

I'm not the World's Most Masculine Man

I remember enduring the excruciating pangs of sound produced by my Dad playing *Aja* by Steely Dan. For too long, I could not fathom why one would ever listen to this dated music over a much more elegant and contemporary song like “Fergalicious”. This theme continued with artists like Billy Joel, the Beastie Boys, and Bob Dylan. There were a few songs, though, that my Dad and I were able to hear ear to ear on. I glanced at my Dad in excitement whenever a song by The Cranberries came on, and, embarrassingly, prepared to sing along with my Dad to “Lola” by the Kinks as soon as I recognized the opening chords with which I became all too familiar. I mention these artists not to demonstrate some sort of grand repertoire that somehow separates me from others, but rather, to establish a connection. A connection with you. That’s because music, in my life, has served as a peacemaker by connecting me with others.

In March of 2015, my father was diagnosed with lymphoma. Daily trips to visit him in the hospital were often supplemented with music. My own phonic medication. Modern artists, including Vampire Weekend’s “Everlasting Arms,” held me tight to their chest, keeping me warm for a while. During this period I explored music more than I ever had. I came to realize just how much I had been missing by limiting myself to music with particular expressions. Music allowed me to feel something different, not as an escape, but as a new lens to view my situation through. I was able to experience, feel, and learn from these artists who chose to spill themselves, with brutal honesty, into their music.

Despite my Dad’s untimely passing, I can still connect with him by listening to his favorite songs. Even I, the one time child who would only listen to songs with a strictly upbeat melody, learned to love the brazen harmonica that seemed to always make an appearance in rock from the ‘70s. I sing along to “Lola” alone now, but that does not change the impact that song

has on me. In fact, it amplifies it. I doubt The Kinks considered how their song might affect the relationship between a kid and his father, and yet now I have a hard time listening to the song without shedding a tear. Music brings me peace by relating me to others. It teaches, it entertains, and most importantly, it connects.