

Riding the notes back in time

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There are pivotal moments in our lives that stand out clearly.

We recall vividly all the births, deaths, special occasions and vacations. We remember tragedies with equal clarity.

These can be defining moments in our life's journey.

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of other smaller 'Kodak moments' that we recollect fondly. Many are often associated with music or songs -- pieces that we like, or popular tunes at the time

My car windows opened for the first time recently, as the warm weather beckoned one afternoon. Being quite content, with the sun shining on my face, Neil Young's 'Rockin' in the Free World' came on the radio. For those four minutes, and for some time thereafter, I felt good. I was blessed and simply soaked up the vitamin D, and those lyrics.

Human beings are unlike any other species on the planet in terms of their love of music.

While some parrots like to groove to the music and some dogs pretend they can sing, the fact is only humans have perfected this art. Its only purpose is joy.

Our love of musical notes begins very early, perhaps even prior to birth. Pleasant, familiar sounds are absorbed and put a smile on the faces of wee ones.

Music, in whatever form you like, has become the most interesting and far-reaching medium on the globe. Every culture, every human, can appreciate and enjoy a sound that moves you.

While I can enjoy the top 40, my heart lies in those classic rock tunes of the 1970s, '80s and even '90s.

The passing of icons like Prince and David Bowie have seen a resurgence of decades-old classics. But you didn't have to tell a generation of 50-somethings about the importance of such things. We already knew.

Lately, I've been searching the Internet for a classic used car. I don't know why, because I can't afford one. But seeing muscle cars from the 1960s and '70s make me smile. Looking at custom Karmann Ghias or VW Beetles makes me want to dash outside, open the windows and blare some of those famous rock ballads.

My first 'cool' car was a 1970 Camaro RS and the first thing I did was install a cassette player and some decent speakers in the rear deck. I added a power booster from Radio Shack, and voila, I was rockin'!

Such were the times.

While I don't remember the summer of '69 as Bryan Adams does, I sure can appreciate a lot of '80s hits when I started to drive, and had full control of the radio.

Who out there remembers summer hits like 'Hurts So Good' (John Cougar Melancamp); Gabriel's 'Sledgehammer'; Eurythmic's 'Sweet Dreams', Human League's 'Dont You Wan't Me', Springfield's 'Jessie's Girl', Madonna's 'Papa Don't Preach', Survivor's 'Eye of the Tiger', Tears for Fears' 'Shout', and of course, Prince's 'When Doves Cry'.

I'm sure we all have our favourites that literally make us jump out of our seats and want to dance. And if we come across them by

accident on the radio, we grin, from ear to ear, perhaps rekindling some past joys.

I remember, as one of my first assignments as a journalist, interviewing Larry Gowan who appeared in Bolton. In a weird coincidence, my future wife Kim was at that very concert.

He was promoting his 1985 album *Strange Animal* that featured the title track, "Criminal Mind, Guerilla Soldier" and "Cosmetics." He followed up this success with "Moonlight Desires" in 1987. And in the 1990s, he released *Lost Brotherhood*, recorded at Metalworks Studios in Mississauga, which contained "All the Lovers in the World."

All in all, Gowan was a pretty decent star from Ontario and became a chart-topper for more than a decade.

He made an appearance at Brampton's Rose Theatre recently, to a sold-out crowd, undoubtedly all there to get their fix of nostalgia.

I must say his voice was spot-on and he looked better than his 59 years would indicate. The two-hour show was not only a mini-rock concert, but a journey back in time.

That's what music is meant to do - to stimulate the senses and tickle those pleasure spots of the brain.

The crowd was enthusiastic, albeit a bit toned down. Many, sporting grey hair and tattoos, weren't spring chickens anymore, yet you wouldn't know it from their reaction.

Gowan has remained quite active since those early, memorable albums.

In 1997 during Styx's tour, Gowan performed as a supporting act for Styx at Montreal's Molson Centre and Quebec City's Colisée.

He also played with Styx in Vancouver as the opening act for Def Leppard in 2007.

Tommy Shaw admired his talent and vibrant stage charisma, and called him in May 1999 asking him to tour with them for 53 dates, replacing their lead singer Dennis DeYoung. Since then, Gowan's classic hit, "A Criminal Mind", is often played by Styx.

Styx's 2003 album *Cyclorama* was Gowan's first studio album with the band. Gowan sings two songs on *Cyclorama* - "Fields of the Brave" and "More Love for the Money" - both of which have an easily recognizable Gowan signature. He then continued recording with Styx for their 2005 album, *Big Bang Theory*.

When I was a teen, Styx was another of my favourites, mostly because they sounded great booming from my car speakers.

I couldn't get enough of Mr. Roboto, Renegade, Come Sail Away, Too Much Time on My Hands, Foolin' Yourself, Lady and Babe.

We can't relive the past. But visiting it once in a while is just fine.