Thirty years ago, Paul Simon released the album “Graceland.” He recorded it in South Africa, in the thick of the anti-apartheid struggle there. And its musical, cultural and political significance is worth noting. As a lyricist, Simon was always telling stories. His 1986 release was no different. There was “You Can Call Me Al,” a song about a man in a midlife crisis. And the title track begins “the Mississippi Delta was shining like a National guitar.” But what made “Graceland” different was its sound. To an American audience, the music was new, fresh and unfamiliar. At the time, Simon was influenced by South African music, specifically the album “Gumboots: Accordion Jive Hits, Volume II.” Released 30 years ago, Paul Simon’s Graceland album was groundbreaking, controversial, and, some would argue, ahead of its time. Which may be why it is considered one of the greatest albums in American music history.

It was on Thursday, exactly 30 years ago, when the music world was introduced to this: In case you didn’t know, that was the acclaimed Paul Simon, along with famed SNL alum Chevy Chase, in the music video to one of the former’s greatest solo works, “You Can Call Me Al”. It was a song that, oddly enough, was inspired by a misunderstanding at a party between Simon, his then-wife Peg Paul Simon, meanwhile had defied the cultural boycott, and traveled to South Africa to record with South African musicians for his Graceland album.

The interviewer’s contributions are in bold:

So I snuck in and met with AZAPO, the Azanian People’s Organisation, who were like a more radical, violent version of our Black Panthers. [In 1986, Paul Simon recorded tracks for his Graceland album in South Africa, in direct violation of the cultural boycott–Ed.]

And in spite of my feelings about Paul Simon, who we can talk about in a minute if you want to, I said to them, “Listen, I understand your feelings about this; I might even share them, but…” Judi Rever’s account of the Rwandan genocide and its aftermath challenges the official narrative. Sports Page. Apr 09.