Music Virgin No More

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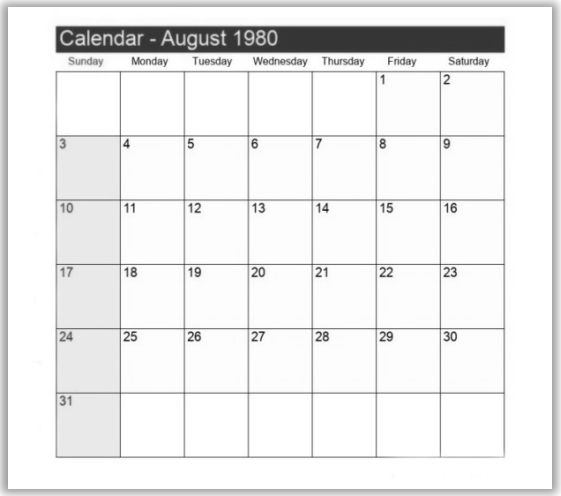


In August 1980 there was . . .

No internet
No MP3s
No cable TV
No iTunes
No compact discs
No Much Music or MTV
No digital music downloads
No wireless speakers
No satellite radio
No smart phones
No loop pedals
No GarageBand
No social media
No Auto-Tune
No Pro Tools
No YouTube

But there was Top 40 AM radio!

AN INTRODUCTION

I recently came across an article on The Verge website that discussed a New York Times analysis of Spotify data with the headline: "Our musical tastes peak as teens." The article highlighted that the crucial period for shaping musical preferences is between the ages of 13-16. Men typically being 14 when their favourite song was released, and for women, it's 13.

For over forty years, I was convinced that the songs I still enjoy in 2025 were purely due to their quality and my excellent taste. However, recent scientific research has shown the influence of the brain in shaping our musical inclinations.

If asked why we are drawn to the music we heard as teenagers, my initial response would have been due to the abundance of time we had to listen to music during that period. I believe that there are two key phases in life when our musical tastes are significantly influenced: during our early teens when we have few responsibilities, and later when we are exposed to diverse influences in college or university. Campus stations often play indie bands that mainstream stations won't touch. Their DJs have the freedom to create their own playlists like AM and FM station DJs did until the industry went corporate. When that occurred, gradually, the same set of songs would be played on all the company-owned stations across the country. This continues today with the multi-media conglomerates that have become the McDonald's of the airwaves, meaning no matter where you go everything sounds identical.

When it comes to the music baked into my budding teenage brain in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this book

will prove the aforementioned scientific findings: I had no choice but to love artists as varied as Bruce Springsteen, Queen, Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers, Blondie, Rick Springfield, AC/DC, Kate Bush, Donnie Iris, The Vapors, The Pretenders, Dolly Parton, Duran Duran, and Adam And The Ants for decades to come.

It's doubtful many people can recall what their favourite song, album or group was on their birthday in 1981, but I can and with the utmost certainty. I can go one step further and tell you the order of the singles, albums and groups I was playing on my turntable the week ending Saturday, March 21, 1981 – my 15th birthday!

My 15th birthday record player shaped cake made by my mom.

My secret? By revisiting Chart #31 of the 106 weekly music charts I meticulously compiled alone in my bedroom on a portable green Smith Corona typewriter between August 1980 and August 1982. A period I can trace the evolution of my musical tastes and relive the era that continues to shape my personal playlists today. These charts also reflect my personal journey as a young record collector,

starting earnestly in 1979 and that can be viewed week-to-week in real-time.

These one-of-a-kind charts are as significant to me as re-reading a diary decades later. Every page tells a story and evokes fond memories of a simpler world during a vibrant period in music history.

Note: Access all 106 weekly charts, plus year-end charts from 1979-1990, at the website link at the end of this book.

The following pages are an expanded companion piece to the podcast I co-host with sound engineer Jason Cabanaw titled, ***Music Virgins No More***. A few years ago, I revealed the existence of my charts to Jason who is 20 years younger. As he will admit, his take on the music of the 1980s was a wasteland of drum machines and synthesizers. However, whenever we'd get together I tried to convince him otherwise, saying, "No, you have to listen to this song!" Or, "No, this artist was fantastic!" Each show we discuss a new chart(s), spotlight songs and artists, and debate what was so great – and bad – about the music that became the soundtrack of my life.

Like discovering a long-lost time capsule, this book aims to take readers on a nostalgic journey through memoir and musical history, exploring the songs, albums, and artists that influenced a generation. Enjoy!

John Schlarbaum
June 2025

CHAPTER ONE

A bit of background.

In August 1980, I was 14 years and 5 months old, living in the small farming community of West Lorne, Ontario, Canada, with a population of approximately 1,000. My family had relocated there in 1969 from a city northeast of Toronto, three hours away. My father was a minister while my mother was a homemaker, church choir leader, and ran a cake decorating business on the side. I had two siblings, an older brother by 4 years and an older sister by 3 years. Growing up in the 1970s was influenced by religion with rules against drinking, smoking, playing cards, and attending dances. Sundays were observed as a day of rest with the exception of watching one hour of *The Wonderful World Of Disney* television show.

Despite this, music was still a significant part of our lives. My parents had a collection of generally accepted inoffensive contemporary singers and groups. My mom, who had a musical background as a singer and pianist,

loved Jim Nabors' records. While my brother wasn't a huge music enthusiast, he did have greatest hits compilations of The Beach Boys, The Rolling Stones, as well as a few Foreigner and The Cars LPs. In 1978, I remember him playing the latest Pablo Cruise 8-track tape in his bright yellow Chevrolet Vega. On the other hand, my sister preferred artists like Andy Gibb, Barry Manilow, Rod Stewart, and The Bay City Rollers. However, neither of them delved into record collecting like I did a few years later. Unlike some lucky kids whose older siblings introduced them to bands like The Beatles or Led Zeppelin at a young age, I discovered my own musical tastes independently.

With that said, as I reflect on the national music charts from the past, I realize that 1976, when I was 10 years old, was the year when I first started paying attention to certain songs and bands playing on my tiny AM transistor radio. Hits like *(Shake, Shake, Shake) Shake Your Booty* by K.C. & The Sunshine Band, *You Should Be Dancing* by The Bee Gees, *Silly Love Songs* by Paul McCartney & Wings, and One Hit Wonders *Torn Between Two Lovers* by Mary MacGregor and *Afternoon Delight* by The Starland Vocal Band, caught my ear. By 1979, I had begun buying 45s and LPs and even created my first year-end charts, similar to the lists published in RPM Magazine (Canada) and Billboard Magazine (USA). It featured the Top 35 Singles (*My Sharona* by The Knack at #1) and Top 10 Albums (*The Long Run* by The Eagles at #1). However, it wasn't until eight months later that I decided to start my own personal weekly countdown. The date: August 23, 1980.

During that time, music industry charts were determined by factors such as radio plays, record sales, listener requests, and station discretion. My criteria for chart eligibility were pretty simple:

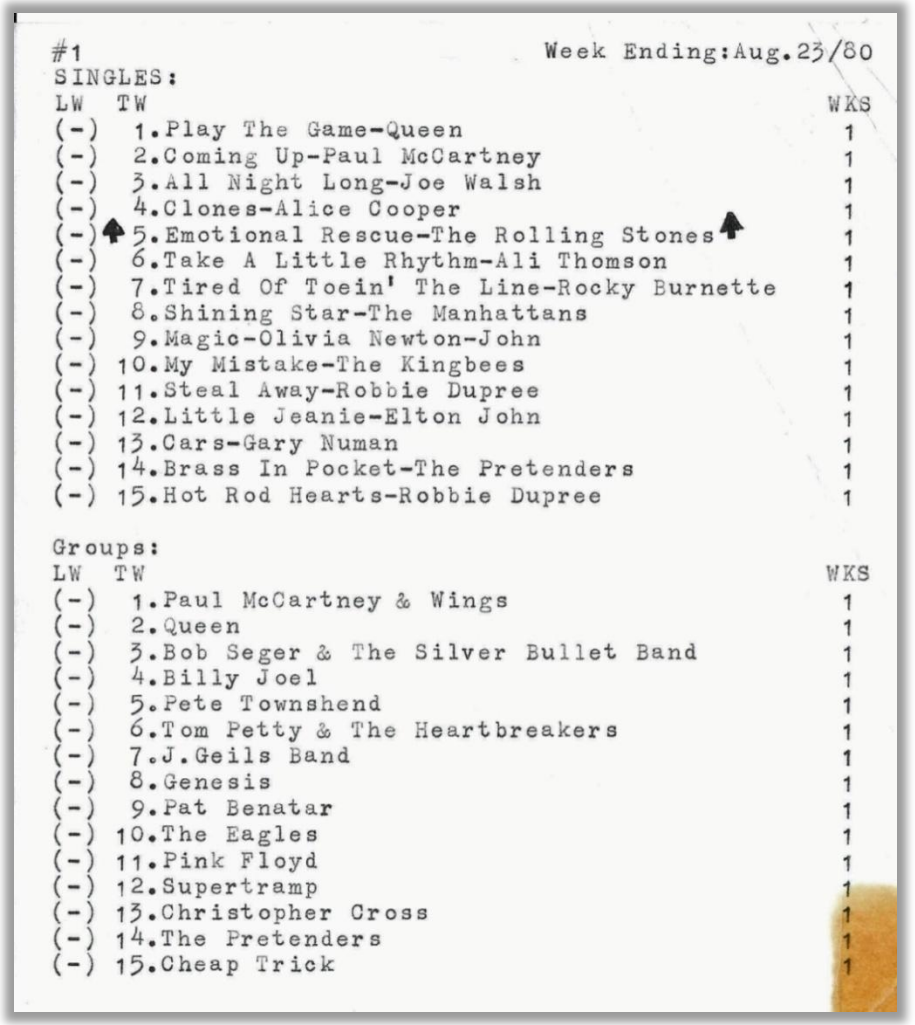
1. To be included on the Singles chart I had to own a physical copy of the record. This immediately caused troubles. For example, even though I owned the album *The Game* by Queen that contained the song *Play The Game* . . . for it to chart I also had to purchase the 45 separately. However, due to financial and practical constraints, this rule was short-lived.

2. To feature on the Groups chart, I had to own at least one of the band's albums. Consequently, popular groups like Fleetwood Mac, Boston, Kiss, and The Doobie Brothers did not appear on Chart #1.

Note: On Chart #7 (October 4, 1980) a Top 10 Albums list would be introduced.

Here are a few statistics to wow you:

- 163 Songs and 75 Albums charted between August 1980 and August 1982
- 33 Singles hit #1: longest 8 weeks (2 songs); shortest 1 week (5 songs)
- 24 Singles only reached #2
- The longest charting Single was 24 weeks
- 12 Albums hit #1: longest 20 weeks (1 LP); shortest 2 weeks (1 LP)
- 12 Albums only reached #2
- The longest charting Album was 40 weeks and didn't hit #1!



#1 Week Ending:Aug.23/80

SINGLES:

LW	TW		WKS
(-)	1.	Play The Game-Queen	1
(-)	2.	Coming Up-Paul McCartney	1
(-)	3.	All Night Long-Joe Walsh	1
(-)	4.	Clones-Alice Cooper	1
(-)	5.	Emotional Rescue-The Rolling Stones	1
(-)	6.	Take A Little Rhythm-Ali Thomson	1
(-)	7.	Tired Of Toein' The Line-Rocky Burnette	1
(-)	8.	Shining Star-The Manhattans	1
(-)	9.	Magic-Olivia Newton-John	1
(-)	10.	My Mistake-The Kingbees	1
(-)	11.	Steal Away-Robbie Dupree	1
(-)	12.	Little Jeanie-Elton John	1
(-)	13.	Cars-Gary Numan	1
(-)	14.	Brass In Pocket-The Pretenders	1
(-)	15.	Hot Rod Hearts-Robbie Dupree	1

Groups:

LW	TW		WKS
(-)	1.	Paul McCartney & Wings	1
(-)	2.	Queen	1
(-)	3.	Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band	1
(-)	4.	Billy Joel	1
(-)	5.	Pete Townshend	1
(-)	6.	Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers	1
(-)	7.	J.Geils Band	1
(-)	8.	Genesis	1
(-)	9.	Pat Benatar	1
(-)	10.	The Eagles	1
(-)	11.	Pink Floyd	1
(-)	12.	Supertramp	1
(-)	13.	Christopher Cross	1
(-)	14.	The Pretenders	1
(-)	15.	Cheap Trick	1

<u>Chart #1 Breakdown</u>:

From the beginning, I was drawn to melodic songs. The initial Top 15 Singles were popular on AM radio with well-known artists such as Queen, Paul McCartney & Wings, and Elton John dominating the charts. Yet, emerging bands and artists like The Pretenders, Gary Numan, Robbie Dupree, and The Kingbees also caught my attention. Some of these

artists went on to have long-lasting careers, while others faded into obscurity.

Unlike today's streaming platforms that break music genres down into sub-genres and sub-subgenres, the AM stations I was listening to in 1980 played just one genre: Music. Looking at Chart #1's songs you can see how diverse the programming was back then. The Rolling Stones were experimenting with a disco themed song, Alice Cooper was trying to remain cool in the New Wave era, Olivia Newton-John was enjoying post-*Grease* success with a hit from the film *Xanadu*, The Manhattans were making a comeback with their biggest song since *Kiss And Say Goodbye*, and newcomer Ali Thomson, soon to be a One Hit Wonder and the brother of Supertramp's bassist Dougie Thomson, had one of my favourite songs at the time (and still does).

As for the inaugural Top 15 Groups rankings, most had made their reputations in the 1970s. By August 1980, I had been collecting records sporadically for a few years and had discovered groups I liked. Along with their latest releases, I would buy some of their earlier albums. For the most part, these listings would not change much week by week. On Chart #1 the Top 4 Groups were: Paul McCartney & Wings, Queen, Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band, and Billy Joel – all groups that I had multiple albums of by then. Pete Townshend of The Who was #5, based on his solo album, *Empty Glass*. Within a few weeks though, newer groups were added like The Monks, The Police, and Split Enz, pushing the older artists down a few notches.

Like the 105 charts that followed, Chart #1 gives an accurate snapshot of what I was listening to and interested in during a specific week of my young teenage life. I can still play and enjoy all the listed singles, but I think the groups'

ranking is the more telling chart. It establishes the core bands and artists I'd already gravitated toward during the previous, say, eighteen months. Today, the names listed are considered some of the most classic *Classic Rock* artists of all time. Had my brain – remember, it was in charge of my 13-year-old mind's musical tastes at the time – gone a different direction, my Top 15 Groups could have included, in no particular order: Rex Smith, Patrick Hernandez, The Village People, Boney M, Leif Garrett, Andy Gibb, and A Taste Of Honey.

In retrospect, I believe I made a lot of great choices right from the beginning!

THE LONDON FREE PRESS, Friday, August 22, 1980

Top 10 singles, albums

Following is a list of the Top 10 singles and albums in Canada this week according to lists compiled by RPM Magazine. The numbers in parenthesis indicate the place on the charts last week.

Singles

1. Emotional Rescue, The Rolling Stones (1)
2. Magic, Olivia Newton-John (5)
3. Misunderstanding, Genesis (2)
4. Tired Of Toein' The Line, Rocky Burnette (4)
5. It's Still Rock And Roll To Me, Billy Joel (3)
6. Echo Beach, Martha and the Muffins (6)
7. Let My Love Open The Door, Pete Townshend(10)
8. The Rose, Bette Midler (7)
9. Coming Up, Paul McCartney (8)
10. Cocaine, Eric Clapton (13)

Albums

1. Emotional Rescue, The Rolling Stones (1)
2. Glass Houses, Billy Joel (3)
3. Duke, Genesis (2)
4. Empty Glass, Pete Townshend (5)
5. Against The Wind, Bob Seger (4)
6. Woman Love, Burton Cummings (6)
7. Peter Gabriel, Peter Gabriel (9)
8. The Wall, Pink Floyd (7)
9. The Game, Queen (14)
10. Bad Habits, The Monks (10)

Social Media

Continue The Musical Journey . . .

View all 106 weekly charts (Aug 1980-Aug 1982) + year-end lists (1979-1990) at:

https://johnschlarbaum.com/podcast/

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INSTAGRAM: musicvirginsnomore

Listen to the *Music Virgins No More* podcast today!

This podcast is based on co-host John Schlarbaum's pubescent memories of the Top 40 between 1979-1982, when he created 106 weekly music charts alone in his bedroom in Southwestern Ontario.

Each podcast will dive deep into these charts and discuss the music that has become the soundtrack to John's life, as well as others about to enter high school in 1980!

The name of the podcast – Music Virgins No More – has a double meaning: First, it refers to John's personal journey as a young record collector starting in the late 1970s and into the early 1980s. And second, to co-host Jason Cabanaw's present-day journey as he discovers, sometimes for the first time, music and bands he was totally unaware of before now.

Through weekly song analysis and group profiles, their goal is to entertain and educate all music lovers!