**#WTH Is No One in the Music Industry Standing Up for Israeli Hostages? Five for Fighting’s John Ondrasik Explains**

Episode #319 | May 29, 2025 | Danielle Pletka, Marc Thiessen, and John Ondrasik

Danielle Pletka: Hi, I am Danielle Pletka.

Marc Thiessen: And I'm Marc Thiessen.

Danielle Pletka: Welcome to our podcast. What the hell is going on? Marc, what the Hell's Going on? Hollywood version?

Marc Thiessen: Well, music industry version. We're talking to our friend John Ondrasik of Five for Fighting who he is become the tribune of a generation in speaking out about so many of these important issues. He wrote a beautiful song, very sad song after the Afghan withdrawal about abandonment of our Afghan allies called Blood on My Hands. And then when Russia invaded Ukraine, he wrote a beautiful song about the Ukrainian struggle called Can One Man Save the World? And then he wrote a beautiful song called Okay about the plight of the hostages after October 7th. And now he's done a new version of his hit song Superman, celebrating the lives and the chance that the hostages will come home and see their homes again. He's just such a courageous voice, particularly... And it's funny, this shouldn't be a courageous thing that he's doing because calling for hostages to be released, speaking out against Hamas terrorism should not be a controversial thing.

These are simple moral messages that everybody should be behind. And yet the music industry has been just absolutely complacent in its silence in the face of these atrocities, in the face of the Hamas' massacre on October 7th. It's horrible holding of hostages for hundreds of days and refusal to release them. And he's had to really be courageous to speak out against these things. I'm just so honored and call him a friend.

Danielle Pletka: Yeah, no, listen, he's a great guy. And I think you're exactly right, he should be one of many. He should be in a huge line of people who are seeking to use their influence, their sway, especially with the younger generation to bring compassion to sure, absolutely, I have no problem with compassion for Gaza because many in Gaza are victims of Hamas, just like the Israelis are. And to the hostages and to the victims of this war. This was not just Israel's 9/11, this was as if 9/11 happened, 10 x proportionately to the state of Israel. We've said it before, and I won't stop saying it, it was the worst attack on the Jewish people since the Holocaust. And yet it has, instead of unleashing a wave of compassion that similar terrible events have done in the past, not in Israel but in Africa and elsewhere, has unleashed a wave of antisemitism.

And the music industry, but I would say not just the music industry, the entertainment industry has been entirely complicit in this. And the reason that you and I and John know the exceptions is because we can count them on one or two hands. That's it. We talk about what distinguishes him from other people, but I don't understand why someone like Gary Sinise is a lone soldier in these battles for US troops. These are such important causes. And people like Taylor Swift, people like Barbra Streisand, they have so much lift with so many different generations. And what they use it for is to enrich themselves, period.

Marc Thiessen: And what's also amazing is that these are... We're talking a little bit about why people don't speak out in our conversation. And John was saying, "I don't know what I would've done if I was just trying to make it in the music industry and this happened. Would I'd be saying the same thing?" It's hard for people. And why are people in other areas in the music industry not speaking out? Because they're trying to make it, they're trying to feed their families, they're trying to put their kids through college and all the rest of it. But most of these people we're talking about are multi, multi-millionaires who have succeeded already, who are billionaires in some cases.

They've got huge success. If Hollywood or the music industry got mad at them, they're so powerful they could crush them back. Taylor Swift, nobody's going to cancel Taylor Swift because they're entire industries that are built on her back. And so these people, what are they afraid of?

Danielle Pletka: Because they have no moral courage.

Marc Thiessen: A mean tweet, backlash on Instagram, who cares? You have a platform for a reason, use it.

Danielle Pletka: Well, and they will use it for certain niche issues that are lefty articles of faith, who should use what bathroom? But they're not going to use it for the Jewish people, including Jewish artists. So I want you to hear something because Barbra Streisand has not been especially courageous or good. And excuse me, Barbra, but you have had a career. I don't think you're about to be dethroned. So she posts last week, as I know our listeners know, what she calls this beautiful young couple. These two young Israeli diplomats outside the Jewish Museum at a gathering of peace builders, people looking to build rapport between Israelis and Palestinians, how to get aid into Gaza. These were no conservative firebrands here.

And they were shot dead by a terrorist in the streets of Washington, D.C. And Barbara writes, "I can't stop thinking about this beautiful young couple that was gunned down stepping outside the Jewish Museum in D.C., they were about to be married with their whole lives in front of them. Did that shooter know that these two people were trying to build bridges for a better future in the Middle East, especially for Palestinian children?" How ironic. Okay, that's fine. Good enough for me. The responses. "Mossad, cover up." "Wake up, read the room, Barb." "Shut up, Barbara." "Another lie by Zionists." "Barbs, you were my hero for 47 years, but delete your account. He was a Zionist who agreed with genocide, no sympathy for them." "Yes, he did. That's why Mossad and the Israeli government had them killed." "You keep telling yourself that, Barbs, because nobody else believes it." What the hell is wrong with people? What is wrong with people?

Marc Thiessen: Yeah. And all these people are so afraid of getting some angry commenters, that literally every column I write has an angry comment. It's like, why do you care? Well, that's also part of this culture of Instagram and social media, it's all about the comments. We want to post things that everybody will tell us how wonderful you are and how much they love us. And if they don't comment, then our hearts are broken. It's like, who the hell cares what some guy eating Cheetos in his mother's basement thinks about your post about two Israeli kids who were killed in the prime of their lives. But they do care, that's the problem.

And so just when I joined the Washington Post and started writing my column, my editors gave me a piece of advice. I said, "What should I know as a new Washington Post columnist?" And they said, "Don't read the comments." That was the number one piece of advice they give you. So my advice to Barbara Streisand and Bono and all these other people is say what you know is right and don't read the comments.

Danielle Pletka: Because who cares?

Marc Thiessen: Who cares?

Danielle Pletka: Who cares? If they said to you were fat, would you care? If they said to you that you were old, would you care? Why do you care?

Marc Thiessen: They probably would.

Danielle Pletka: And on that note, so folks you may remember John Ondrasik, obviously he's a Grammy nominated singer. He's an incredible performer. He has spent the last several decades writing really just personal songs with incredibly strong, and as Marc says, courageous social messages. He's done six studio albums, been featured. He's a songwriter as well as singer, 350 films, TV shows and ads under his, and this is Marc's of course true secret, under the hockey moniker he has for his band, Five for Fighting. Marc, what is Five for Fighting? It's five minutes of time in the box.

Marc Thiessen: You're going to call it detention.

Danielle Pletka: Detention. I'm not a hockey fan.

Marc Thiessen: You go into the box you feel shame, as they said in the great movie Slap Shot. John will know what I'm talking about.

Danielle Pletka: There you go. Most recently, John has been using his platform to advocate for Israel, denounce the holding of hostages and the October 7th attacks. And he recently updated... And we will play this for you at the end, so stick with us, updated the words of his song [Superman](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRz4FY0ZcwI) that rose into the top 10 after 9/11 to highlight Israeli hostage, Alon Ohel and other hostages still held by Hamas.

Marc Thiessen: Yeah, some of his colleagues in the music industry needed to go into the box and feel shame. So the name of his band is perfect for this topic. Here's our interview.

Marc Thiessen: Well, John, welcome back to the podcast.

John Ondrasik: Thank you, Marc. Hey, Dany, how are you? Good to see you.

Danielle Pletka: Great to see you back.

Marc Thiessen: It's great to have you back. I just saw you live at the Birchmere with a star-studded retinue of guest singers and guest guitarist with John Roberts from Fox. But I was struck by some of the things you said in between songs about the music industry. I wish all of our listeners could hear what you had to say on the stage that day because it was very moving and very important. So could you tell us the thoughts you shared with the audience that night in the Birchmere, and what your thoughts are on the music industry and the entertainment industry broadly when it comes to antisemitism and all the rest?

John Ondrasik: Well, first of all, it was nice to see you guys. You had very good seats.

Marc Thiessen: Thanks to you.

Danielle Pletka: It was sold out.

John Ondrasik: Well, I know you got some really good shots of John Robert shredding on Queen, which was certainly a highlight for me. But yeah, as I've been talking about it, and we've talked about since October 7th, one of the great, I think shames of the aftermath of October 7th is the silence of the music industry and the arts. Of course, I was honored to play at the concert for New York after 9/11. And every living icon got on that stage and condemned Osama bin Laden stood up for freedom, stood up for America. But since October 7th, you see very few of those people speaking out at all. Bono will make a little quote here or there. But none of them say free the hostages. None of them can say simple moral things. It has nothing to do with Israel. And it's the end of my video of the okay song, We're Not OK, is Martin Luther King's quote, "Silence in the face of evil is complicity." And I don't think I am overreaching when I say the music industry is complicit in the anti-Semitism running amok around the world.

And it is very depressing for me as a songwriter. The music industry likes to hold itself up as the leader of human rights, Live-Aid, Sun City, The Concert for New York, go down the list. But for some reason they're morally paralyzed. And I don't think there's any other way to say it, but it's a historical disgrace.

Danielle Pletka: I was just looking actually at what one of the singers said about this. So we're all roughly the same age. I think I'm the oldest in this little group, but we grew up in an era of Farm Aid and U.S.A. For Africa and We Are The World. And in fact, there was a fantastic documentary on that that I just saw. You know, Michael Jackson... There was nobody who was not involved in that in the early days. And it is so striking to me. It's not just Israel. Israel makes us passionate and it's a cause that I know the three of us care about a great deal, but 150,000 people have been murdered in Sudan. Where's Hollywood? What has happened to the moral compass of the entertainment industry? Do you have a theory?

John Ondrasik: Well, I think certainly for the younger generation, if you look at the Macklemores of the world, they've been indoctrinated by what's indoctrinating many of our kids. If you look at polls under 30 to 40% support Hamas, how can that happen? You can talk about TikTok, you can talk about the media, you can talk about social media. So I think for the younger artists, they're caught up in the fad of free Palestine. There's nobody to give them another opinion. It's group think. But you can't have that excuse for folks of our generation. We know better. We know better. We understand what's going on. And as I said, I think you wonder how the Holocaust had ever have happened. How could that ever have happened? And now we see how. We see how. We see people that are not indoctrinated, not fools, not useful idiots, silent. And like so many were in 1938. So again, I think it's moral cowardice. Many of the leaders in the music industry are Jewish. They're Jewish, and they are quiet, and they are stamping down some of their artists.

And again, as you mentioned, it's not just the music industry, it's everywhere. It's our college campuses, it's industry, it's media. So this whole kind of tilt to Marxism, which really what it is, and of course the Jews are always in the front line, but I really believe it's the battle for civilization right now. And it's just so happens that Israel is getting the heat. But look, if you're on a college campus and you hate Israel, you hate America. I remember when I was in Israel a year and a half ago, I talked to Sharansky and we were talking about Ukraine actually, because he's Ukrainian and he'd seen my Ukrainian song. And he said to me, 20 years ago, somebody asked him, what's the biggest threat to western civilization? And 20 years ago, Sharansky said, "American academia." And of course everything falls through that. And the arts, again, I think are always a loss-leader for morality.

Our buddy Andrew Breitbart always said, "Politics is downstream of culture." So when culture is losing its mind, I guess we shouldn't be surprised that the arts are falling into that, I think, moral cowardice trap. And how we get out of it? I'm not sure.

Marc Thiessen: Which came first, the chicken or the egg? I mean, it's like you're seeing the college campuses now exploding with this virulent anti-Semitism, and you're seeing these artists, I don't remember who those idiots were at Coachella.

John Ondrasik: Yeah.

Marc Thiessen: And Macklemore and some of these antisemitic artists like that. And their messages are being carried on TikTok and all the social media. Which is it? Or is it is just a vicious circle that they're all feeding each other in this river of filth?

John Ondrasik: Well, I think the problem is they get no counterpoint. Now, are the algorithms being manipulated on TikTok? Yes. Is that our fault for allowing China to basically indoctrinate our kids? Yes. Is it our fault that we allow Qatar to send billions of dollars to our Ivy League campuses? Yes. But on the other hand, it's like the media. There's been no consequences. There's no consequences for not even allowing a Jewish student to cross the campus at UCLA. Nobody is expelled. And so, when there's no consequences, whether it's in the media, whether it's in college campuses, why should people change behavior? So thank goodness there's finally consequences. Thank goodness. The new administration is, I call it defunding Harvard, but giving consequences. And I think that will have an impact, not just allowing it and basically burying our heads in the sand. So thank goodness that we have an administration, Marco Rubio has been saying this for years, who basically stands not just for Israel but for sanity. So let's see.

I'm cautiously optimistic. I know this is going to take decades to overcome because it's decades in the making. But finally, there's people standing up for sanity. And I know that makes all of us a little bit more optimistic and relieved because for four years there's been no consequences for any of this insanity.

Marc Thiessen: Well, it's not just no consequences. They literally rewarded the students who are committing the antisemitic acts. Harvard, the Trump administration just cut off another hundred million from Harvard. And in the letter to the GSA instructing the cut off the contracts, they pointed out that there are these two students at Harvard. One's an editor of the Harvard Law Review. The other is a student of the Harvard Divinity School. They physically accosted a Jewish student, surrounded him, held him back by Kafias, pushed him around and chanted anti-Semitic slogans at him. And Harvard, not only did they not cooperate with the authorities, they actually refused to help them to identify the other students who were perpetrating this. And the one kid just got a $65,000 grant to work for care. And the other one was made the class marshal at Harvard's graduation. If that had been a Black student, they would've been kicked out.

John Ondrasik: A Muslim student. Maybe not a Chinese student. But yeah. And part of the problem too, Marc, is if it was a Black student or a Muslim student, it would be front page New York Times. It would lead every media outlet. And of course we have Scott Pelley ranting at Woke Forest about, "Oh my God, we're losing all our liberties at our colleges. And everybody's shutting down the press." The press is complicit too, because they don't cover these stories. Nobody beyond our bubble knows about these students at Harvard. Shabos the hero, the kid over there, he'll put it out there. But again, I think it just goes to the whole culture of this kind of, again, woke oppressor, Marxism that's infiltrated everything. And certainly arts has always lean that way. But yes, you just can't make it up. It just sounds so insane. And every day you hear one of these stories. But again, until there are consequences, until people are suspended and expelled, I don't believe anything.

I went to Cornell. You know? The new president there, he's a Jewish man. He's saying he's taking steps. But for me I'm like, until kids are expelled, you're not getting your tuition back. And we are not accepting this on any level. I don't buy it. I think, again, most of these presidents believe the kids are oppressed. They are free Palestine. And until we have leadership at these schools that is like an SCC school, the racist schools, the SCC, I don't think we're going to see much of a change. And hopefully they continue to defund these schools. But while these presidents and faculty are there that are 99% Marxist, why will it change?

Danielle Pletka: Now listen, I agree with you. I think people will make assumptions about you. Oh, it's another Jew, or it's another this or it's another that. First of all, tell us a little bit about you and then we've been talking about antisemitism. We've been talking about October 7th. But you wrote a marvelous song, Blood on My Hands, about the Biden withdrawal from Afghanistan, about which we've heard nary a peep about the women of Afghanistan and their loss of all rights from a group of people who profess to care about the women, to believe all the women.

John Ondrasik: Right.

Danielle Pletka: Right. And you played in Ukraine. I mean, you've been a champion for a lot of really, to my mind, important causes. Tell us about you and how you got there.

John Ondrasik: I've always had a great appreciation for freedom. The honor of my career is performing for our troops and writing songs about our troops and about freedom. And I'm a disciple of Reagan, and I come from that era. I've never been someone to stand on a soapbox and lecture my politics. As you mentioned, Blood on My Hands was the first one that, I guess, I was very explicit in who I was critical of and why. But again, to me, these are all moral messages. If you abandon your citizens to the Taliban and your allies that have fought with you and maybe saved your life to the Taliban, that's not a good thing. If you can't stand against Putin, the tyrant, well that's not a good thing. And if you can't stand against Hamas, to me, these should not be political issues. Of course they are. And I'm not Jewish. You don't have to be Jewish to condemn Hamas. You have to be sane and you have to have a heart and a soul.

And it's interesting too, Blood on My Hands, you guys might remember, YouTube took it down because it was having an impact. And that became a bigger story than the song. So I quickly lived through the media cancel culture. They were forced to put it back. And then with Ukraine, of course, initially it was very well received on both sides. But many folks on the right attacked me. Matt Walsh from my pals over at the Daily Wire said I was doing the work of the devil with Can One Man Save the World? And so, to me, these have nothing to do with sides, with politics. They're simple moral messages that I think everybody can agree with. But of course, both on the left and the right, I think there are forces that don't believe that. We can talk about the evolution of Tucker Carlson, which has been very disappointing. And you're seeing this woke right. I haven't seen any kind of the woke right anti-Semitism till the last few months. Since October 7th, all the attacking to me, the reason I have to hire more security, is because the left, the crazy woke left.

But now you're seeing it from the right. And so, I think we have to be aware of both, and both have to be addressed, because both are very dangerous.

Danielle Pletka: I couldn't agree with you more. And I agree with you about the timing as well. I don't know what to say. I don't have a brilliant theory about what has prompted this outbreak on the right, but it is notable and lamentable. But what happened? Tell us the story about how they took you down. Because I don't know if you noticed, but the Israeli singer, Yuval Raphael at the Eurovision contest, she had her Twitter taken down. And Kanye West whose new song Heil Hitler, has not been taken down. Was this something that protesters got done on your YouTube channel or how did that happen? And how did you fight it?

John Ondrasik: Well, I think what initially happened, because Blood on My Hands was really becoming a problem for the Biden administration, that many of the minions, you can go on YouTube and you can say this is offensive. And I had a warning label before the video, because it showed the horrors of the Abbey Gate attack and it showed the horrors of women. So I had not for kids warning. But I think when you get enough of those, they initially take it down. That's the nice excuse. Or it's basically people at YouTube who don't want you criticizing the left. But anyways, they were forced to apologize and put it back. As far as this Israeli singer, I've heard different things. I heard that actually was not her account. But I do have to say, and again, I think I'd be interested to hear your guys' thoughts. I think of all the things that have happened in my lifetime, Elon Musk buying Twitter may have been the most important thing for freedom and for freedom of speech. Because that has been the one outlet where we can talk about 60 minutes deceptively editing the Kamala Harris video. We can talk about things that nobody else will talk about, and they can't be stamped down. They can't be deleted. The Babylon Bee basically saved the world, you would've thought.

So again, I think certainly free speech is at a much better place now than it was. But then of course you look at Europe and people going to jail for saying a mean tweet. So yeah, how we got here? I don't know. But, again, I feel optimistic with the new administration, whether you like Elon Musk or not. And nobody's taken down my songs anymore. But of course those forces are still there and they're not going to go away.

Marc Thiessen: Let's talk about your evolution a little bit because in my living room, I've got a case of all my CDs because I was from the CD era. And I've got all the Five for Fighting CDs in there. I was a fan of yours before I got to know you a long time ago. And you weren't political. You were just a beautiful singer-songwriter who made beautiful music. And then you decided to start becoming the Bob Dylan of our generation, I guess the Bob Dylan of the right or the center or whatever you call it. You're the moral force in the music industry. It's such a beautiful heartening story. But when did you make that choice and how have you chosen, you did it with the first song on Afghanistan, because you're so appalled, but then you've continued to lean into this new persona, using your platform to speak out where others won't. How did it happen? Why did you decide to do it?

John Ondrasik: Well, thanks Marc. And I know you're a massive music fan. I still have stacks of cassette tapes of my Five for fighting demos that I keep as a novelty. And I know-

Marc Thiessen: They're coming back, cassettes.

John Ondrasik: Yeah, well, everything's coming back.

Marc Thiessen: I just got an LP player for the first time in years.

John Ondrasik: Well, again, you know more about music than I'll ever know.

Marc Thiessen: Oh, please give me a break.

John Ondrasik: But I know how to make it. There's music fans and then there's music fans. I'm a sports fan.

Danielle Pletka: Fanatic. Fanatic is the word you're looking for.

John Ondrasik: Yeah. I can talk sports. But I love that. I love that passion for music and the history. And certainly I've been blessed to realize my childhood dream and still do shows and people come and still make music that seems to resonate. But it really was, the Afghanistan withdrawal really was tectonic for me, because I guess I was naive. And I always felt that, well, presidents do crazy things, they say crazy things, it's the nature of it. But our military, our generals, they are the last source of honor and they will not sell their soul. But when Millie and Austin came out and started echoing the narrative of what an extraordinary success was this withdrawal. That scared me. And I also had friends risking their lives going down to Afghanistan to rescue our own citizens. This incredible woman that does this amazing work, was going down there to rescue our citizens. I'm like, "What is happening here? We've lost America. We've lost our soul." So that basically, I think maybe scared me straight.

And the last story I'll tell, because when I wrote the song and I sent it to some folks, they're like, "It's good, but you can never put it out. Your career will end." And I thought about that and I was hesitant. And to be honest with you, if I was 30 years old trying to make a living, trying to build my career, would I put it out? I don't know. But I thought about a song I had written 30 years ago called Last Great American. And the song is about John McCain. And it's about John McCain when they came to take him out of the hellholes in Vietnam, said, "No, that guy was here first. You take him, I'm going to stay." And it may sound trite or, I don't know, hyperbolic, but I thought to myself, if John McCain can stay in a Vietnamese prison, I can release a stupid song. And I'm glad I did because the song became something very significant to our veterans. To this day, do not have closure for the abandonment of their allies. I'm glad to see the administration is looking into that and maybe we'll have some consequences. But I'm really glad I did.

But after that, I'm like, "I'm not going to do this again." But here comes Ukraine and Putin invades. And here's this little guy, this comedian standing up to Putin. And then I'll never do it again. And October 7th was different, Marc, because after October 7th, I wasn't like, "I got to write a song about this." What do you write? I mean, there's no words for that horror. But what really inspired the song were the months that went by after that. And you saw the collapse of the media, the UN, Amnesty International, our college campuses, the arts that we've been talking about. You saw the collapse of all these-

Marc Thiessen: It's a music festival.

John Ondrasik: At a freaking music festival for peace, for a bunch of lefties that loved their Palestinian neighbors. They were all not only killed, but they were defiled and raped and kidnapped. And that scared me and frankly made me angry enough to write that song. So again, every time I do one, I hope I don't have to do another. But I have to say the Harvard song is on the tip of my tongue, so that might be coming really soon. Don't send your kids to Harvard. So that might be the next one.

Danielle Pletka: I cannot wait for that one. I cannot wait. So John, this is something I've obviously, because I studied history and then I became a Middle East person, so I've spent a lot of time with issues relating to Israel and to anti-Semitism. And I know them well. But this lack of courage is not something new. The New York Times never reported on the concentration camps on the front page of the paper until the war ended, despite the fact that they knew about it. Hollywood didn't talk about it despite the fact that Hollywood was, as anti-Semites love to remind us, absolutely dominated by Jews who started Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, who started Warner Brothers, who started... I mean everything. And this silence, which is complicity, Marc and I have talked about this a lot on the podcast.

And the thing that, I think, angers us even more about this is that it's not silence about everything, it's silence about Jews. If this was George Floyd, if this was about Black people, if this was about Latinos, if this was about trans people, we can go from a large group to an ever more small niche question, they'd all be out there with their fists in the air. But somehow Jews are special. You live in this community. I don't know those people. I can't sing, I can't act. I can't do anything that is required in Hollywood. Do you get this?

John Ondrasik: Yeah. And again, I think it reflects the culture. And in a way, turning over these rocks is great to expose these frauds that we've been seeing for decades. Women's rights groups. Women's rights group are not women's rights groups, they are activists for the left. You look at Amnesty International, and they're not about freedom for people, they're for activists on the left. So a lot of these groups have been grifting for years. And the sad thing is you can make a lot of money doing this. You can make a lot of money grifting and standing for these leftist causes. So very few. And also with the media, frankly, becoming dominated by leftists too, it's not about morality, it's about what feeds your audience, what puts money in your pocket and what supports your beliefs. And of course, yeah, fighting for the Jews doesn't check those boxes, even though nobody's been more sympathetic or proactive for civil rights, Black Lives Matter, all these leftist causes, than the Jews.

And I think it's been a big awakening for many of my Jewish friends, many of them very liberal who thought, "Well, we marched with you, we stood with you, we stood with George Floyd, and where is everybody now?" I think there's still coming to grips with that. Many Jewish folks on the left are still, it's kind of like Trump derangement syndrome. They hate Netanyahu so much that they cannot come to grips with this reality of what's happening to their nation and their countrymen. But again, I think, again, we probably shouldn't be surprised. I mean, take the college campuses. This has been going on for 20 years, so why should we surprise when there's these radical antisemitic acts with no consequences? Because all the folks that run these universities agree with free Palestine. They agree that America's an evil horrible place. So why should we be surprised? So I think we have to fight that, but we have to fight it with the arts.

And I know I'm ranting, but if we don't use the arts to combat what's happening, it can't be political speeches, it can't be Wall Street Journal op-eds. If the arts are not part of fighting back this cultural war, we will lose. And the right does not understand that.

Danielle Pletka: Now, listen, I couldn't agree with you more. You reminded me because Bono great tribune of justice, who worked his butt off to support people who suffered from AIDS, and worked his butt off to get the United States to cough up cash for AIDS sufferers in Africa, has no such compassion. So he spoke out this weekend and he said, and this is my second favorite, the moral equivalency argument, "We need to free the hostages and we need to free Israel of Bibi Netanyahu." And it's like, "Okay, I may not have voted for him. You may not have voted for him, but he is the democratically elected leader in the only democracy in the Middle East. Why the hell did you feel the need to add that?" But you're exactly right. If they can't say free Palestine by themselves, they're going to say something that suggests that there's a moral equivalency between Hamas and Israelis.

John Ondrasik: And the fact that their president is one of the most anti-Semitic leaders in the world.

Danielle Pletka: No question.

John Ondrasik: And Bono can't say that. Yeah. They have to qualify everything if they even have an ounce of courage, because they still want to get invited to the parties. They still want to be part of the crowd. Springsteen can go on a rant against Trump for an hour, and that's fine, you can do that. But can he save free the hostages? Doesn't seem to. So again, I think it's also exposing the frauds that are many of these folks that have built their legacy on human rights. And look, Bono's done a lot of good stuff, and I don't think he's a bad guy, but it just shows the paralyzation, the moral paralyz ation of what's happened in the arts. And again, I think the world would've been different if on October 8th these artistic leaders had come out and said, "Unequivocally," like after 9/11, "This is evil. Free the hostages," period. But the fact that they didn't, I think is another reason why we are where we are.

Marc Thiessen: Well, he's a perfect example of this culture you're talking about. Because right after October 7th, he was doing a show at the Sphere in Las Vegas, and he changed the lyrics of, In The Name of Love from, Early morning April 4th, a shot rings out of the Memphis sky, to early morning October 7th, and talked about the beautiful kids at that music festival that had been killed. And now all of a sudden he's equivocating 20 months later. What the hell is going on with that?

John Ondrasik: As you said, 20 months later, he finally releases a statement maybe because of the two kids who were assassinated in D.C. The other day. But yeah, it just goes to show you how broken society is and how broken the arts are. And again, we can lament it for hours, but I'm like, "What can we do about it?" We can support artists, we can support people who are not afraid to say simple truths. And what we've been doing, like with you guys, we can support media that does not put an article on their opinion page in The New York Times that says, "They're still trying to figure out why that guy shot those two kids." We can disdain that. And I think we are. I think new media is growing more powerful. Just Trump's election alone shows you that the power the arts had over politics has waned. There was a day when if you had all the... Like Obama had every single icon in the world at that Greek Palace, and that moved the needle. And so I think the fact that the arts does not move the political needle, that the media does not own the politics anymore, is a healthy thing.

But I can't give you a good reason, Marc. It's depressing and it's soul killing. But the rest of us, we can only do what we can do. And I think you know what. We've looked at the arts and sports for our moral leadership way too long anyways. Why are we looking at people like that, that can shoot 40% from three or have a hit song? Why are we looking at them for kind of moral leadership anyways? I understand celebrity. I understand that. I love my favorite actors. But why have we been looking to them for moral leadership anyways? So again, I think people reevaluated it, and I like the fact that their power has dissipated because they frankly have not earned, especially in the last 19 months, any stature.

Danielle Pletka: That I couldn't agree with more. So I'm curious, when you write about Afghanistan, when you write about Ukraine, when you write about the hostages, and you go out and you perform, I know you've got very loyal fans, do you hear from other people who are more reticent that they're nervous to speak out, that they need to be hip with the pro-Palestine movement? Do you hear from other people that this is something? Or these people just silent, ignorant?

John Ondrasik: No, I do hear from people in the music industry that thank me and say, "I really appreciate what you're doing." Of course, I have to remain anonymous. They always call for it. And I frankly understand why they're saying that, but I have a disdain for that. And I understand, people have jobs. I was talking to someone who worked at CAA, a Jewish person, a very high-profile job, and is trying to make a difference in that organization, but she's in fear of losing her job. And I understand people have kids in college, they have mortgages, they have their careers, but I always say-

Danielle Pletka: CAA, Ari Emanuel CAA?

John Ondrasik: Ari Emanuel CAA.

Danielle Pletka: Yeah.

John Ondrasik: Yep. Yeah. He was at a dinner I was at the other day. And the fact is, with each one of us that speaks out, it gives permission to someone else. And it puts people either you either inspire somebody or you shame them, and they both work. So I think it's important that we continue growing these voices. At least in Hollywood you have Patricia Keaton, you have Deborah Messing, you have a few from completely both sides of the spectrum standing up for sanity. But in the music industry, there's virtually nobody.

Danielle Pletka: Scooter Braun I think has been-

John Ondrasik: Scooter's been good, but Scooter needs to get his artist to say something.

John Ondrasik: I appreciate what he's doing and what he did with the Nova Festival. But Scooter Braun, his voice is not going to move the culture needle. You know what would? Justin Bieber or Ariana Grande. Now, they're probably indoctrinated like anybody else. But I tell all my music industry friends, they're like, "Yeah, we put a letter with a 100 signatures in The New York Times." I'm like, "And?" I'm like, "What you need to do, is to get Ziggy Marley to say, 'free the hostages.'" And Ziggy Marley has a Jewish Israeli wife. So again, I think a lot of these folks think... And I appreciate anybody who will say anything. But what they're doing, the few folks that have been supportive, I don't think will move the needle, because the only way that moves the needle is if people that have billions of fans come out and say simple truths, that will give people permission to rethink the dogma they've been taught.

And nothing breaks through walls more than music. And that's why I think this new version of Superman it's supporting Alon Ohel the hostage, has resonated so powerfully, because music, people will listen. If you sing me something, I will listen to you more than if you lecture me about something. And so I think that's what, again, our friends on the right don't understand. And that's why music is so critical. And that's frankly, why Can One Men Save the World resonated, because it got into Russia. And people in Russia heard it, where they're not going to hear a speech. And we need an arsenal of that. We need a DOGE. We need a DOGE of the arts, where we're having this soft power through the arts and resources and talent and publicist. And that's what we really need to fight this culture war. Unfortunately, I don't think, unless we get Elon Musk on board, maybe he's a music fan, that's not happening as we speak.

Marc Thiessen: Did you get any pushback from your label or from people saying, "John, don't do this. You're going to ruin your career. Why do you keep going out there and sticking your neck out?"

John Ondrasik: A little bit. There'll be someone that stands up at a show screens free Palestine and starts yelling at me. And there'll be people that, it's interesting, my biggest market is the Northeast, which is typically very blue states. And I remember when we were touring with Blood on My Hands, there were people that didn't necessarily initially like that song because it was criticizing their guy, criticizing Biden. But before I'd play it, I would give context about why I wrote the song and that it's a moral message, and that we abandoned our Afghan soldiers who we promised that we would save them. And people didn't always walk away agreeing with me, but they listened and they considered it, and nobody stood up and walked out. And that's what we need to have. We need to have the conversation, and music allows that to happen. So I think for me, whatever pushback I've gotten when in D.C. when there were some Afghan vets there who came up afterward and told me how important Blood on My Hands was to them, when there's people waving Ukrainian flags, when somebody brings me a dog tag of a hostage, when that happens, all that other pushback stuff seems fairly trivial. Because when you talk to hostage families like I do, somebody not buying a record or not licensing my song seems pretty ridiculous. And I think that's frankly where I am in my life.

Danielle Pletka: Good for you. I'm so proud to know you and I mean that. And thank you, Marc, for introducing me to John. Really, you are right that one person can make a huge difference. And it really impresses me what you've done.

Marc Thiessen: Well, if one man could save the music industry, it might be you. But before we go, could you tell the story of how you rewrote Superman and how you played the piano in Hostage Square? Tell that story that you just told at the Birchmere show. And could you play us out with your new version of Superman?

John Ondrasik: I would love to. Yeah. Well, a few... Actually, over a month ago now, Edith Ohel, who is the mother of Alon Ohel, reached out to me. Alon has been hostage now for almost 600 days. Alon is a piano player, and his piano was in Hostage Square. And it's called The Yellow Piano. And it's just sitting there. And people walked by and play it. And when I was in Tel Aviv a little over a year ago, I sat and played his piano. I played my song OK in it. I performed that night at Hostage Square. And when she reached out, she said, "Can we do some collaboration to keep the spotlight on the plight of my son?" And I said, "Of course." And she initially wanted to write a new song. But the more I thought about it, I thought, well, maybe Superman as the song for our , one of the songs that recognized the heroes of 9/11, perhaps that would be a song that would have more significance because of course for our Jewish friends, October 7th is their 9/11. And I thought, well, maybe we should do a new version of Superman.

And as I mentioned at the show, when she sent me a picture of Alon in his Superman jammies at eight years old, it made it very clear that we should do Superman. Certainly it broke our hearts. And as we were recording the video in Tel Aviv, they were shooting it, and I was in the studio cutting a new version, it became very clear that we had to change the lyrics of the second verse, which is the current lyric is, "Wish that I could cry, fall upon my knees, find a way to lie about a home I'll never see." Well, of course, many of the hostages have been released. These hostage family members are superhuman. Edan Alexander, the last American hostage was released, thank goodness, a few weeks ago. So there is a lot of hope. So we needed to change that lyric to, "Wish that I could cry, fall upon my knees, find a way to fly to a home I will soon see."

And the whole reason we did this project is the goal that I believe will happen, Dany and Marc, that soon I will be able to get on a plane, go to Tel Aviv, sit at that yellow piano, and next to me Alon will be playing Superman, will be playing a duet with his family, all the hostages surrounding us, and also recognizing the hostages who did not make it home. So that is our goal. I'm glad it's been received well. And I'm very grateful to you guys for all you do fighting this fight and sharing the versions on your podcast, on social media. And I also want to go to one of those crazy new age concerts you guys go to every year. We have to put that on the books as well.

Marc Thiessen: Absolutely. We'd love to have you.

Danielle Pletka: Absolutely.

Marc Thiessen: Will you play it for us?

John Ondrasik: You got it.

[[Superman](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRz4FY0ZcwI&pp=0gcJCdgAo7VqN5tD) by John Ondrasik]