

My Musical Roots?

by Rev. Joe Dirt - Friday, March 01, 2024

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A love of music is something that *Señora* and I share. An important inflection point in our courtship story, *Señora and the Curmudgeon*, was our second date, an indoor Bluegrass music festival taking place in St. Louis that first winter of our romance.

Shared Musical Loves

Bluegrass seems to be a style of music that you either love or you look at the other person thinking, “WTF.” Obviously, we both are fans. Our other commonality in the realm of music is that we both have very eclectic taste, liking a wide array of musical styles. Although, our favorite genres are folk music and a style of roots fusion music that is referred to as [Americana](#).

Musical Talent

One key musical difference between the two of us is that she is musical. She was trained as a classical pianist, and at one point of her life was very good. Now due to life circumstances and health, she is out of practice. However, she continues to sing chorally, currently down to just two choirs. She will tell you that music is her life. Not only does she sing, but singing in these choirs helps fulfill her strong social needs.

I, on the other hand, am very good at tuning the radio. My latest music endeavor was to set up our joint collection of 600 CDs on a home server utilizing open source media server software, [Emby](#), so that they are playable on our various Wi-Fi connected devices. I am not a big fan of letting Pandora or other apps curate my music for me. I am a big fan of supporting musicians by buying their CDs, especially lesser known acts. It always amazes me how many really talented individuals never make the big show, but that is a blog for another day.

Gospel Music

One of my musical predilections that always strikes my agnostic heart as a bit weird is that I love gospel music. For some reason it just talks to me. I trace this back to my mother's mother who the whole world knew as Mama Carr. She had one of those boxy, plastic radios so common in the 50s and 60s, a big dial on one side for tuning, a small dial on the other side for controlling the volume, one speaker, and no one had ever heard of such a thing as FM radio. While I never took the back off, it would not have surprised me if there had been tubes inside, although this is about the time transistors radios started coming out.

She frequently had this radio turned on, playing low, and it seemed to me that it was always tuned to a gospel station. I always found Mama Carr somewhat perplexing in regards to religion. While she was religious, I believe Assembly of God or some other very fundamental religion, I never recall her going to church. I started these musical musings the other day while I was listening to some Bluegrass. It made me wonder if, at least part of the time, she did not have Bluegrass music playing. I doubt I was musically sophisticated enough at that age to really key in on the style, but I do wonder if that is where my fondness for this genre started.

Another source of my love of gospel music was the amount of time I spent in country churches of Oklahoma. My Uncle Dutch was a Baptist minister, and I have many fond memories of attending services he preached in small churches around eastern and central Oklahoma. Of course, there was much congregational singing of hymns at these events, perhaps my favorite part.

Fantasia Rocks

I have an even earlier childhood memory of music, and that is watching cartoons on a 50s era television, the ones with the almost round screens. It was very common in this period of television and of the movies to score cartoons with classical music – think [Fantasia](#). In my memory I seem to have loved the music as much as the cartoons, at any event it has stuck with me. I had a bit of a reputation when I worked at places where I had my own office and could play a radio softly, folks talked about my elevator music. In reality, I had the radio tuned to the local classical station. I have never quite understood folks seeming abhorrence for classical music. I find it great music to work by. Frequently when *Señora* and I are in the car together that is what we listen to.

Parental Influence

I know that my father was a big [Patsy Cline](#) fan, but I cannot dredge up a memory of him playing or listening to music. Perhaps one of many siblings can. But if he listened to anything, it was probably country, although he did seem to enjoy Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, etc when they were on the telly.

My mother was a different story. At least when I was younger up to my teen years, it was not uncommon for her to put on some big band music from her youth and jitterbug around the house as she was doing chores. I chalk that up for my appreciation of music of that era, and is probably where my appreciation of jazz started. Her other favorite genre was musicals/show tunes. I remember her playing [Hello Dolly](#), [My Fair Lady](#), among others. For some reason, she was especially fond of *My Fair Lady... the rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain*. Her playing *Hello Dolly* so frequently may be why I am a [Barbra Streisand](#) fan to this day.

On the other hand, when I would visit them on a Saturday after they both had retired, they would insist on watching [Lawrence Welk](#). While I have eclectic taste, they did not extend quite that far.

Rock Of Course

Having graduated high school in 1970, I came of age in the golden era of rock-n-roll. When it comes to rock-n-roll, IMHO, you cannot beat the 20 years starting somewhere around 1960.

Country

I was never a big country music fan, with the exception of [Dolly Parton](#), a true American treasure, until the mid 90s. The FM radio went out on my pick-em-up truck and all I had was an AM radio for two years. My choice of stations were religious programming, talk radio or country music. One station specialized in the older country music and I grew to appreciate this style also. It may also have been because this was when I was going through my divorce. Country music is famous for achy-breaky heart songs so they were “talking” to me. One I especially remember is [Brooks & Dunn’s Neon Moon](#).

Truly Eclectic

One of the things that the Emby software does is assign a genre to each song in your collection. Or you can override it and enter your own assignment. Emby has assigned 72 separate genres to the songs on our 600 CDs – Eclectic indeed.

No real point to my ramblings, but thinking about Mama Carr and her gospel music sent my down the path of wondering how I came to appreciate so many different styles of music, why my acoustic tree has so many musical roots.

And so it goes.

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