

Myers Music Experience, Track #3

Contributed by Stephanie R. Myers

"Let us close our eyes;
Outside their lives go on much faster.
Oh, we won't give in,
We'll keep living in the past."

Despite the above quote, I don't like Jethro Tull. I should probably make that clear. But when I heard the song on the classic rock station at the laundromat the other day, I fully identified with the impulse to revisit personal history. It's pretty easy to go on default mode, after all.

I've been thinking a lot lately about my music. The kind I've written? Nope, hardly (unless it involves my extensive kazoo compositions). I'm talking about the kind of music collection accumulated -- much like High Fidelity's Rob Gordon -- over the years. The kind of collection where every piece of music, no matter what the format, is as important as the next, the kind you somehow can't bring yourself to let go of, the kind that tells a story -- the kind that sort of becomes your story, in a way.

This was the root of the flea market-scouring I'd been doing since I was eight years old for records (LPs, by the way, had long fallen out of favor by then), often searching for something I was unaware of at the moment. In High Fidelity, Rob tells a friend he's reorganizing his record collection autobiographically and I immediately got it. (I'd done that too at one point, after all.) I also didn't think that anything was strange about Rob in the slightest until someone remarked that he was such an obviously damaged character.

Whoops. I suppose I identified a little too strongly.

I didn't really realize that my near-obsessive collecting of CDs, vinyl and cassette tapes (c'mon, some live bootlegs are just better on tape) was even an issue until a friend was at my apartment helping me organize my room and asked -- as tactfully as she knew how, bless her heart -- if I was planning on keeping all of my CDs. I must have given her an utterly blank look because she followed it up with the kind of look that said, "you realize you've totally ran out of space to put them, right?"

She was right, of course. There are literally no more shelves for the things. Frankly, I didn't really have space for them when I moved into my Brooklyn apartment two-and-a-half years ago, and I certainly hadn't gotten rid of any in the meantime. And my rate of accumulation of music is sort of insane, something that I will readily admit to. Even to this day, if I'm not unearthing old 45s and LPs at local record stores and stoop sales, I'm bringing home a ton and a half of promo CDs from the local music magazine I write for.

And inexplicably, I can't get rid of any of them.

Still, I didn't realize that perhaps I had a little bit of an OCD problem until it was mentioned. In my mind, there's a perfectly acceptable reason to keep every piece of music I've ever accumulated, barring, of course, the completely kitsch-based reasons I chose to keep relics such as the Seals & Crofts' "Unborn Child" 45. Mostly, my collection reminded me of old friends; of guys I'd lost touch with; of some great night involving a note-perfect conversation with a friend over Guinness -- and, of course, a permanent, tangible reminder of the corresponding song that came on the jukebox right at that moment that somehow immortalized everything.

It's simple; there's always gonna be that song.

So whenever I get the urge to do a massive cleaning overhaul and realize it can't involve getting rid of even a fraction of my music collection, I think I've sort of come to terms with it. Sure, some of us don't care to do scrapbooking -- but we have a way to remember anyway.

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