

A little too soon for golden oldies

Pre-sets on your radio? Phonograph, 8-track, or iPod? Ready or not, your musical midlife crisis is looming.

By Keith Forrest '88

Keith Forrest '88 lives in Edinboro, Pa., with his wife, Kris, and his sons, Kameron and Joshua.

When I was a student at Glassboro in the 1980's, I thought I would always be cool. After all, I was program director at WGLS-FM, the hip college radio station. We played alternative music and we knew all the up-and-coming bands before anyone else did.

A few years ago, I borrowed my father-in-law's van to move some furniture. My wife Kris and I howled when we saw the cassette tape collection. It was filled with all sorts of dentist office music: John Denver, The Turtles and Peter, Paul & Mary. When we turned on his car radio, a similar group of golden oldies came spewing out of the speakers.

The other day Kris and I sat in our living room listening to a 1980's music station with our 2-year-old son, Kameron. "Oh, my God," I suddenly exclaimed. "This is a golden oldies station, isn't it?" My wife reminded me that I am the father of two sons. How cool could I be?

I tried to console myself by concluding that the Psychedelic Furs, The Cure, The Clash, REM and U2 are cooler than the music my father-in-law keeps in his

van. But I am not so sure that is how my sons will see it a few

years from now. They'll probably

say, "Dad, you listen to old music." I'll try to regale

them with stories of my days as a Glassboro D.J. But it probably won't do any good.

Every generation goes through this. We get locked into the music of our youth, and the memories tied up in those songs. There are at least 500 from the 1980's that conjure up specific Glassboro moments for me. "Born in the USA" by Bruce Springsteen always makes me think of freshman year in Mimosa Hall. Two guys who lived at the end of the second floor

hallway played Springsteen 24 hours a day. I am not exaggerating: their boom box blared "The Boss" for 28 solid weeks in 1984-1985. Looking back on it, they should probably be in the Guinness Book of World Records.

Another song that always slaps me back to the 1980's Glassboro is "Let's Go Crazy" by Prince. It was one of those songs we jammed to every Thursday night, the big party night at Glassboro in those days.

If I had received payment for each time I did "The Bird" with my friends, I wouldn't be working right now. We did that goofy dance to the not-so-clever song by The Time about 1,000 times. We would flap our arms and attempt to saunter across the dance floor just like Morris Day, The Time's lead singer. Looking back on it, maybe we weren't so cool then, either.

Kris's college musical memories are filled with mixer songs from her sorority parties. Rob Bass and Bobby Brown appear to have been the official musicians of her sorority. Kris spent much of her college years gyrating to songs like "Joy and Pain" and "My Prerogative."

Perhaps it's time to face our musical midlife crisis: We upgraded our cassette tapes to CDs, but our taste in tunes is trapped in the 1980's. Someday my daughter-in-law will borrow my car. She and my son will no doubt giggle maniacally when they see my CD collection of Men at Work, Madonna, Billy Idol, Journey and other assorted 1980's acts. But then I will be able to find comfort in the fact that my son will face the same treatment from his kids.

The college experience ultimately becomes a tangle of selectively vivid memories. We remember all-night cram sessions, but not the score we received on the test. We remember the sights and sounds of a legendary party, but not where it was held. We remember the emotion of graduation day, but not the advice doled out by the commencement speaker. Yet, all college memories echo with the beat of the music we played in our dorms and apartments, cars and bars, for dances and dates. And before we know it, the music of our college days becomes the music of our life.



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