Dinner party rock snobs are just asking for the blunt instrument

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SOMEONE at the table said: ''Did you hear the good news? James Blunt is quitting music!'' And someone else said: ''Thank God for that, always hated his stuff!''

Then someone else said: ''Oh, yeah, he's a bloody shocker'', then round the table it went, everyone throwing in their ''hate hims'' and ''he's awfuls'' and ''total craps'', until it got to me and there was a pause.

Everyone was staring, waiting for me to agree, and I stared back with a Thai chicken ball near my mouth. What do I say, what do I say? So I said ''Uhhh … yeah, awful, he's the worst … yeah!''

Then everyone relaxed and smiled and went back to their meals and I sat there trembling, disgusted with myself, because they'd bullied me into saying that - those rock snobs can be very intimidating with their scrawny anaemic faces and squinty myopic eyes.

For the rest of the dinner party, my food just tasted bitter, and it wasn't the appalling overuse of Vietnamese mint. It was the taste of betrayal, of regret: I could hear James Blunt in my ear, his haunting plaintive Kermit-voice cooing: ''Goodbye, my Danny, goodbye my friend, you'd always been the one, you'd always been the one for meeeeee …''

I have no beef with Blunt. I first heard *You're Beautiful* on a car radio on a drive to Point Lonsdale, and I liked it - it's one of those songs you can never get out of your head, like the Beatles' *Yesterday*, and the Peter the Possum Man jingle. And when I first heard *Goodbye, My Lover*, I liked that song too: it had passion, heart, and the sweet, strained vocals of a 12-year-old girl asphyxiating.

Of course, there are better musical artists around, but would Neil Young have made a video clip where he jumped off an ice-covered cliff into freezing water because he couldn't be with a woman he saw briefly on a subway? Nuh, uhhhh. But Blunt did, shirtless and ripped.

Did Lady Gaga ever serve in Kosovo as a British army officer then retire and become a sensitive musician with a villa and a model girlfriend? Nuh, uhhh, but Blunt did, and now he spends summers in Ibiza, chilling on his yacht.

Rock snobs are big bullies, and I'm sick of being a victim. Sick of being pfffed at because I like Barry Manilow. Sneered at for humming a bar of Billy Joel's *Allentown*. Publicly ridiculed when I launched into Spandau Ballet at my parents' 50th wedding anniversary (why the booing, mum and dad? - this is my gift of ''Gold'').

Sick of being humiliated if I mention a fondness for the Gypsy Kings or America or Alanis Morissette - WHY ALL THE ALANIS-HATE? She's Canadian, she redefined ''irony'', and she makes you want to get naked and thank India.

Sick of feeling embarrassed about loving Hall & Oates, the Dixie Chicks and the soundtrack of *Chess: The Musical* - give me that stuff any day over Kanye West, Nick Cave or Mumford & Sons (who are either a band or a plumbing business, and have written the same song 400 times, like variations on a theme by Paganini, with f-words and a banjo).

I should have stood up to those rock snob thugs at that dinner party. Should have stared them in their smirky *Rolling Stone*-browsing eyes and said: ''I'm proud to be a music-unfashionista, I like James Blunt. *He's beautiful, he's beautiful, he's beautiful, it's true. I sang his track, to Point Lonsdale and back, and I love that song, I do. And I like Phil Collins, too*.''