Heavy Metal



Today on the way home from work I scanned the radio dial for something other than political ads. I landed on DC 101 and they were taking it old school with AC/DC's Hell's Bells. I cranked it up and played my steering wheel drum the rest of the way home. I love classic rock and some bands have the ability to immediately transport me to another time. Some songs, if only for a few minutes, have the power to make me feel young again. Angus and the boys do it to me every time.

I was 16 years old the first time I heard AC/DC. The year was 1981 and I was being forced to move from Chicago to Washington DC. My mother was marrying an engineer who worked for the government so it was off to Virginia we went. I was leaving behind my friends, my school and a job that l loved. My endless begging and pleading to be left behind with relatives fell on deaf ears. Driving across Indiana, through Ohio and in to the mountains of Pennsylvania, my anger and resentment grew with each mile. I truly believed my mother was ruining my life and I made sure she knew it. Six months later and still struggling to fit in I was primed for a teenage rebellion. It was around that time that I met the boy who would one day become the father of my children. He was nineteen, already graduated and drove a 1970 cherry red fastback Mustang. He listened to heavy metal, could buy beer and was my parent's worst nightmare. One steamy summer night he popped his Back

in Black 8-track in to the tape deck and said “this is my favorite album.”

It changed my life.

I had always been kind of an oddball in the family with my taste in music. Raised on a steady diet of Everly Brothers, Mamma Cass and Neil Diamond, nobody in my family listened to anything that would have been considered heavy metal. I wore out my Mom’s Elvis and Ricky Nelson records but by the 70’s Elvis wasn’t a rebel anymore and Ricky got hold. Rock and roll had changed. I liked the Eagles, the Beatles and when Electric Light Orchestra’s Turn to Stone hit the radio waves during my preadolescence I couldn’t hear it enough. While my sister was listening to Jeffrey Osborne and Barry Manilow I was spending my babysitting money on Rush and Moody Blues albums. When I hit my teens I couldn’t get enough of Journey, Styx and REO Speedwagon. (My husband says those are girls bands and don’t count.) Point being, I was going my own way musically. The house was listening to a lot of hymns and easy listening stations back then. (Would someone please answer Lionel Richie, he keeps calling.) I wasn’t listening to anything back then that could have been called hard rock or metal but I was laying a foundation. When AC/DC entered my life I was ready.

I can’t put in to words how it changed me. I knew I was listening to music that my mother wouldn’t approve of. I was listening to music that she wouldn’t allow me to have in the house. I had asked for Meatloaf’s Bat out of Hell album and I was told I wasn’t allowed to have it because there was a curse word in the title. Not sure if my Mom knows it but I bought that album myself and hid it in my room. I can still sing every word to Paradise by the Dashboard Lights.

Falling in love with AC/DC was pure rebellion. I loved it. It’s been over thirty years since then and my marriage to that boyfriend didn’t last, but he gave me three beautiful children and I’m grateful. I’m grateful too for Back in Black. The album and the song. When I listen, I time travel. When I hear those opening chords I feel a little bit like I’m about to do something that’s going to get me grounded.