

DON'T STOP THE MUSIC!

LINE-DANCING WAS STARTED BY WOMEN WAITING TO USE THE BATHROOM.



Illustration: Tim Tripp

GEE, US GEEZERS REALLY ARE sentimental old coots, aren't we? I have recently been boring my Facebook friends with my 50 favourite rock songs of the 60s. That's a time when my children assume – and viciously opine as much – that you could still spot a triceratops roaming through the bush in Glenfield, where I grew up.

I don't mind such insults. I just smile a toothless grin and hum something from *MacArthur Park* and that soon clears the room of malcontents.

Music, it is said, has charms to soothe a savage breast.

I don't know that you'd call my breast savage these days. More of a pirate's dream of treasure – i.e. sunken! But it doesn't take much to bring a tear to my languid eyes nowadays as I flip through the back catalogue of the *Small Faces* and *Joni Mitchell* and realise these guys were my poets.

Whether it's Mitchell's glorious anthem to lost love and the coming snows: "*the warriors of winter give a cold, triumphant*

shout,” ... or the Faces’ arcane tribute to Oxford: being on “*the Bridge of Sighs, under dreaming spires, to Itchycoo Park, that’s where I’ve been,*” ... I feel I grew up in an era when great lyrics entered my chest and gave my heart a squeeze.

There’s a scene in the movie *Amadeus* where Mozart’s great rival Salieri picks up a piece of Wolfgang’s music and he says ...

“On the page it looked nothing. The beginning simple, almost comic. Just a pulse – bassoons and basset horns – like a rusty squeezebox. Then suddenly – high above it – an oboe, a single note, hanging there unwavering, till a clarinet took over

honeyed-tones of Roy Philips in *Misty* ... the naked scathing of Steppenwolf in *The Pusher* ... or the gut-searing harmonies of Lisa Fischer, in that achingly brilliant version of *Gimme Shelter* – these threads are woven indispensably through the lives of us boomers.

And that music *does* calm my savage breast. Some days it’s the only thing that helps my search for answers to the primitive, mindless savagery that exists in some parts of the world.

Never stop the music!

Who knows when one may be hearing the very voice of God?

Someone’s bound to ask: why am I comparing the restless, paradigm-busting 1960s with the works of the great composers? Why? Because music is a rite of passage. Especially when we’re still young (in our puberty, for preference). Music has power to assault our senses, validate rebellion and, yes, even soothe the savage breast.

and sweetened it into a phrase of such delight! This was no composition by a performing monkey – this was a music I’d never heard. Filled with such longing, such unfulfillable longing, it had me trembling. It seemed to me that I was hearing the very voice of God.”

Someone’s bound to ask: why am I comparing the restless, paradigm-busting 1960s with the works of the great composers? Why? Because music is a rite of passage. Especially when we’re still young (in our puberty, for preference). Music has power to assault our senses, validate rebellion and, yes, even soothe the savage breast.

Whether it’s the mad shake of Keith Moon’s mop in *Substitute* ... the

So, my friends, if you happen to pass by my porch and see an old coot with his headphones on, his eyes dim, his gait unsteady but his face betraying ecstasy ... don’t interrupt me.

As the young Jewish kid in some movie I saw once told his date’s father as he dropped him home, “*I’m not ready to get out of the car just yet.*” The quizzical dad cocked his head and wondered why?

“*Because ...*” said the boy, pointing at the car radio, his eyes begging everyone else to shut up, “*Sir – nobody interrupts Mr Sinatra!*” 

ROB HARLEY IS A CELEBRATED KIWIS JOURNALIST, DOCUMENTARY-MAKER, STORY-TELLER, HARLEY-DAVIDSON-RIDER, AND AUTHOR OF ‘THE HIGH VOLTAGE HEDGEHOG’