





SECOND & FLUME

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New oldies

When I was in high school and started seeing bell-bottoms in fashion magazines, I realized some of my mom's old clothes were actually cool. I would've cringed had she actually worn them, but of course me raiding her closet during that sixties and seventies renaissance of the nineties was perfectly acceptable.

Mom had great taste in music and an enviable record collection. When I was little, she'd do housework to all of her favorite "The" bands: the Beatles, the Stones, and the Byrds. I'd stare at the album covers and memorize the lyrics to my favorite songs.

There was one that always made me cry: "Different Drum" by the Stone Poneys. It was my dad's record. I don't know if it was Linda Ronstadt's soulful voice, the introspective lyrics or the languid melody, but for some reason that song about a woman who wasn't ready to settle down gave toddler me all the feels.

It was really fun when, years later, my friends started listening to the music I'd long loved. Don't get me wrong, we were very much into the popular artists of the time—the Cure, Red Hot Chili Peppers, and TLC—but there was something mesmerizing about the "oldies."

Indeed, the appeal transcended the arts.

The world was still analog, but barely. The first President Bush had already taken the country to war in the Middle East—the opening salvo to our "endless wars" in the region—and kids my age suddenly felt a connection with the past, albeit we never had to endure a military draft like our parents did with Vietnam.

I suppose it was a little odd considering how many of us were latch-key kids who largely raised ourselves. Point is, we were searching for something, though I don't think we ever found it. Not collectively, anyway. People labeled us as disaffected and cynical, but I think we were simply young and honest.

Cut to 2023 and it's reality check time. As has been noted in many a recent meme, the sixties are to the nineties what the nineties are to today—time-wise, anyway. Case in point, this year marks three decades since Nirvana released *In Utero*. Oof.

If you're a Xennial like this columnist—a younger Gen Xer, that is—you might feel quite, well, old right now. You're welcome. Interestingly, Millennials and Gen Z have embraced a lot of the things from our adolescence. Nineties music and fashion—and even that abomination of a hairstyle known as the mullet—have cycled through the cultural zeitgeist repeatedly over the last decade.

Seems they're searching, too, and I certainly can't blame them considering the economic (read: Great Recession), political (read: MAGA fascism), and societal (read: wars, racism, drug addiction, and homelessness) ills plaguing the nation through much of their young lives. We're talking about humans who've always lived in an era where a palm-size computer is an extra appendage for basically everyone over the age of 16.

Wisely, many Gen Zers in particular started a trend of using so-called "dumb phones," similar to the old Siemens I used in the early aughts, to curb the urge to scroll and its associated negative effects. That has to be quite the come down for people who were smothered by digital media since infancy. I applaud those self-aware enough to make such healthy choices.

This forty-something isn't going to join any Luddite clubs, but even I can relate. During a recent social media hiatus, I felt more present, became more active and even slept better. I especially listened to more music, including the vinyl collections that both parents handed down to me. Those records definitely hold up, though the Stone Poneys no longer make me cry.

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