WEEKEND *LOOKING BACK*



LUCAS CASTILLO-WEST

COLUMN

Lend Me Your Ears: Not all the goodies are oldies

// BY CIELO GAZARD

No, you were not born in the wrong generation. I too was once a music snob — the kind that people called an "old soul." I declared my superiority over the latest pop music fads, thinking there was nothing better than good ol' boomer rock music. My scope of music and history was very narrow. I put up boundaries and limited what I defined as "good" music. After what should've been enough study of music history to validate my taste, I realized I was wrong to think that every goodie was an oldie.

It's a common trend for music fans "born in the wrong generation" to look at the past with rose-tinted lenses. The know-it-all snob tends to remember only the crème de la crème of their favorite decade. There was plenty of bad music in the 1960s. Not every artist was making "Pet Sounds" or "Revolver."

In middle school, I used to think all modern pop music was inherently bad and formulaic. I looked down on my fellow sixth graders whose taste revolved around 2016's Top 40. This view I held in the sixth grade was reactionary and myopic. The vast majority of what I was listening to was anything with a guitar solo from a year that started with the numbers 1 and 9 succeeded by the numbers 6, 7, or — if I was feeling ambitious — 8. I thought that my music taste was superior to everyone else's. I could name the release date of every Beatles album and all the tracks on them in order. No other middle schooler could do that. I peaked early.

At some point, every young music fan believes that they have superior music taste. This is endemic among rock fans, who feel morally superior because they are the only one in their friend group who can tell the Beatles apart. I ate up every biographical detail — both the random and scandalous — about all of my favorite musicians and spewed them out as fun facts at any opportunity. I was a sponge for information about my favorite songs and musicians. As a result, I got into 20th century history in general. I wanted to know the history that informed the musicians I loved. Studying history made me appreciate the music I grew up listening to even more.

On that historical journey, my younger self made a shocking discovery: Not everyone in the 1960s liked the Beatles. Scrolling through '60s Spotify playlists gives off the impression that progressive anti-war songs were all the rage back then. The bestselling single in the United States in 1966 was not something by the Beatles or the Beach Boys, but rather "The Ballad of the Green Berets" by Staff Sgt. Barry Sadler. The pro-war, patriotic ballad sold 9 million copies. Not everyone believed in the mantra "Make Love, Not War." Not every college-aged kid was burning a draft card or a bra.

Self-described classic rock nerds need to know about great music not written and performed by a bunch of white guys. It's quite unfortunate that many music fans write out black artists' contributions to rock music. On their early records, the Beatles covered girl groups like the Shirelles and the Marvelettes. The Rolling Stones' first U.S. recordings were at Chess Records in Chicago, where Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf recorded years before them. These artists openly showed their love and appreciation for black musicians, and it's only right that rock fans do the same. Just because a Motown hit wasn't written by its performer or doesn't have a guitar solo doesn't mean it's not a timeless classic.

After I decided all good music came from the 20th century, I tried to imagine being born in the "right" generation. I realized it wouldn't have been easy to have such a diverse musical palate. If it weren't for the internet, I couldn't have listened to some of my all-time favorite artists. The number of musicians I've discovered from YouTube video recommendations is enormous. What if I didn't have internet access? The only way I'd find new artists would be rummaging through LPs at a record store. Most of my favorite artists are from the United Kingdom. What if my local record shop only sold American artists? AM/FM radios were playing the top hits. What if I wanted to hear the b-side to a single I didn't own or wanted to listen to an up-and-coming band on the West Coast? Today, I can easily listen to an artist's entire discography on Spotify. Imagine waiting for "Sgt. Pepper's" to come out!

I wouldn't be the person I am today if I didn't get into the Beatles when I was 7 years old. There's a high chance I wouldn't be studying history and English at Yale if it wasn't for my rock music nerdiness. When it comes to studying history, there is always some new narrative or new perspective to discover and analyze. The same thing goes for getting into older music. There'll always be an album from decades ago that I've never listened to and one day will listen to on repeat. Do I still think I listen to the best music and have the best music taste in the world? I'm not in a position to judge anyone else's taste.

Part of the beauty of being a music fan is knowing that you will never listen to every song ever written. This is the beauty of exploring any piece of media: Films will go unwatched, books will go unread. I actively try to uncover what I call "musical blindspots" — artists and genres that are not in my regular rotation. Some discoveries have become instant favorites. Music snobbery should go away when realizing there's more to discover. On the musical Mount Everest, I'm nowhere near the summit.

Contact **CIELO GAZARD** *at cielo.gazard@yale.edu.*

PERSONAL ESSAY

Across the exit door

// BY LILY SCHECKNER AND MELISSA ADAMANTIDI

It went like this:

It is Aug. 19. I — Melissa — am in my room in Vanderbilt Hall. I hear screaming. I hear laughter. I look over at the mysterious exit door, the one that separates me from the screaming and the laughter. I ignore the sign that reads: "Open only in case of emergency." I am a risk taker. I knock.

And at the same time, I — Lily — am in the middle of watching a new episode of "The Summer I Turned Pretty" with my suitemates. I hear a knock. Who's knocking? Is this a noise complaint? Why is it coming from the wall? "COME IN!"

Oh, how thankful we are for that knock.

That knock led us to each other. It led to late-night debriefs and shared closets. Study sessions and movie nights. Emotional support on the worst days and ideas traded back and forth on the best ones. It led to mutual friends, birthday celebrations, formal preparations, endless conversations, future trips to Athens and Barcelona. It led to sisterhood.

College friends can come about in the most fateful of ways: tripping over each other at an orientation-week suite party, commiserating over some niche interest or family trauma, holding someone's hair back after said ill-advised suite party. Proximity — our foundation — is hardly the strangest way we met people during those first few hazy weeks at Yale. And yet, we've always thought about our exit door as something magical and destined, like the wardrobe in Narnia. It provides us with a too-easy method of transportation between our suites, yes, but our shared wall also has a whimsy of its own.

More times than we can count, we've FaceTimed each other on a Sunday morning, after yet another ill-advised party, evaluating the merits of the Prohibition era from our respective couches. Were we technically less than 10 feet away from each other? Yes. Were we being lazy? Also yes, but there's just something special about accepting a FaceTime call only to hear the echoes of our own voices on the line. It's straight out of a sitcom.

This past year has been our very own season of "Friends," only with significantly fewer square feet of living space and no important male characters. The theme song has felt especially resonant — particularly the lyrics about your job being a joke, being broke and your love life being "DOA."

"I'll be there for you" hits too.

Yale can feel too big to take in all at once; it's extraordinary in the moments when you zoom in. We build communities — circles within circles within circles — until things and places and people that began as foreign become familiar.

These circles make us feel unique but less lonely, diachronically connected to generations before and after. We are pioneers, and we are following a path long ago drawn. An older sibling paves the way for a younger one, an avenue around the corner longs to be traversed and our exit door is forever waiting to be opened.

But it was never really ours. In the blink of an eye — or two — freshman year is over, and with it our time in the "megasuite," as we call it. One of us will go to Pierson, the other will go to Morse, and suddenly we won't be able to hear each other through the walls when the dreaded Sunday morning FaceTime rolls around. It is this ephemerality of it all that calls you to open the door. Our time on Old Campus may be fading, but certain things that came out of it make us feel, in the words of Stephen Chbosky, infinite.

This year, we are the keepers of the exit door. Next year, it will be someone from the class of 2030, and someone after them and someone after that. We think of first years in the 1900s. Likely, we will never know their names or stories. But we know their curiosity, that feeling that dared them to knock. There have been years of students just like us, looking at the very same door. Some hated the people on the other side; others loved them. Some never opened it. We did.

Contact **LILY SCHECKNER** *at lily.scheckner@yale.edu and* **MELISSA ADAMANTIDI** *at melissa.adamantidi@yale.edu.*

SUDARSHAN KRISHNAN



WEEKEND RECOMMENDS:

MAKING A SHARED PLAYLIST WITH YOUR FRIENDS FROM HOME