

# FINDING FOCUS



October 12, 2017

## “Fifty-Eight”

This month’s track is “Mean Streets” from Van Halen’s 1981 release, *Fair Warning*. You might not believe the band who wrote (with David Lee Roth) classics like “Jump,” “Dance the Night Away,” and “Panama” and who have always been regarded as the party band’s party band could’ve released a “dark album,” but this is how critics often refer to it. As a guitar player, it also happens to be my favorite because it contains some of the most incendiary, face-melting guitar playing Edward Van Halen has ever produced.

I digress.

As I write this, it’s been ten days since 58 people were killed and the person responsible has left investigators nothing. How do we describe this person? Terrorist? Nah, terrorists fight for or against a cause or ideology to meet a greater end. Sociopath? Psychopath? I don’t think either of those work either. Criminal sociopaths/psychopaths see no fault in their actions. For them, there’s no moral dilemma so, in their minds, they’re actions were justified so they bear no guilt, i.e. they do not kill themselves once they’ve committed their crime!

Since October 1, I’m sure you’ve all been wondering what I have, “why?” What makes a man over the course of one year recon multiple locations and amass an arsenal of various weapons in a grand plan to do nothing more than kill as many people as possible? This one was hard not to take personally, because this nut took aim at something that’s pretty sacred to me—music.

*At night I walk this stinkin' street past the crazies on my block  
And I see the same old faces and I hear that same old talk  
And I'm searching for the latest thing, a break in this routine  
I'm talkin' some new kicks, ones like you ain't never seen*

I’ve had the privilege of being on both sides; in the crowd and on the stage. In addition to stealing lives, he’s forever changed the direction of every person there that night. Will any of them ever go to another concert and be able to enjoy it?

And my heart breaks for Jason Aldean and his band. No matter what he does, he’ll forever be attached to this, but even worse, every time he takes the stage and the house lights go down he’ll be wondering what’s going to come at him out of the darkness next.

Now, I'm not writing this to proselytize and I'm definitely not advocating that we go chipping away at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment—far from it. Chipping away at the right to bear arms is a slippery slope I'd never suggest or recommend.

*It's always here and now my friend, it ain't once upon a time  
It's all over but the shouting, I come to take what's mine  
We're searchin' for the latest thing, a break in this routine  
Talkin' some new kicks, ones like you ain't never seen*

I've never purchased a firearm; however, there are guns that I understand are mine. I was told they would become mine by the proud gun owners who raised me. My father is a sportsman who loves the outdoors and he did his best instill that appreciation in both my brother and me. At a very early age I was taught to shoot and care for weapons and that, if handled recklessly, they can kill indiscriminately. The education, respect, and appreciation for firearms remains with me to this day, but hunting and shooting ended long ago for me. I found out long ago that I much prefer the bang I get from my old beat up Stratocaster and 100-watt Marshall amplifier.

Sure, you have every right to own a semi-automatic weapon whether it be AR-15, 9mm, 30-06, etc. Sure, everyone knows that it is illegal to possess a fully automatic weapon or one that's been converted to fully automatic.

Before I go any further, I'll clarify some terminology my readers who aren't gun familiar.

<sup>1</sup>Semi-automatic weapon—able to fire repeatedly through an automatic reloading process but requiring release and another pressure of the trigger for each successive shot

<sup>2</sup>Fully automatic weapon—fires repeatedly until the trigger is released.

Here is where we may agree to disagree, or maybe, as we've seen from our legislators in the past few days, we may actually agree. I'm fully against the existence of a device that can be purchased (legally) which circumvents existing laws simply because it doesn't "technically make a weapon automatic." Specifically, I'm talking about an item the Vegas killer used on 12 of his 23 assault rifles—the bump-fire stock or "bump stock."

*See, a gun is real easy  
in this desperate part of town  
Turns you from hunted into hunter  
You go an' hunt somebody down*

The ATF clarified in a recent interview that the item was originally designed to give someone without the full use of their arms the ability to fire a rapid succession of rounds. So, how does this item get around gun laws? Because, rather than change the mechanism that fires the projectile (trigger, firing pin), a device was created that uses the natural force of the gun's recoil (i.e. the kick when fired) to fire the next round.

Huh?

It's like jumping on a pogo stick. They put a spring in the part of the gun that rest against your shoulder. At the opposite end, that spring is attached to the trigger so, when you fire, the kick against

the spring causes the spring to pull the trigger. It can give the weapon the ability to fire 400-800 rounds per minute.

*Then somebody said, 'Fair warning!  
Lord, strike that poor boy down!'*

Outside of the physically challenged, who needs this? I'm sorry, but no one. I've yet to hear an argument for why something like this should be readily available. And here's the thing, for sporting men like my brother and father and most every other hunter I've ever met, it would've never occurred them to make any of their guns fully automatic. In short, I don't think you're going to catch any of them losing sleep if that item falls off the market.

As for home defense, I don't know many gun owners (present company included) who are going to reach for their rifle first if an intruder comes calling. However, if that is your weapon of choice, I don't think you're going to recklessly spray bullets throughout your house hoping to hit your target. You're going to take aim and fire deliberately. If you can't hit the target with a semi-automatic rifle with a 10-round clip, the problem might lie with the operator, not the gun.

I am a strong proponent of our right to keep and bear arms. The recent tragedy in Las Vegas caused me to go back and study the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment. I don't think I'd actually read it since my government class in high school. The first thing that struck me was how short it was. It's just one sentence. Amendment II to the Constitution of the United States reads:

*"A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."*

There are quite a few words in that short sentence which can be interpreted in quite a few different ways. I'd love to know what you think. If you have an opinion or just want to share your thoughts, visit my Facebook page at [facebook.com/wesisfindingfocus](https://www.facebook.com/wesisfindingfocus).

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