

Welcome to American Mosaic, from VOA Learning English.

I'm June Simms.

On the show today, we play music supportive of the gay rights movement.

We also talk about a new tax that is worrying some people in the American blue jeans industry.

But first, we look at the "explosive" new movie, "White House Down."

## **"White House Down"**

In 1996, film director Roland Emmerich destroyed the White House -- on camera. That was for his movie "Independence Day," in which space aliens invaded Washington DC.

Emmerich is blowing up Washington again in his new movie, "White House Down." But this time the bad guys are terrorists. Mario Ritter has more.

White House Down is an action movie, but it also has an emotional side. Between the explosions and other special effects, the film deals with the relationship between the hero and his daughter.

The hero is John Cale, a soldier who served in Afghanistan. He goes to the White House for a job interview for the Secret Service.

"John Cale, why do you want to be in the Secret Service?"

"I can't think of a more important job than protecting the President."

When a terrorist bomb goes off at the Capitol, the White House goes on lockdown. John is still inside with his daughter Emily. They get separated during all the danger and disorder. John has to act to save his daughter -- and, of course, the president.

Actor Channing Tatum plays John Cale. He needed to be in good shape for the movie, since he was to perform difficult physical scenes. The actor was already known for having a good looking body. Last year, People Magazine named Channing Tatum the "Sexiest Man Alive."

Actor and singer Jamie Foxx plays the president of the United States, James Sawyer. Jamie Foxx says his character is not a modeled after President Obama although the character is African-American.

"We didn't want to do an impersonation of him because we don't want people to think that's how Obama would react in this situation because we don't know."

Roland Emmerich says he wants his film to be like the action movies of the 80s and 90s. It explores the serious topic of American national security. But it's also pure entertainment.

"It's not as fun anymore like it was, like with movies such as Indiana Jones. Raiders of the Lost Ark was one of the most fun movies I have ever seen in my life. These kind of movies are missing (today)."

Critics are mixed about the movie. The New York Post says “you couldn’t ask for a more fun summer popcorn movie.” But the Chicago Tribune calls it offensive and overblown.

## **New Tariff on American Jeans**

Americans love their jeans. These cotton denim pants, generally come in blue or black. They may first have been used as work clothes for miners. Many people link jeans to American cowboys. But whatever their history, American jeans are a big business.

They also sell very well around the world. The “Made in the USA” label alone can lift the price of the pants, especially in Europe. But recently, Europe ordered an additional import tax, or tariff, on premium jeans from the United States. And the American jean industry is protesting.

Peter Kim is the founder of Hudson Jeans and an expert on high-end, American-made jeans. From his second floor office in Los Angeles he can see rows of costly jeans and Italian denim one floor below him.

“I look at denim kind of like wine. You know, you can have the same batch of grapes. How you treat it, how you process it, you can make completely different things.”

Like wine, the cost of jeans differs greatly. One pair can cost \$10; another may sell for more than \$200. Most people cannot pay for the most costly jeans. But, Peter Kim says those jeans still set the style for ones that cost less.

“Like high-fashion, you start in the runway, and there is almost nobody that wears these runway items. But what happens from there is that elements of that gets trickled down to contemporary fashion, mid fashion and, ultimately, into mainstream fashion.”

From the wash, to the fit, to the fabric from Italy, every element goes into the cost of making the jeans and their price for the buyer. And one more element makes jeans costly.

“We produce them in Los Angeles. So, as you can imagine it’s not cheap to produce.”

Mr. Kim says Europeans buy these jeans mainly for the “Made in the USA” label. But, he says that label may go away for some kinds of jeans. The EU’s new 28 percent tariff on American jeans is not the only tax on the product. There is also an existing 12 percent tax. Those high taxes may drive manufacturers elsewhere.

Ilse Metchek is with the California Fashion Association. Seventy-five percent of top American jeans come from that state. She says the new tax could send jobs to other countries and affect the local economy.

“The companies will make their jeans in Mexico, in South America.”

Peter Kim also warns of severe results.

“It’s just trying to decimate all of our business out here.”

American manufacturers fear other countries may see this as a great chance to get into the top-level jeans market.

For now, Peter Kim's Hudson Jeans says it will absorb the costs of the new tax. The company says it will not make buyers pay more for their jeans and will stay in Los Angeles.

But Hudson Jeans and other manufacturers in the United States hope that American and EU officials will find a way to avoid the new tax in coming trade talks.

## **The Sound of Gay Rights**

Supporters of same-sex marriage gathered at the United States Supreme Court in Washington last week. They were celebrating two rulings in support of gay marriage.

Part of the Defense of Marriage Act, or DOMA, was found unconstitutional. As a result, married same-sex couples are permitted the same federal benefits as heterosexual couples. Another ruling cancelled a ban on gay marriage in California.

In the United States, same-sex marriage is allowed in 13 states and the District of Columbia. Many same-sex couples in the country still cannot get married. They might also face discrimination in their everyday lives.

But public support for gay marriage rights has grown, and some popular music expresses support also. Madeline Smith plays some of these songs.

In the song "Same Love," the rapper Macklemore criticizes homophobic language, or expressions of hatred towards gay people.

The lyrics say:

*Gay is synonymous with the lesser / It's the same hate that's caused wars from religion / Gender to skin color, the complexion of your pigment / The same fight that led people to walk outs and sit ins / It's human rights for everybody, there is no difference.*



The song also represents a pop music milestone. It is the first single to make the top 40 charts that promotes giving marriage rights to same-sex couples.

But there have been other popular songs about gay rights. The pop star Lady Gaga is known for supporting the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, or LGBT, community. She sings about accepting people's differences in the song "Born This Way." The song's message is that being gay is a part of a person's identity, and not a choice.

There are also songs that the LGBT community has welcomed anthems, songs of pride. We leave you with one. Here is Diana Ross singing her 1980 hit, "I'm Coming Out."

I'm June Simms. Our program was written by Cathy Weaver and Madeline Smith, who was also the producer.

Join us again next week for music and more on American Mosaic in VOA Special English.