

I'm only seeing bands I loved when I was 14. Am I in a musical rut – or is this growing up?

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Match these musicians and bands with the decade in which they had their first success.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| 1. Foo Fighters | a. the 1960s |
| 2. Blackpink | b. the 1980s |
| 3. Guns and Roses | c. the 1990s |
| 4. The Rolling Stones | d. the 2000s |
| 5. The Killers | e. the 2010s |
| 6. Ed Sheeran | f. the 2020s |

2 Key words

a. Find the following words in the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

1. an adjective meaning *strange or unusual* _____ (paragraph 2)
2. a noun meaning *thoughts about happy times in your past* _____
(paragraph 4)
3. a noun meaning *a public performance of popular music* _____
(paragraph 4)
4. a noun meaning *a situation that is boring and difficult to change* _____
(paragraph 4)
5. a verb meaning *stay the same without growing or developing* _____
(paragraph 4)
6. a noun meaning *a feeling of great happiness or excitement* _____
(paragraph 6)
7. an adjective meaning *extremely exciting* _____ (paragraph 6)
8. an adjective meaning *giving you a lot of happiness or excitement* _____
(paragraph 8)
9. a verb meaning *disappear completely* _____ (paragraph 8)
10. a verb meaning *speak in a loud voice* _____ (paragraph 10)

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- 1 I was standing in a field with my friends as Interpol played, and it wasn't 2006. A man in front of us was dancing wildly. "This was my wedding song!" he shouted to my friend, as Bloc Party started. "Oh wow!" she said politely.
- 2 At that moment, I thought: should I feel weird that lately I've only seen bands I loved when I was 14?
- 3 The last concert I'd attended was Yeah Yeah Yeahs, where the lead singer remarked it was 20 years since their debut album. "No way!" I heard myself and an entire stadium of other 32- to 52-year-olds say.
- 4 It was confusing to discover that nostalgia was influencing which gigs I was going to. Am I in a musical rut? I used to seek out new music like it was a personal mission. I hadn't even noticed that this mission had stopped. When you reach a certain age, does your musical taste stagnate?
- 5 Probably, it means nothing. It might just be a normal part of getting older. In 2018, *The New York Times* studied Spotify data to analyse how our musical tastes change as we age. They looked at every hit song released between 1960 and 2000 and calculated that the most "important period for forming musical taste" is 14 for men and 13 for women.
- 6 If nothing hits you like it hits you when you're a teenager – and there have been studies showing that music sticks to autobiographical information about our lives and brings back those times – it makes sense that I would want to chase that high. And I found it at those concerts: Bikini Kill was electrifying, and I cried when Yeah Yeah Yeahs did the song 'Maps'.
- 7 There's science behind it too. When we listen to a song we used to love, the reward centre in our brain is flooded with dopamine, serotonin, and other chemicals. "Musical nostalgia, in other words, isn't just a cultural phenomenon," says *Slate's* Mark Joseph Stern. "It's a neuron command."
- 8 But what does that mean for finding new music? When I was younger, I dedicated time and effort to discovering bands – and when I found one, the thrill was intoxicating. Who knew where my next favourite song might come from? It was like falling in love. Studies have found that when you reach your thirties, your musical curiosity evaporates.
- 9 A study found that your music discovery peaks at 24, and by 30, you simply stop looking for new tunes. Of around 1,000 music listeners, 47 per cent said they wanted to find new bands, but because of jobs and kids, they didn't have the time. I get it – I too have less time these days – but I also have greater resources: endless new music, just waiting to be discovered. The music is out there! Why am I not looking for it?
- 10 If I'm worried by all of this (I'm fine!), there might be a little bit of ageism involved. I don't want to decide that music I don't understand is just "people yelling". My nostalgia may just be because the popular bands of the early to mid-2000s are big business again.
- 11 At least when I *do* actually put effort in, I can still find stuff I love. It might not produce the high it did when I was 14, but the thrill of connecting with something completely new remains immediate. But if you're wondering if I want to see the Chemical Brothers and the Presets, the answer is yes. A thousand times, yes.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Are these statements True (T) or False (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. The author of the article is over 30 years old.
2. The author now goes to see bands she first liked 20 years ago.
3. The most important age for forming musical taste is younger in men than in women.
4. Music can bring back happy memories.
5. Dopamine and serotonin produce negative feelings.
6. People usually stop looking for new tunes at 30.
7. People often want to find new music but can't because they don't have the time.
8. The bands of the mid-2000s are no longer big business.
9. The author can no longer find music she loves.
10. She doesn't really want to see the Chemical Brothers again.

4 Key language

a. Match the words in column A with those in column B to make two-word phrases from the text.

A	B
1. lead	taste
2. hit	business
3. cultural	song
4. musical	singer
5. big	phenomenon

b. Use two of the phrases from task A to complete the sentences.

1. Music is still _____. A successful band can earn millions if they become viral.
2. The author's _____ is almost the same as it was 20 years ago.
3. The Beatles were a _____ in the 1960s. Their music became famous globally without the help of the internet.

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- “Your taste in music develops when you are young and doesn’t change as you get older.”
- “Going to a live gig is much better than listening to music at home.”

6 In your own words

a. Use an internet search engine to find more information about one of the bands mentioned in the article or another band. Try to find the following information.

- When did the band form?
- How many members are/were there?
- When did they release their first album?
- What was their biggest hit?
- Have they played live in your country?

b. Report your findings to the class.