

The Music Man – by John Duffy

There have been many observations about my music I listen to for the Hawkesbury Classic and the contraption I strap to the deck for the speakers, and so I was asked to pen a few words about my HCC playlist.



Playlists are very personal things and like jokes about our mothers, we take criticism of them quite personally because the lists are really a reflection of ourselves. That criticism is often warranted, especially in those cases where others feel compelled to force their playlists onto us. In my case, all criticism is accepted in good humour.

Firstly music on the HCC is a very important part of the event for me. I wouldn't come back to it year after year if I did it just for the finishing time. The camaraderie, the conversation, the stars and (rare) moon, and of course the experiences I draw from the music are equally important for me and I certainly would not dream of doing it without the tunes. And while other paddlers interested in music tend to have their earpieces in, my preference is having the songs coming through the speakers on the deck. This is firstly so I can hear what other paddlers are saying and carry on a conversation over the music and secondly so those other paddlers might also experience some of the enjoyment I get.

My list is predominantly 60's, 70's and 80's and some might think I am a once-a-year floating advertisement for 2CH. So be it. But we all listen to what we like and in my case much of that is the formative music I grew up alongside of, whether that be records my parents played, songs I liked growing up, at school, or favourites when my musical preferences emerged.

We all have an undefined list of songs that when we hear them give us a lift. That lift comes in different forms; in excitement (they pick us up and make us feel good ... think "Love Goes Where My Rosemary Goes"), in drawing out feelings for those close to us (songs that make us sentimental when we think of our wives or parents ... think "I'll Never Find Another You" and "I Would Give Everything I Wwn"), and songs which just want to make us sing at the top of our voice (think "Sweet Caroline" or "Cracklin Rosie" at full volume around checkpoint N). And there are just beautiful melodies such as "Time to Say Goodbye" and Pachelbel's "Canon" which listening to 3am in the dark by yourself on a wide stretch of the river is an experience I wouldn't trade.

Variety is obvious and no genre is a no-go zone for me excepting post 1999. Jumping from "Nessun Dorma" to "I Love to Have a Beer with Duncan" to hymns to "Margaritaville" to "How Gentle is the Rain" to opera selections to "Hooked on a Feeling" to Elvis tends to confuse many paddlers beside me but I have had only one experience of a paddler drifting away and that's when one of my son's heavy metal songs with a generous sprinkling of the F-word found its way onto my list (calling it a song is stretching it). One minute the paddler was there and next minute they had understandably vanished.

While many of us are competitive and most have an interest in an improved time or doing our best, that can still be achieved if the songs are pumping and in fact the music can actually help us achieve that. So maybe consider giving it a go in 2020. Mix it up and enjoy yourself more. It will

help take your mind of the discomfort, it will often give you a lift and often will give you an opportunity to reflect.

I will leave you with a story I often tell. Many years ago I pulled up at the flashing lights waiting for the Sackville ferry and I had The Seekers blaring [this one <https://youtu.be/wZf41UudAbl>]. The guy beside me commented that he loved that band and he asked if I had any Petula Clark. I said "mate, it is the next song", which it was. He replied with "you must be about 45". I was 44.

As ABBA said, "Thank you for the Music". It really is a "Slice of Heaven".