

Half-assed Halftime: Who let the doggs in?

This column is for non-sports fans who would like some enlightenment and hopefully humor without being sports fanatics.

It is perhaps premature to start bitching about the treat we will have in the travesty that is the NFL Super Bowl's annual halftime entertainment, but hey, let's get out in front of the crowd.

In case you are not a brainless teenager who is already aware, this year's extravaganza will feature Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Mary K. Blige, Kendrick Lamar, and (token white guy) Eminem. Be still my beating heart.

Most of the Super Bowl's halftime showcases have been an embarrassment. When there were crowds in the stands who were treated to the Rolling Stones, The Who, and Bruce Springsteen, most in the stadium didn't complain about big-time performers taking up 30 minutes of their lives and loved it. Hey, there's Mick! Give us some more windmills, Pete! Go for it, Boss!

But when it came to watching such eternal superstars (honk!) as Coldplay, Maroon 5, and the unspeakable display by Beyonce and Destiny's Child, the NFL, and its lily-white executives who make such decisions, lost everyone to the idea that *People* magazine's idea of celebrities and good music rules.

These recent displays of bad taste have featured a fake audience of today's 'utes trying to watch the actual football game from a tunnel (or totally ignoring it, because these kids probably couldn't spell Tom Brady), before being unleashed - and acting like they had all done a few lines of crystal meth just before - to do a screaming, hand-waving act that would have embarrassed even early Beatles' fans.

Meanwhile, up in the stands, most of the attendees were either in line for the bathroom, at the concession stand, or having their private bartender stir up a few more martinis in the luxury boxes.

But here's On the Ball and Off the Wall's suggestion to the NFL, albeit too late: Bring back the HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) marching bands for halftime. Trust us, they would considerably shorten the lines at the *pissoir* and hot dogs and beer stands, and perhaps get some of the ultra-rich Big Pharma and Facebook suits in the executive suites to check out the happenings on the field, even if they couldn't understand what all those black folks were doing there in the first place.

The NFL got it right at the first Super Bowl in 1967 by having the HBCU knockout Grambling band do the halftime show along with the University of Arizona. They came back with the elite Florida A&M gang in 1969. And then Grambling again in 1975.

(Help for the uninitiated: Watch the movie "Drum Roll," which is regularly featured on TV. It's as close to the college marching band *sine qua non* of high-stepping, polished horns-swaying, and bring-you-out-of-your-seats clapping and dancing you can ever replicate.)

We have seen one of these HBCU bands live at a Patriots game way back when, as the drummers started their staccato whip-up underneath the stands before marching onto the field in full cry and flash, they drew a roar from the crowd that was immeasurable.

This year's new lineup of hip-hoppers and rappers may actually draw new viewers, but just for the halftime show, which doesn't mean the NFL has now gotten *au courant*. That's called "marketing," boys and girls.

So, not to be too harsh, good luck to Dr. Dre and Co., but let the NFL empty suits loosen up and let the proud and perfect HBCU band marchers and players show their stuff to a national audience currently oblivious to their skill, or even existence. And give me a cut of the royalties when they are finally, and deservedly, recognized. One, two, three, HIT IT!