

If there is a particular sort of music that means a lot to you personally, could you describe in words why this is so? Are there aspects of musical experience for which words fall short?

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Music plays a central role in people's lives and has done so for a long time. In one way or another it touches all of us though sometimes in remarkably different ways. Often people like to put music into classes such as country-western, classical, pop or R&B to name a few, and then you often hear people say "I listen to such and such music". We seem to be very fond of labelling music and putting it into categories.

I have never been able to categorize my music taste. I have never learned to read music, or how to analyse it but it has always played a large role in my life. There was always music playing in our house when I was a child and I still have music around me most of the time to this day. I remember *Chariots of fire*, which was on the first cassette I received the last Christmas my parents were together, and to this day it is bittersweet to hear it. I remember watching sport with my parents with the sound turned down and music playing instead. I remember lazy Saturday afternoons lounging around the dining room table with my family for hours listening to music, eating and talking together. I remember waking up sometimes in the middle of the night with my step-father blasting music through the house and we would just get up, join him, and dance. We just knew there would be no sleeping for several hours to come when these moods hit him, but it was never unwelcome. I remember hours of sitting and listening with him to strange and weird music that he listened to while he was in university in the early seventies all the while thinking that no-one makes music like that anymore.

I listen to all kinds of music, though I dislike having to decide if a song falls into this or that category. I just listen and often within 5-10 seconds decide whether I like the music or not. Majority of the time if I like the first seconds the song gets added to my favourites, but this does not happen very often. I cannot explain what songs will appeal to me or why. Something about the melody or beat will appeal to me and then it is as if the song becomes part of me. If I have to listen to a song several times to acquire a taste for it then I will often only like the song for a short period of time. After several weeks, months or even a year or two, I might enjoy the song and then discard it wondering why I had ever liked it. But songs that I like right away stay on my list of favourites forever.

Strangely enough the music that appeals to me the most I prefer to listen to alone. After thinking about this, I believe this is because other people or circumstances cannot then put their stamp on the music, if this makes any sense. My feelings and thoughts about the music stay my own, untouched by other people's thoughts, ideas and feelings. I can listen to the music anytime and experience my own feelings in private. At the same time I have plenty of

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songs that remind of people and places in from the past and present. And it can be so giving and comforting to listen to a song that reminds me of a place or person that I love that I can't be with at that moment. I have never enjoyed traditional music from home as much as during the periods I have lived overseas. Particular songs make my cry from homesickness, others full me with pride for my country and people, and others remind me of times gone by and help keep the memories fresh.

In the end music is a very personal experience and very difficult to explain or analyze. Trying to explain what music means to me means putting my thoughts and feelings "out there" and exposing a part of myself that is not something I would like to share with anyone. Music affects people in different ways and this is not a good or bad thing. Though teenagers or sometimes even adults may use music to express an idea or to fit into a certain group, such as adopt a "heavy metal" look and behaviour this does not mean that I cannot listen to that type of music because I do not dress like that or "belong" to their group. That is the joy in music, the experience belongs to one who listens to it and nothing can take that away unless you allow it to.