Welcome to another edition of the Cleveland Sports Video Grab Bag-- the only column that scrounges through Youtube's vast VHS junkyard in search of precious artifacts from Browns, Cavs, and Indians lore. This week, we recklessly dig up the past with an eye to the present, as our found footage includes such timely references as MLB Spring Training, NBA All-Star Weekend, and TCF's preferred reader of the month, Quincy Morgan!

First up, we join the Cleveland Indians as they arrive in Arizona to gear up for a new season. Only, in this case, it's a grainy, black-and-white version of Arizona, and a much more colorful version of the Indians. That's because it's 1954, and the Tribe has championship aspirations-- l ed by manager Al Lopez and one of the great pitching staffs in baseball history, featuring Mike Garcia, Early Wynn, Bob Lemon, and a fella named Feller.

The clip below is from an old '50s newsreel that's now in the public domain, making it one of the few baseball videos that the backwards-thinking MLB copyright police haven't had removed from Youtube. While the NBA, NFL, and NHL have all recognized the intrinsic value of fans promoting the games' histories through video sharing and other new forms of social media, Major League Baseball—the American sport with the biggest historical archive to pick from—has remained shockingly obtuse in that department. Almost nothing earns their "expressed written consent," be it a famous World Series highlight or fifteen seconds of a meaningless Brewers-Indians game from 1988. If you post it, they'll find it. And if they find it, they will take it down angrily and say, "That Brook Jacoby footage belongs to us!!!!" And sure, the law is on MLB's side. But the next generation of sports fans might not be, as football and basketball continue to be the far more progressive, "plugged-in" sports for the ADHD nation.

In any case, here's that rarest of commodities for you; a baseball clip!

Video 1: Unpainted Arizona (1954)

alt=""
swfobject.embedSWF('http://www.youtube.com/v/ZmOb103uJZI','avreloaded0','368','280','9.0.28','/plugins/content/avreloaded/expressinstall.swf',
{autoplay:'0',color1:'0xFFFFFF',color2:'0x000000',rel:'0',egm:'0',border:'0',loop:'0'},{wmode:'window',bgcolor:'#FFFFFF',menu:'true'},{id:'p_avreloaded0',styleclass:'allvideos'});

Watch Video on Youtube: 1954 Indians Spring Training

Gotta love Al Lopez doing his best Mark Mothersbaugh impression. Whip it, ’54 Tribe! Whip it good!

As for the players featured in this segment, Mike Garcia (19-8, 2.64), Early Wynn (23-11, 2.73), and Bob Lemon (23-7, 2.72) all certainly lived up to their expectations that year, as did the vets Bob Feller (13-3, 3.09) and Hal Newhouser (7-2, 2.51). Those “reaching for Luke Easter’s job” over at first base, however, didn’t quite enjoy the same success. Easter himself only appeared in six games and was subsequently done in the big leagues at age 38. His first spring training challenger, Rocky Nelson (no spring chicken either at 29), came up with the Tribe in April, but only saw four at-bats before getting sold to Brooklyn. This put the Indians’ first base job in the hands of 28 year-old Bill Glynn—until June at least—when slugger Vic Wertz was acquired from the Orioles. Glynn would still appear in 111 games that year for Cleveland, but he hit just .251 with 5 homers and 18 RBIs, and he would never play another season in the Bigs.

As for Wertz, he put up great numbers, but wound up better remembered for a fly ball in Game 1 of the World Series—against the team prophetically featured in the second part of this Spring Training clip, the New York Giants. It should be noted, despite winning a then AL record 111 games, the Indians had to go on the road to face the 97-win Giants—a bad-luck consequence of baseball’s then year-to-year alternation of World Series home field advantage between AL and NL.

Video 2: The Price is Right for Soul Asylum (1994)

alt=""
swfobject.embedSWF('http://www.youtube.com/v/UCrttbk6HtI','avreloaded1','368','280','9.0.28','/

plugins/content/avreloaded/expressinstall.swf',
{autoplay:'0',color1:'0xFFFFFF',color2:'0x000000',rel:'0',egm:'0',border:'0',loop:'0'},{wmode:'window',bgcolor:'#FFFFFF',menu:'true'},{id:'p_avreloaded1',styleclass:'allvideos'});

Watch Video on Youtube: NBA Superstars 3: Mark Price

Since we've already discussed the NBA's savvy embrace of Youtube and social media, it should come as little surprise that the Association was on the cusp of all things hip back in the early '90s, too. And nothing typified this trendiness any more than the *NBA Superstars* video series. The three volumes of this now legendary VHS set astutely combined the fast-paced visuals of ESPN-style highlight reels with the then still relevant music video format of MTV. Admittedly, some of the early music/athlete mashups were a bit perplexing (Patti LaBelle for Michael Jordan, The Outfield for Larry Bird), but by 1994, the NBA had zoned in on its core youth audience a little better. Since most '90s kids spent their time rocking out to Pearl Jam and/or practicing thunderous Shawn Kemp dunks on their Nerf hoops, the Rainman reel featuring Pearl Jam's "Go" made
NBA Superstars 3
immediately worth the purchase. For those of us in Northeast Ohio, meanwhile, there was an extra bonus-- three minutes of our beloved point guard Mark Price (fresh off a fourth All-Star Game appearance and back-to-back 3-Point Shootout titles) accompanied by the slightly cuddlier grunge stylings of those "Runaway Train" hitmakers from Minnesota, Soul Asylum.

With this chunk of choppily edited '90s heaven at our disposal, we took comparatively little interest in Larry "Grandmama" Johnson's segment with LL Cool J or Shaquille O'Neal's self-rapped homage to… himself. Instead, it was repeated use of the rewind button to research and immitate the sharp shooting and scappiness of Mark Price, as well as the hornets-nest hair and bum chic fashion sense of the Winona Ryder-loving alt-rock band.

It might be worth noting that Mark's highlight anthem, "Black Gold," was released in 1992 on Soul Asylum's triple-platinum selling *Grave Dancer's Union* LP, and according to legend, was *not*
actually written about Mark Price at all! But at this point, can you really associate it with anything else?

Video 3: Quincy Morgan's Big Moment (2002)

alt=""

swfobject.embedSWF('http://www.youtube.com/v/lKGsCwiRBzE','avreloaded2','368','280','9.0.28','/plugins/content/avreloaded/expressinstall.swf',
{autoplay:'0',color1:'0xFFFFFF',color2:'0x000000',rel:'0',egm:'0',border:'0',loop:'0'},{wmode:'window',bgcolor:'#FFFFFF',menu:'true'},{id:'p_avreloaded2',styleclass:'allvideos'});

Watch Video on Youtube: Quincy Morgan's Hail Mary Gamewinner vs Jags

And finally, in honor of loyal ClevelandFan reader (and Quincy Morgan apologist) Quincy Morgan , it's arguably the greatest highlight in the highlight-lacking history of the new Cleveland Browns—Tim Couch's game-winning Hail Mary heave to Morgan to beat Jacksonville on December 8, 2002 (the video includes the final drive in its entirety).

In a season in which the Browns had already lost two nail-biters to Pittsburgh and an infamous opening day game to Kansas City thanks to Dwayne Rudd's epic helmet toss, this miracle finish in Florida basically put the wheels back on for Butch Davis and company. With Quincy's diving catch secured amidst a confusingly ill-prepared Jag secondary, the Browns escaped Jacksonville with a 7-6 record. And after winning 2 of their final 3, the team snuck in via tiebreak for its first and only expansion era playoff appearance.

Did Morgan really catch the ball? Replays paint a sketchy picture. But Quincy still vehemently claims he did, and the refs obviously agreed-- though it's worth remembering that this was just one year after the absolute officiating debacle of "Bottlegate," so perhaps a little calculated karma was involved. Either way, ask the average Browns fan about the play and he'll probably just say, "Damn, that was 10 years ago? What a miserable freakin' decade of football this has been. Was that really as good as we ever had it? Tim Couch to Quincy effing Morgan?" That said, it was a mighty fine catch, Quincy. Anyone reading this would give his left nut to have made a play like that—except you, of course, because you already did make that play. So, obviously, no nut sacrifice necessary.