

The Streets Are Alive with the Sound of Music

Liana M. Silva

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Abstract

Hello, cyberworld. I have returned. The past few weeks I took a hiatus from blogging because I a) gave birth to a pretty awesome baby girl b) moved halfway across the country c) started searching for a job. Yes, plenty of craziness.

Keywords

Music (Subfield), Article, Listening, Memoir, Music, Place And Space

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Hello, cyberworld. I have returned.

The past few weeks I took a hiatus from blogging because I a) gave birth to a pretty awesome baby girl b) moved halfway across the country c) started searching for a job. Yes, plenty of craziness. But the dust is starting to settle down, and I am back in action. And just because I have been invisible online doesn't mean I have stopped thinking about sound. In fact, far from it.

Anyone who has moved can tell you it can be exciting but it can also be jarring. For one, everything that was familiar to you has disappeared all of a sudden. The street you took to go to work every day has been replaced by a bunch of new streets around your neighborhood that go... somewhere. And if you listen to your local radio stations, like I do, you lose your favorite radio station/stations when you go somewhere new. (Yes, I still listen to the radio. I refuse to pay to listen to radio stations, and I only listen to my iPhone in the car if I'm in the mood for a particular song/artist or I'm going on a long car ride). That's another thing that falls out of place when you move: your programmed radio stations. Very much like when you drive into a new city far from home and you press the scan button, looking for something to listen to, but fumble around for a good ten minutes or so.

This time around I was spared that exercise when my boyfriend—who drove my car halfway across the US to our new home town, Kansas City—programmed my radio stations for me. When I got into my car the day after we arrived, I clicked on FM radio and found that the stations that were programmed were not the ones I had set up in Binghamton, and Radio Station #1 was playing a slew of my favorites. I was thrilled! I drove down our street and headed to the supermarket, singing along in my head. This station made me feel immediately at home, this station with its mix of nineties hits and Top 40 singles. In fact, my bf told me, when I mentioned how this station rocked my world, that he set it at number one because he knew I'd like it.

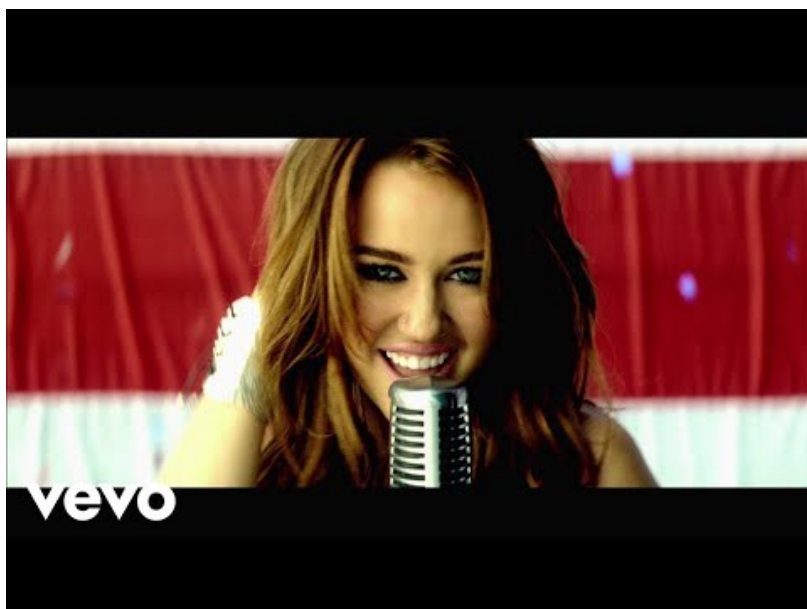
What puzzles me now, however, is this: the selections this stations plays don't remind me exactly of Binghamton or of Puerto Rico or of New York. These are not songs that I relate to a particular place, but nonetheless they made me feel "at home" in Kansas City. I couldn't pinpoint what about this station's music choices made me feel like that. It could be that music plays such an important part in my life, and this station's hits are songs I recognize as my own. When I think of my teenage years I think of Beck's *Mellow Gold* and how my best friend recorded it on tape for me. (I still have that tape, by the way!) When I think of commencement, I think of Chamillionaire's "Riding' Dirty"; a friend of mine kept on singing it while we walked into the Events Center because I had revealed to her earlier that I had been pulled over about five times in my life, all of them in the town of Vestal NY in a two-year span. When I think of my daughter, I can't help but think of The Beatles' "In My Life." Finding a music station that plays a lot of the music I like is a pretty sweet deal.

That feeling of being "at home" is complicated by the fact that these songs are not only mine. If you think about it, these songs are special to me, but aren't really special in general. This is popular music, hits you'd hear anywhere. And if I listened to this radio station in, say, Phoenix Arizona, there wouldn't be much of a difference. I could listen to this station's music with my eyes closed and be anywhere. So with this station comes a sense of displacement at the same time that it roots me in Kansas City. Listening to this radio station made me feel like I hadn't just

arrived here. It seemed like I had already been here for years, listened to these songs and sung along to them on the way to work. I didn't feel lost all of a sudden. But at the same time these songs are not exclusive of Kansas City, or of Binghamton or of Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico. Is it the memories I attach to these songs? Maybe, but not all of them. (Believe me, Montell Jordan's "This Is How We Do It" is just a song with a catchy beat to me.) I believe it has to do with how Top 40 radio (or popular music stations in general) has the ability to send an artist and his/her music into each of our homes nationwide. Is it all in the ear of the listener then? Is the difference between listening in Kansas City and listening in Phoenix located in me?

Regarding the video: My bf reminded me of this song, and Miley's experience of listening to songs that make her feel at ease. I figured it was the perfect accompaniment to this post. Good luck getting this earworm out of your head.

LMS



<https://youtu.be/M11SvDtPBhA>

