

The Perspective on Inflation

For fun, let's say that inflation abates soon, which is entirely possible when the economy cools down under the pressure of rising interest rates. If, for example, monthly increases in the consumer price index (CPI) flatten out, registering zero percent increases for a string of months, inflation would drop to zero in 12 months. That is because inflation is measured by year-over-year changes of the CPI. Inflation would drop automatically as an unchanging CPI registers continuously smaller increases each month from the readings of one year ago, finally reaching zero in 12 months.

That would be fun! The members of the Federal Reserve would rejoice as inflation drops below their target of 2 percent within 8 months. The stock and bond markets would love it too.

By contrast, it would not be fun if monthly increases in the CPI continued at 0.63 percent, which is the average monthly increase during the previous twelve months. In that case, inflation would remain stubbornly high as measured by year-over-year changes in the CPI, remaining in the vicinity of 7 percent and registering 7.83 percent in 12 months.

In that case, the Federal Reserve would have more work to do. In late November, St. Louis Federal Reserve President James Bullard said that the central bank still has a lot of work to do before it brings inflation under control. He said,



*Gray Emerson Cardiff,
Editor Since 1988*

Investment returns in prior years have been calculated independently by the Hulbert Financial Group and concur with ours. From 2000 through 2021, the *Sound Advice* model portfolio averaged a 9.4% annual return versus 5.7% from the S&P 500.

“Thus far, the change in the monetary policy stance appears to have had only limited effects on observed inflation... To attain a sufficiently restrictive level, the policy rate will need to be increased further...”

Bullard argues that 5 percent could serve as the low-end range for where the Federal funds rate needs to be, and that upper-end could be closer to 7 percent. He noted that this range is not what current market pricing expects, which anticipates that the Federal funds rate will top out around 5 percent by the middle of 2023.

Could the market be right? Yes, if monthly increases of the CPI continue to average 0.23 percent, which

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is the average since July. In that case, inflation as measured by year-over-year changes in the CPI, would drop to three percent by June 2023 and stabilize there. This would be a happy scenario too, and is becoming increasingly likely as the Federal Reserve continues to raise interest rates.

Sound Advice Diffusion Indexes

Our **Sound Advice Diffusion Indexes** (page 11) have had a remarkable track record over the last 47 years. During “Aggressive” signals, the S&P 500 climbed an average of 31.5 percent. In sharp contrast, all market crashes have occurred during “Caution” signals. When the stock market was not crashing, the S&P 500 either meandered, climbed moderately, or declined in an extended bear market, recording an average decrease of 0.5 percent.

In addition to telling us the general direction of stocks ahead, these signals are also helpful in telling us where to invest. Most groups of stocks behave quite differently when the economy contracts or expands, and when interest rate trends change. Winners become losers and vice versa. Investing in the right sectors really matters.

The economy has remained resilient this year, even under the pressure of an historically steep rise in interest rates. This is evidenced by our Diffusion Index of LAGGING indicators, which has hit 100 percent every month this year, meaning that all three individual lagging economic indicators have climbed in each five-month span, confirming the “Caution” signal each month. Such confirmation is not necessary for a “Caution” signal to remain in force, but it has revealed extraordinary strength.

Our current “Caution” mode is proving to be accurate once again. This “Caution” signal appeared in November 2021, with the announcement of the end of the Federal Reserve’s quantitative easing (QE) program, and the S&P 500 index has since been in a bear market.

In our January 1, 2022, issue of *Sound Advice*, we warned “*Historically low interest rates and bond yields*

have pumped up stock prices in 2021, but as we roll into 2022, those buoyant forces will be attenuating. By April, these forces will be gone, and the specter of rising interest rates will start haunting the markets.”

What’s Next?

As interest rates continue to rise under the Federal Reserve’s resolve to quell inflation, the economy will soften sooner or later. When it does, our Diffusion Index of LAGGING indicators will drop below 100 percent. At this point, we will turn our attention to our Diffusion Index of LEADING indicators. When the Diffusion Index of LEADING indicators drops to zero, we will have another “Aggressive” signal, and can look forward to another delightful bull market in stocks.

Additionally, as the economy softens, monthly increases in the CPI are bound to diminish. As illustrated above, smaller monthly increases will produce declining year-over-year increases in the CPI, bringing a long-awaited abatement of inflation.

The Sound Advice Risk Indicator

Our **Sound Advice Risk Indicator** (page 10), which compares the S&P 500 index to house prices, also has a remarkable track record of revealing when risk is extremely high in the stock market and when it is extremely low. This indicator has also presaged every major crash or extended bear market, and its track record spans more than 100 years.

Our Risk Indicator was 1.91 for November, which reveals that the risk in the stock market is still historically high.

While the path of the long cycles revealed by the Risk Indicator may be in a certain direction, there are bull and bear markets along the way. Of course, these relatively short bull and bear markets are significant during our investing careers. Even during times when the **Sound Advice Risk Indicator** is above the “low risk” reading, such as it is now, there have been substantial bull markets. We will rely on our Diffusion Indexes to reveal when that will be.

The Sound Advice Portfolio

All of the Sound Advice model portfolio recommendations are made with our current “Caution” mode in mind. Our portfolio is made up of selections that are most likely to prosper despite adverse market conditions or will directly benefit from inflation and rising interest rates.

These selections, as well as their dividend yields, and buy/hold/sell recommendations, are summarized in the table on page 9 and sorted by investment objective categories and then in alphabetical order. Our individual stock recommendations are special situations offering a compelling value proposition. We are also recommending liquid electronically traded funds (ETFs) and mutual funds investing in sectors that are bound to benefit in the months and years ahead from fundamental changes in geopolitical, medical, and economic landscapes.

A Downside Hedge

We employ a downside hedge as part of the portfolio because it dampens volatility, especially during adverse market conditions. The [ProShares UltraShort Russell 2000 \(TWM\)](#) short-sells the Russell 2000 index and is designed to produce two times the daily fluctuations of the Russell 2000 index. A decline of say, 1.0 percent in the Russell 2000 will cause TWM to increase by 2.0 percent. Conversely, an increase in the Russell 2000 will cause TWM to decline in the same fashion.

We are using this hedge because of the inherent weakness in the Russell 2000 stocks in comparison to the S&P 500 stocks. Many of the stocks in the Russell 2000 have negative earnings. During the first three quarters of 2021, the total earnings of the Russell 2000 stocks were actually negative. The total has since turned positive but is still low, which makes the overall trailing twelve-month (TTM) price/earnings (P/E) ratio very high, currently 85. This lofty P/E ratio makes the Russell 2000 index more vulnerable than the S&P 500, offering more downside profit potential.

Another reason the Russell 2000 is more vulnerable is because it is comprised of companies with small capitalizations. Small cap stocks have a higher risk/reward profile. They perform better during good times and worse during adverse conditions. Small caps are more heavily adversely impacted by rising labor costs and inflation.

ETFs for Rising Bond Yields

Until March of this year, the most significant force on the Treasury bond market was the Federal Reserve’s quantitative easing (QE) program. For two years, at the rate of \$80 billion per month, the Federal Reserve purchased more than one-half of all US Treasury securities issued. However, the Federal Reserve stopped buying bonds in March, ending the QE program. Then in September, the Federal Reserve officially started “quantitative tightening” (QT), effectively reversing quantitative easing (QE). This is another mechanism to impede economic activity and quell inflation. The QT program lets Treasury securities mature without the Federal Reserve buying new ones issued to replace them, up to a maximum amount of \$95 billion per month. This lack of Federal Reserve support forces the private sector to buy the replacement securities, which soaks up liquidity from the US economy.

The three ETFs listed below are designed to benefit from rising long-term Treasury bond yields. They differ in the amount of leverage used. You can choose among them depending on your investment objectives and risk tolerance.

[The Direxion Daily 20 Plus Year Bear 3 Shares \(TMV\)](#) uses 3:1 leverage.

[The Proshares UltraShort Lehman 20 Plus Year Treasury \(TBT\)](#) uses 2:1 leverage.

[The Proshares Short 20 Plus Year Treasury \(TBF\)](#) uses no leverage.

ETF Upside Potential

The price action of these ETFs is based on the daily changes in long-term Treasury bond indexes, only in the opposite direction, and then multiplied by the leverage each ETF uses. For example, a decline of say, 1.0 percent in their respective benchmark bond indexes will cause TMV to increase by 3.0 percent, TBT by 2.0 percent, and TBF by 1.0 percent.

So far this year, TMV is up 135 percent, TBT is up 84 percent, and TBF is up 38 percent.

Bond investors traditionally demand a positive real return, which means a yield over and above the inflation rate. Since 1980, long-term Treasury bonds have yielded 2.8 percentage points above the inflation rate. (See the nearby table – Historical Real Rates of Return.) Real yields were lower during the Federal Reserve’s four quantitative easing (QE) programs, which began in 2008, but QE programs are over now. It is important to note that before the QE programs, the average real return was 3.7 percentage points above the inflation rate.

Historical Real Rates of Return

Years	30 Yr Note (Avg. Yield)	CPI Annual Increase	Real Rate
1980 - 2000	8.6	4.3	4.3
2000-04	5.7	2.6	3.1
2005-09	4.5	2.6	1.9
Average Prior to QE programs			3.7
2010-14	3.6	2.0	1.6
2015-18	2.9	1.9	0.9
2019-21	2.1	3.2	(1.1)
Average Including QE programs			2.8

If we assume that inflation simmers down to the Federal Reserve’s target of 2 percent, the yield on long-term treasury bonds should increase to the range of 4.8 percent to 5.7 percent. Of course, if inflation remains stubbornly higher, bond yields will be commensurately higher.

Date	20-Year Bond Yields	ETF Prices		
		TBF	TBT	TMV
11/30/2022	3.94	22.17	31.16	127.96
12/31/2023	4.80	24.69	37.97	168.01
12/31/2023	5.70	27.03	44.48	207.36

The nearby table – ETF Upside Potential -- shows the approximate upside potential of our selected ETFs at the end of 2023 at various levels of long-term Treasury bond yields. The first row shows today’s ETF prices at today’s long-term Treasury bond yields. Note that the approximate price of these ETFs would rise dramatically as Treasury bond yields rise. The erosion factors discussed below are included in each of these approximate projected ETF prices.

The Erosion Factor

ETFs based on daily changes have an erosion factor because they decline slightly faster than they increase with an equivalent change in the underlying index. This factor becomes greater as the leverage of the ETF increases. To gauge this factor, we assume that Treasury bond yields simply tread water, rising and falling by a significant amount, say, 0.03 percentage points (3 basis points) every day, and thus go nowhere. By the end of 2023, TMV would decline by 3.6 percent, TBT by 1.8 percent, and TBF by 0.6 percent.

Special Situations

These are stocks of individual companies that are presenting extraordinary values within their respective industries. Here they are in alphabetical order:

Apple (AAPL) is facing substantial supply disruptions in China as the Covid lockdown there has forced employees to leave the Zhengzhou Foxconn facility. Apple has had close to \$75 billion of sales in China,

which was 20 percent of its sales in its most recent fiscal year. If Apple moves production out of China and cuts jobs there, the communist party may not allow Apple to continue to compete against Chinese smartphone companies there. Earnings are expected to suffer in the current quarter.

AAPL was added to the portfolio in 2016 at \$29.08 per share (adjusted for the 4:1 split in 2020). When the price/earnings ratio (P/E) expanded, we recommended holding but not buying AAPL. High (P/E) ratios anticipate high growth rates which is a disaster waiting to happen. Our buying target is still \$125 per share. At that price, the TTM P/E would be close to 20, which is more reasonable than the current ratio.

Cisco Systems (CSCO) is transitioning from a network equipment seller into a contractual subscription and services company that generates recurring revenues from the equipment it sells, leading to a more reliable income stream. During the past five years, CSCO's annual recurring subscription revenues and services have more than doubled and now represent close to one-half of total revenues.

Cisco is a direct beneficiary of the major new upgrade cycle into the fifth generation (5G), which is able to download data 100 times faster than the previous generation of 4G, because demand will be accelerating for faster equipment. Cisco also has a substantial and growing Cyber Security division. If there was ever an inexorable growth market, cyber security is it.

Crown and Castle International (CCI) is also benefiting from the bright future of 5G wireless technology because a higher density of large and small cell sites and related infrastructure is required. The company is seeing a strong leasing environment as customers deploy 5G with 5,000 small cell deployments expected by the end of the year to meet the growing demand and expects to double them next year.

CCI presents a relatively low risk way of investing in this high-tech area because of its unmatched portfolio of hard assets comprised of 40,000 towers, 115,000

small cells on air or under contract, and 85,000 route miles of fiber concentrated in the top US markets. These assets are difficult to create because of scarce locations in urban areas, zoning and governmental regulations, and sheer cost. As a result, there are high barriers to entry for competitors. Furthermore, income is secure, and growth is assured because these assets are leased to credit-worthy tenants with pre-determined escalating rent clauses.

Management believes its portfolio positions Crown and Castle to achieve its long-term annual dividend per share growth target of 7% to 8%. The company emphasizes sharing its growth with its stockholders. The dividend has been increased every year since 2014.

Intel (INTC) has the size, diversity, industry dominance, and financial health to make a relatively safe investment in a high-growth, and often high-risk business. Intel can leverage new technology into its existing large platform without introducing unacceptable risks. The dividend is well-covered thanks to its strong cash flow. In August, the "Chips and Science Act" was passed aimed at boosting national security by bringing chip production to US shores. The \$52 billion package includes benefits for US companies producing computer chips, including tax credits to encourage investment in chip manufacturing and funding for the innovation and development of other US technologies.

Intel is the only advanced semiconductor manufacturer, based in the US, building state of the art manufacturing plants for the western world. This puts Intel on a long-term growth path to become the nation's premier chip producer.

JP Morgan Chase (JPM) is a good value for what is considered the world's highest quality banking enterprise with diversified businesses and prudent underwriting policies. The annual dividend is \$4.00 for an attractive yield. The trailing 12 months (TTM) earnings are \$11.84. At the current price of JPM, the TTM P/E ratio under 12 is low by historical standards. The company has been taking substantial quarterly charges against earnings to anticipate and cover adverse circumstances that may lie ahead.

Moderna (MRNA) is a pure investment play on Messenger RNA (mRNA) technology. This revolutionary approach is certain to provide solutions for not only vaccines, but cures and treatments for the most deadly and debilitating diseases haunting humanity.

Moderna and Merck recently collaborated to develop mRNA personalized cancer vaccines, whereby cells from the patient's tumor are analyzed and subjected to RNA sequencing to identify mutant and immunogenic epitopes. Within the next 18 months, Moderna is likely to bring a new vaccine to market for the Cytomegalovirus (CMV) which is the leading cause of birth defects in the US. News of approval would be very positive for MRNA because revenues would likely be in the range of \$2 to \$5 billion annually, and it would be a bridge to new horizons from Covid-19 vaccines.

MRNA has crashed from \$495 per share in September 2021. Behind the deflation was the consensus that revenue from Moderna's revolutionary messenger mRNA Covid-19 vaccine, called Spikevax, would be declining in the years ahead. This expectation is already reflected in the current price of the stock, as evidenced by the low price/earnings (P/E) ratio. MRNA has been rising recently, revealing a brighter future is expected.

Valero Energy (VLO) is an oil refiner that makes its money from the "crack spread", which is the profit margin derived from purchasing crude oil, turning it into refined products such as gasoline and jet fuel, and selling those refined products. Valero has the ability to achieve discounts for its crude oil feedstocks because it has the unique ability to refine substantial quantities of a variety of crude oil types, with access to the US pipeline network for delivery to its gulf coast locations. This flexibility and access allow Valero to capture the highest margins among its competitors because it can take advantage of the temporary gluts of crude, whether it's low or high-quality crude, or light sweet (low sulfur) or heavy sour (high sulfur) crude, and receive the best available discounts for its feedstocks.

Environmental policy-driven mandates have led to substantial closures of refining facilities in the US and

Europe in recent years. Shell, for example, reduced its refineries from 54 to 8. Many other companies have responded to government incentives to convert large oil refineries to bio-fuel refineries which produce a comparatively small amount of energy-equivalent fuel. This has reduced overall refining capacity dramatically, leaving China as the world's largest refiner. Clearly, refining shortages are here for the foreseeable future because of the lead time and large capital investment to develop new refining capacity.

Valero is diversifying from a pure oil refiner to a "green" company through its joint venture with Diamond Green Diesel, which is producing renewable diesel at large profit margins. Renewable diesel is made from animal or plant waste material which reduces greenhouse gas emissions up to 80 percent because it only releases as much carbon dioxide as the material originally contained. It does not gel at low temperatures which means it can be easily transported through pipelines.

Cash flow from diesel production turned positive in 2016 and is increasing. Use for sustainable aviation fuel is expected to be a primary escalating demand factor. With diesel prices rising along with other refined products, this has become a more significant growth aspect for VLO. Operating income from the Diamond Green Diesel joint venture was \$212 million for the third quarter of 2022, compared to \$108 million for the same quarter one year ago.

The Best in Biotech ETFs

Biotech companies offer the most explosive profits because they are the source of the world's top breakthrough vaccines and treatments. Their stocks are often volatile, making diversification essential. This can be accomplished by investing in a diversified electronically traded fund (ETF) investing exclusively in a portfolio of biotech companies. We are recommending two top performers. All have pulled back substantially, offering timely buying opportunities.

ARK Genomic Revolution Multi-Sector (ARKG) is an actively managed biotech ETF investing in companies expected to benefit by incorporating technological and scientific developments and

advancements stemming from mapping the human genome. Breakthroughs and advancements have cut the cost substantially of mapping the human genome which is opening new opportunities and putting this sector on the cutting edge of many new innovations.

Virtus LifeSci Biotech Products (BBP) is a passively managed biotech ETF that weighs the portfolio selections essentially equally, as opposed to the more typical practice of weighing selections according to market capitalization. This is an important aspect because biotech ETFs who weigh their portfolio selections essentially equally have been the best performers by far because they have larger investments in smaller biotechnology companies which are acquisition targets for large pharmaceutical companies looking for ways to revitalize their drug portfolios by scooping up smaller companies.

Real Estate

Our three cumulative preferred stocks provide very attractive high yields and are inherently safe because any unpaid dividends must be retroactively restored first before any common dividends can be paid. In addition, these preferred stocks have a “liquidation preference” which must be paid out in full in the event of a liquidation of the company before any proceeds are paid to common stockholders. In all three cases, there is substantial equity in the respective common stocks, evidencing that the market does not expect liquidation to be plausible.

These preferred stocks are trading below the company’s call price (the right of the company to purchase the preferred at a certain “call” price), or have no call feature at all, which is very unusual for preferred stocks. These preferred stocks have a small number of outstanding shares, which is typical for preferred stocks in general. Accordingly, we recommend using limit orders rather than market orders.

Hersha’s Preferred D (HTPRD) was recommended when the stock price was under \$4.00 a share as the pandemic was gaining momentum in early 2020 and the company suspended all dividends to preserve

liquidity. We believed that the eventual resumption and payment of preferred dividends would propel this stock back close to its call price and liquidation preference value of \$25. In April 2021, the company resumed the dividends on its preferred stocks and made up for unpaid preferred dividends of \$1.64 per share annually. The price of this preferred is still substantially below its call price of \$25, offering an attractive discount and a current yield above 8 percent.

Hersha Hospitality Trust is a real estate investment trust (REIT) which owns and operates luxury and lifestyle hotels in urban gateway and regional resort markets. The Company’s 27 hotels totaling 4,125 rooms are located in New York, Washington DC, Boston, Philadelphia, South Florida, and California.

RLJ’s \$1.95 Series A Cumulative Convertible Preferred (RLJPRA)

is the only RLJ preferred stock and cannot be converted into common stock until the price of the common stock is significantly above \$100 per share. This means that the preferred is essentially not callable without an astronomical rise in the price of the common stock (RLJ).

RLJ Lodging Trust is a hotel investment company that owns premium-branded, high-margin, focused-service and compact full-service hotels. The Company’s portfolio consists of 96 hotels with approximately 21,200 rooms located in 23 states. During the first half of this year, operating revenue from its hotel portfolio recovered beyond the pre-Covid level, and the company no longer has financial covenants requiring minimum financial performance measurements.

This is an opportunity to lock in a safe extraordinary current yield close to 8 percent. It is hard to imagine that this yield will remain this high indefinitely, which means the price of this preferred stock will rise significantly.

RPT Realty 7.25% Series D Cumulative Convertible Perpetual Preferred (RPTPRD)

is simply not callable by the company. This means that we can lock in a very high yield for as long as we

desire. It pays an annual dividend of \$3.62, for a high current yield. This is the only RPT preferred stock for RPT Realty. This is a convertible preferred stock, convertible into 3.796 shares of the common stock (RPT) at the holder's option, which offers long-term upside growth potential.

The dividend on the common stock was resumed for the first quarter of 2021 and increased in the fourth quarter. That means the preferred dividend is more secure because common dividends cannot be paid without paying the preferred dividend.

RPT Realty is a real estate investment trust (REIT) that owns 49 shopping centers across the eastern US, consisting of urban-infill neighborhoods, and power center properties with national chain store tenants, market-leading supermarket tenants, as well as a strong lineup of smaller national retailers.

Third Avenue Real Estate Value Investor Fund (TVRVX) has an advantage over other mutual funds during recessions. Unlike the typical REIT, management will go to cash when asset prices are generally high. Cash is preserved for scooping up opportunities. It is a global real estate fund which means it is not confined to US real estate with low cap rates which translate to high valuations. Management looks for growth more than current income by focusing on real estate operating companies which, unlike REITs, can reinvest profits back into the business. Management also searches for opportunities in different aspects of a real estate company's capital structure by investing in senior debt in addition to equity. Management is also very price conscious, especially in relation to net asset value. Just as we do at *Sound Advice*, they eat their own cooking – they invest their personal assets into their funds.

Consumer Staples

Invesco S&P 500 Equal Weight Consumer Staples ETF (RHS) invests consumer staple stocks within the S&P 500 index. Consumer staples are those unexciting products we use every day without much thought, ranging from food, beverages (including

alcohol), household goods (including cleaning supplies), hygiene products, and tobacco. These are products that people are unable (or unwilling) to remove from their budgets regardless of their financial situation. The nature of these products makes this sector defensive and much less vulnerable to recessions and bear markets.

US Infrastructure

The bi-partisan infrastructure bill enacted in November 2021 will benefit both PSCI and RTM during the next 10 years.

Invesco S&P SmallCap Industrials ETF (PSCI) is based on the S&P SmallCap 600 Capped Industrials Index which is designed to measure the overall performance of the securities of US industrial companies with small capitalizations (caps). These domestic companies are engaged in the business of providing industrial products and services, including engineering, heavy machinery, construction, electrical equipment, aerospace and defense, as well as general manufacturing. They will reflect the positive impacts more strongly than larger companies from an increase in infrastructure spending. Small cap construction companies are also typically domestic companies operating inside the US. It is likely that a government-sponsored program will stipulate that US companies are to be employed to perform the services. Even absent such stipulations, construction projects tend to employ local companies as subcontractors even when general contractors are national companies.

Invesco S&P 500 Equal Weight Materials ETF (RTM) invests in the common stocks that comprise the S&P 500 Equal Weight Materials Index. The portfolio contains prime examples of basic materials companies outside of the oil and gas industries. Basic materials companies are bound to benefit substantially in the years ahead with increased infrastructure spending.

Portfolio Summary Table

This table is updated and live on our website:
www.soundadvice-newsletter.com

Income with Growth	Symbol	Price / NAV	Yield	Action	Limit
Hersha Hospitality Trust - Preferred D *	HTPRD	\$19.59	8.37%	BUY	\$25.00
RLJ Lodging Trust - Preferred A *	RLJPRA	\$24.70	7.89%	BUY	\$28.00
RPT Realty 7.25% Preferred D *	RPTPRD	\$51.25	7.07%	BUY	\$52.00
Growth with Moderate Income					
Cisco Systems	CSCO	\$49.70	2.98%	BUY	\$52.19
Crown and Castle	CCI	\$141.43	4.43%	BUY	\$148.50
Intel	INTC	\$30.06	4.62%	BUY	\$31.56
Invesco Consumer Staples ETF	RHS	\$173.35	2.63%	BUY	\$182.02
JP Morgan Chase	JPM	\$138.18	2.89%	BUY	\$145.09
Valero	VLO	\$133.62	2.93%	BUY	\$140.30
Growth					
Apple	AAPL	\$147.99	0.55%	HOLD	\$125.00
Genomic Revolution Multi-Sector	ARKG	\$32.50	0.00%	BUY	\$34.13
Invesco Basic Materials ETF	RTM	\$170.85	1.60%	BUY	\$179.39
Invesco Small Cap Industrials ETF	PSCI	\$92.36	1.06%	BUY	\$96.97
Moderna	MRNA	\$175.88	0.00%	BUY	\$184.67
Third Avenue Real Estate Value Investor *	TVRVX	\$20.73	0.00%	BUY	\$23.00
Virtus LifeSci Biotech Products	BBP	\$48.39	0.00%	BUY	\$50.81
ETFs for Rising Bond Yields					
Direxion Daily 20+Treasury Bear Shares 3X Leverage	TMV	\$127.96	0.00%	BUY	\$134.36
ProShares Short 20+Treasury - 2X Leverage	TBT	\$31.16	0.00%	BUY	\$32.72
ProShares Short 20+Treasury - No Leverage	TBF	\$22.17	0.00%	BUY	\$23.28
Hedges					
ProShares UltraShort Russell 2000	TWM	\$14.59	0.00%	BUY	\$15.32

Notes to the table: The right hand column is the highest recommended price limit for purchases.

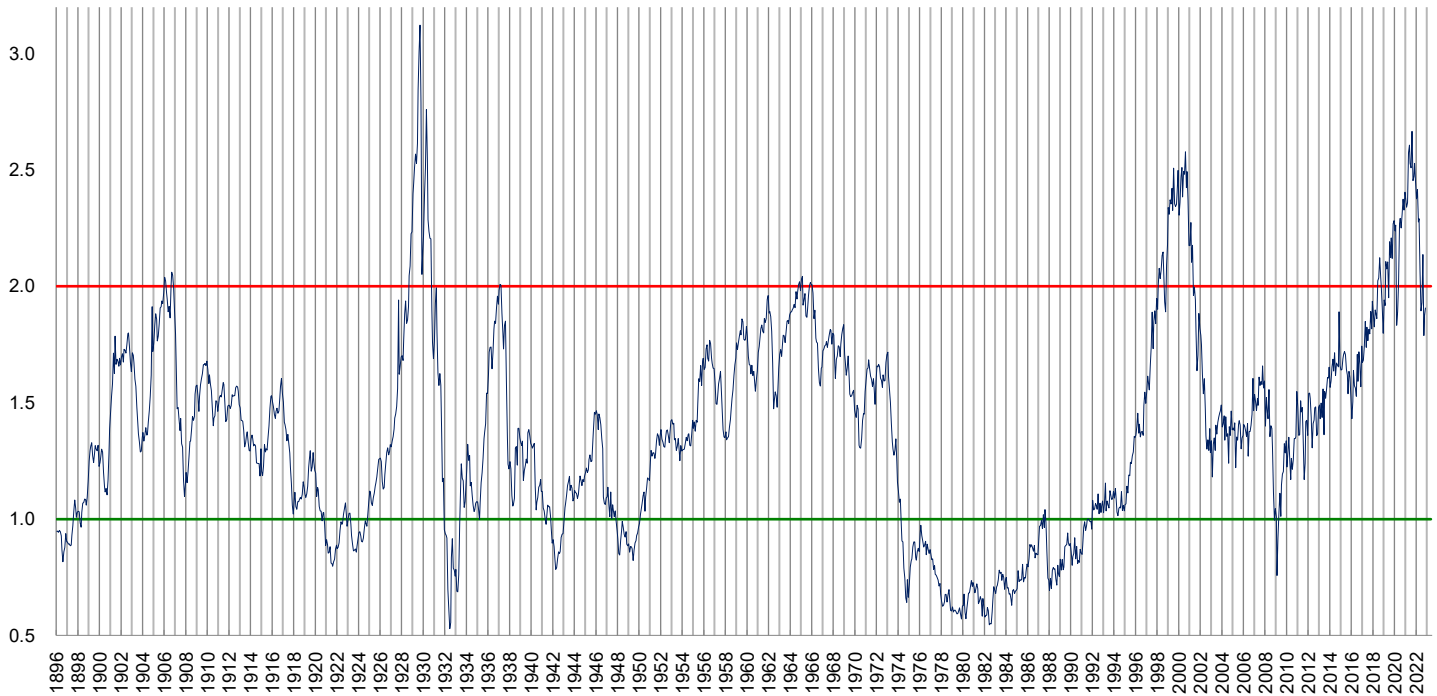
* It is not possible to offer live pricing.

General Comments: Our statistics are based on the assumption that \$10,000 is invested in each position. When a new position is added, we assume the same \$10,000 amount is invested in the new recommendation. When we recommend adding to a particular position, as we have done over the years, we assume another \$10,000 is invested again in that position.

If you are picking and choosing, you can focus on the sector of the portfolio that matches your investment objectives. Alternatively, you may have a higher degree of comfort with certain industries, funds, or stocks because of past experience or your profession. In that case, you may want to invest more heavily in one sector, or in one or more individual recommendations.

As always, broad diversification will temper volatility, add to safety, and improve long-term performance.

Capital Competition: Real Estate versus Stocks: The SoundAdvice Risk Indicator



There are few forces that are more important to a market's destiny than the amount of capital that is available to it. In a normal situation, capital will flow easily between markets as their underlying conditions change. But if a market becomes dangerously superheated, it will absorb a larger proportion of available investment capital than economic conditions and market demand can justify. This change will be reflected not only in the rising market's prices but also in the prices of competing markets, which will be lower than their underlying fundamentals would indicate they should be. Over the last 120+ years, we can see this titanic struggle between the stock market and its foremost competitor for investment dollars: real estate.

To reveal this phenomenon, we have set up an equation based on the ratio of the S&P 500 Stock Index to median price of new houses for each month over the last 100+ years. This equation exhibits an elegant financial minuet as each market has taken turns outperforming the other.

As we look at the historical data, we find that there is a range in which the price disparities are so strong that they are too great to be accounted for by the fundamental economic conditions underlying each market. Every time prices get into these danger zones it has meant that the prices in one market or the other have gone too high, and that they are in imminent danger of falling.

We label this new tool the **Sound Advice** "Risk Indicator," since it will allow us to locate the point at which prices are so high when compared to competing markets that they have come loose from their moorings and are on the verge of declining or under performing the other market.

What is too high? When stock prices are very high relative

to house prices, the **Sound Advice** Risk Indicator will rise over the line marked 2.0, revealing a high-risk time for stocks. In contrast, when the indicator drops below the line marked 1.0, it means that it is a very low-risk time to buy stocks. Notice from the chart how the **Sound Advice** Risk Indicator has oscillated back and forth, revealing the ongoing struggle between Stocks and houses for investment capital. We have labeled these long vacillations Supercycles.

But though an investment beginning with \$25,000 in 1895 could have made money being in either stocks or housing, had an investor followed the signals of the **Sound Advice** Risk Indicator, he or she would have made \$685 million versus \$24.5 million by simply holding stocks through the ups and downs, or 26.5 times more money.

A brief walk through history shows just how reliable this indicator is. The first recorded time the Risk Indicator rose above 2.0 was in February 1906, after the eight-year-old Dow-Jones average doubled since 1903. The market peaked in September of 1906. A massive sell-off in October would later be labeled the Panic of 1907. Stock prices trended downward for 14 more years until the end of 1921 while, searing inflation after World War I boosted house prices 48 percent. The combination of falling stock prices and rising real estate prices forced the Risk Indicator to fall below 1.0 in 1920, just in time for the Roaring 20's when stock prices tripled. Then, in October 1928, the Risk Indicator rose above 2.0 again. On Tuesday, September 3, 1929, the Dow

The New York Times

"Cardiff's equation reveals an elegant financial minuet as each market takes turns outperforming the other."

peaked at 318.17. The October crash marked the beginning of a decline that lasted until July 8, 1932. Houses had declined only by 15 percent compared with the 85 percent loss in stocks. The relative superior performance of houses caused our Risk Indicator to fall below 1.0 at the beginning of 1932.

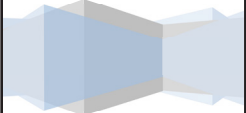
As America's GNP began posting positive gains and with 46 percent growth in three short years, stock prices would triple. Then the Risk Indicator crossed 2.0 in March 1937. This time, the signal came only one month after the zenith in stock prices. As stock prices retreated 50 percent, house prices remained relatively steady, causing the Risk Indicator to fall below 1.0 again in June 1941, within 9 months from the bottom.

As U.S. corporations expanded to meet growing demand, and the economy came to a rolling boil during the Eisenhower years, the stately rise would multiply stock prices by ten times until November 1964, when the Risk Indicator crossed over 2.0 again. The stock market would continue to climb into 1968, and then crashed into late 1974, wiping out the inflation-adjusted gains scored by investors since 1954.

However, a switch to an investment in houses would avoid all that and double in price by the time the next signal came for stocks in May 1974, as the Risk Indicator fell below 1.0 again, as the Dow careened below 700.

It would not be until March 1998 when the Risk Indicator would cross 2.0 again, after stocks were up by more than tenfold. The Dot-Com bubble would push stocks higher into early 2000, but then began another 50 percent retracement. A switch to houses would produce a 44 percent gain through the end of 2008 while stock prices were lower by 17 percent. In February 2009, with the Dow careening below 700 once again, the Risk Indicator quietly dropped below 1.0 to 0.77 as the S&P tumbled under 700. Since then, the stock market has delivered stunning gains as the S&P 500 has quadrupled. For the sixth time in the last 125 years, the Risk Indicator rose above 2.0 again in July 2018.

With the latest median house price at 455,700 in September 2022 (the latest data) and with the S&P 500 averaging 3,917.49 in November, the Sound Advice Risk Indicator read 1.91.



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Business Cycles and Stocks: The SoundAdvice Diffusion Indexes

The Risk Indicator reveals long macro cycles. An analogy can be made to the way radio waves work. Long radio waves have frequencies which are assigned to various radio stations, allowing you to distinguish them on your radio. Riding along the path of these long waves are short waves that produce the sound you actually hear on a particular station. These short waves are like the bull and bear markets revealed by the Diffusion Indexes.

While the path of the long cycles revealed by the Risk Indicator may be in a certain direction, there are bull and bear markets along the way. Of course, these relatively short bull and bear markets are significant during our investing careers. Even during times when the Sound Advice Risk Indicator is above the "low risk" reading, such as it is now, there have been substantial bull markets. We will rely on our Diffusion Indexes to reveal when that will be.

The data we need is contained in the leading and lagging economic indicators. We have hand picked the most sensitive of these economic indicators to produce our "Diffusion Indexes" which function with amazing accuracy as predictors of the birth of cyclical bull and bear markets.

To construct our *Sound Advice* Diffusion Indexes, we observe changes in each of our selected indicators over a five-month period, and take the percentage of those increasing.

When the *Sound Advice* Diffusion Index of LEADING Indicators drops to zero, it is time to buy stocks aggressively, regardless of how negative the atmosphere may be. This is not just an empirical coincidence. It is also logical. In order for all of the leading economic indicators to be giving off a zero value compared to five months before, it is nearly certain that the soft economy is providing an atmosphere for stable or declining interest rates.

This Diffusion Index gave us a zero reading in December 2008, close to the bottom, officially giving us an "Aggressive" signal. That signal came at a time when the Risk Indicator was below 1.0, which revealed that Supercycle 5 came to an end, and that Supercycle 6 was born.

The *Sound Advice* Diffusion Index of LAGGING Indicators gives "Caution" signals when all three of its individual lagging economic indicators rise above their respective levels of six months earlier, providing a 100 percent reading. This reading

Track Record of the SoundAdvice Diffusion Indexes

During the last 47+years, after each “Aggressive” signal, the S&P 500 climbed an average of 31.5 percent. During “Caution” signals, the S&P 500 either crashed, meandered, or climbed, recording an average decrease of 0.5 percent.

Aggressive	S&P 500	Caution	S&P 500
Sep-74	68.12	Apr-76	101.9
Jul-76	104.20	Dec-76	104.7
Oct-78	100.58	Jun-79	101.7
Nov-79	100.00	Oct-83	167.7
Aug-84	164.48	Jun-85	188.9
Jul-86	240.18	Aug-87	329.4
Feb-88	258.13	Jun-88	270.7
Mar-89	280.00	Mar-93	449.7
Mar-95	493.15	Dec-98	1,141.0
Jun-00	1,429.40	Dec-00	1,320.3
Jun-03	974.50	May-05	1,191.5
Jun-06	1,276.66	Mar-08	1,325.4
Dec-08 (1)	865.58	Apr 10 (2)	1,197.3
Sep 10 (3)	1,122.08	Jun 12 (4)	1,359.8
Sep-12 (5)	1,437.82	Nov 14 (6)	2,044.6
Mar-15	2,079.99	May-15	2,111.9
Sep-17	2,492.84	Feb-18	2,705.2
Mar-20 (7)	2,761.98	Nov 21 (8)	4,667.4
Ave +/-	31.5%		-0.5%

Quantitative Easing (QE) Overriding Signals

- (1) QE-1 announced 4 months before Aggressive signal
- (2) QE-1 terminated into existing Caution signal
- (3) QE-2 announced but already in Aggressive mode
- (4) QE-2 terminated into existing Caution signal
- (5) QE-3 announced, changed to Aggressive mode
- (6) QE-3 terminated into existing Caution signal
- (7) QE-4 announced, changed to Aggressive mode
- (8) QE-4 terminated into existing Caution signal

reveals that the US economy is strong enough to put upward pressures on interest rates.

A Powerful Overriding Force

Most of the time, the Diffusion Indexes are excellent detectors of the natural business cycle and a path to the science of making money in the stock market. However, the forces of the natural business cycle can be dominated by extraordinary changes in monetary policy during emergency situations.

The COVID-19 pandemic was the most recent example. In mid-March 2020, the Federal Reserve declared the institution of its fourth “Quantitative Easing” (QE) program whereby it dropped the Federal Funds rate to zero and commenced buying massive amounts of US Treasury bonds. With its mighty power, the Fed drove down interest rates and infused massive amounts of liquidity into the US economy. The money supply mushroomed.

At times like this, we need to ignore readings from the Diffusion Indexes. Interest rates are dropping by the Federal Reserve’s mandate, just as if the Diffusion Index of Leading Indicators had plunged to zero. Conversely, whenever the Federal Reserve declares an end to its QE program, we return to our Diffusion Indexes to follow their readings. If the Diffusion Index has moved to a “Caution” signal during the QE program, we should follow that reading. This is the most likely pattern of events because the economy will likely have strengthened in order for the Federal Reserve to end its QE program.

The impact of the Federal Reserve’s four QE programs on existing Diffusion Index signals are noted in the footnotes under the track record table.

Current Status

In November 2021, the Federal reserve announced the end of its latest QE program. Accordingly, the “Caution” signal became effective from the Diffusion Index of LAGGING Indicators.

The latest reading was zero for the Diffusion Index of LEADING Indicators but was offset by a 100 percent reading from the Diffusion Index of LAGGING Indicators..

Our next “Aggressive” signal will come when the Diffusion Index of LEADING Indicators drops to zero as long as it is not offset by a 100 percent reading from the Diffusion Index of LAGGING Indicators.

Sound Advice versus the S&P 500

