

Hey Parco! Ep. 7: Best of GenX: The Age of Vinyl, Pt. 2

(Phone rings)

Ann: Hey Parco!

Samantha: Hey Parco!

(Lively Jazz opening theme plays)

Samantha: Hello, friends! Welcome to Hey Parco, the mostly true adventures of two Recovering GenX Valley Girls. I'm Samantha.

Ann: And I'm Ann, and we're the Parcos. We've been friends since 1977. Today's discussion in our continuing Best of GenX series is The Age of Vinyl.

Samantha: Part Two.

Ann: Did you ever have the Saturday Night Fever soundtrack?

Samantha: Of course. Are you kidding? Are you forgetting my history?

Ann: Oh, I know.

Samantha: My special history with the star?

Ann: Yes. I do know that history. That's why I thought I'd bring it up, because I've never seen the movie, but I have the soundtrack. Well, I wasn't allowed.

Samantha: Yeah.

Ann: I wasn't allowed.

Samantha: I understand, I understand. It was very adult, and it hasn't aged well, so you'll probably never see it. And that's okay.

Ann: Oh, I might watch it. Just to see what it's about.

Samantha: You might, but It really hasn't aged well.

Ann: Okay.

Samantha: But yes, of course the soundtrack was—probably the number one album of that decade.

Ann: Yes. Well, next to Dark Side of the Moon.

Samantha: Ah...

Ann: Dark Side of the Moon was on the charts for like, I think 10 years.

(Electric whoosh)

Ann (reading): "Pink Floyd's evergreen album, Dark Side of the Moon continues to hold the record, by far, for the most charted weeks on the Billboard 200: 917 weeks."

(Electric whoosh)

Samantha: That's insane.

Ann: It is a brilliant album.

Samantha: Oh god, yes, absolutely. Of course, of course. I'm sorry. I don't even feel like I need to say that because it's just so understood. However, it never had the mass culture thing of Saturday Night Fever.

Ann: Right.

Samantha: You know, Saturday Night Fever was white hot. For a period of time, it was a pretty extended period of time because there were so many singles that came out, between the Bee Gees and all the other artists.

Ann: Right. Yvonne Elliman.

Samantha: Yes. Disco Inferno.

Ann: Of course, "Burn, baby burn."

Samantha: Yeah.

Ann: Yeah.

Samantha: And, and the big Bee Gees hits.

Ann: Right, which are just so classic.

Samantha: Yeah. So I don't really know which outsold which, but in the 70s you couldn't get away from Saturday Night Fever.

Ann: Mom's AM radio, KHJ.

Samantha: Ohhhh! (singing radio jingle) "93 KHJ!"

Ann (finishing radio jingle): "Los Angeles." (Speaking) They would play either Stayin' Alive or Jive Talking at least twice an hour. And my mom finally had a nervous breakdown and had to pull over to the side of the road, and looked at me and said: "I never want to hear that music again! I can't take it anymore! I won't, I won't do it! I will not do it!"

Samantha: (laughing) It broke her!

Ann: It broke her!

Samantha: The Bee Gees broke your mom.

Ann: I was like freaked out. I'm like: "It's just Jive Talking!" "No, I don't want to hear it again! Can't handle it! I'm done." So then she put on—

Samantha: I feel her pain.

Ann: —and so then she put on KNX and I had to listen to news radio!

Samantha: Ehhhh, that's the worst!

(Lively Jazz music plays)

Samantha: Motown.

Ann: Oh, yeah, absolutely!

Samantha: Motown was pretty much neck-and-neck with British Invasion.

Ann: Oh my gosh. Marvin Gaye? Huge!

Samantha: I was just going to say, you want to talk about an album that I

wore out the grooves to: What's Goin' On by Marvin Gaye.

Ann: Such a great album!

Samantha: Such a great album! Could never get enough of it.

Ann: I was just listening to it the other day on the YouTubes.

Samantha: The whole album? They have it on YouTube?

Ann: Oh yeah, you can hear the whole thing. I mean, you get little commercials about, you know, Vacation Rentals by Owner and different, weird, prescriptions.

Samantha: That's fair. You know, they have to—

Ann: Yeah. They gotta make money the way they have to.

Samantha: Exactly. Yeah.

Ann: Yeah. So, oh god, Marvin Gaye, The Supremes—

Samantha: Stevie Wonder.

Ann: Stevie Wonder! Oh! I remember getting a Motown's Greatest Hits. I was probably about 11.

Samantha: Right.

Ann: And it had 'Fingertips, Part Two' on there. Little Stevie Wonder.

Samantha: That's right.

Ann: 13 years old. 13 years old!

Samantha: Yeah.

Ann: And I've—it was—it blew my mind. It blew my mind.

Samantha: Yeah. When it comes to Stevie Wonder, I mean, you've probably heard me say this before—I'm not a religious person—but for me, Stevie Wonder is church.

Ann: Absolutely!

Samantha: It's like I get all the feelings. It does take me higher. He's just an extraordinary,

Ann: Yep, oh my god. Stevie Wonder.

Samantha: Innervisions is my favorite.

Ann: What a great album. Wow. Have you seen Summer of Soul?

Samantha: Yes! Oh my god, thank you for recommending that to me, it was fabulous!

Ann: How about that drum solo. I had tears streaming down my face—down my face!

Samantha: Well, that's where they would stream.

Ann: Ah, Mavis and Mahalia. Ah, it was just so amazing!

Samantha: That is great! I would definitely recommend anybody out there to watch it. Summer of Soul—was this on a Netflix?

Ann: A Hulu, I believe.

Samantha: I don't have Hulu, so they must be showing it on something else. Maybe I saw it on Prime. I'm not sure, but um, yeah, Summer of Soul. Seek it out.

Ann: Yes. And the fact, the fact—now we're going down a different rabbit hole, but—the fact that that footage had never been seen in 50 years—

Samantha: —is completely mental!

Ann: —is a crime! It's a crime! It's incredible.

Samantha: It's great quality! It's nothing but absolute A-list, great artists and phenomenal performances. I can't—I don't understand how that was just locked away in a box for all this time. It's crazy. And honestly, it's way better than the Woodstock movie.

(Lively Jazz music plays)

Ann: Hey, I'd like to take you back in the time machine.

(Ann imitates time machine sound)

Samantha: I'm ready.

Ann: I'd like to go back to 1978.

Samantha: 1978. Good year.

Ann: 1978. I have three albums that changed my life that summer.

Samantha: Okay. Alright.

Ann: Okay. Some Girls by the Rolling Stones.

Samantha: By The Rolling Stones, yeah.

Ann: Who Are You? by The Who.

Samantha: Of course, obvious one.

Ann: Blondie's Parallel Lines.

Samantha: Oh, really? See, I've never really known you as a Blondie fan.

Ann: Oh god, I love early Blondie!

Samantha: Now the Stones and The Who—that's a given.

Ann: Oh, I love early Blondie.

Samantha: Ah, okay.

Ann: I realized as I was going down these rabbit holes, I had two seminal female people that changed the way I looked at music. Like, I could do this.

Samantha: Right.

Ann: That was Debbie Harry.

Samantha: Yep.

Ann: And in 1979—

Samantha: I know who's coming. I know who's coming.

Ann: On the Don Kirschner's Rock Concert.

Samantha: Yes.

Ann: Oh my god! Chrissy Hynde—

Samantha: Chrissy Hynde.

Ann: —and 'Tattooed Love Boys.' I watched that video, the first time I'd ever seen the Pretenders.

Samantha: Yeah.

Ann: This is, I think this is even before 'Brass in Pocket.'

Samantha: I was going to say, I know my first was 'Brass in Pocket,' for sure.

Ann: 'Tattooed Love Boys.' I watched that—and it reminds me of—I was thinking about older friends who told me about the first time they ever heard 'Are You Experienced' by Jimmy Hendrix and how it blew them back against the wall, like: "This is the most amazing thing I've ever heard."

Samantha: Right.

Ann: 'Tattooed Love Boys' was the seminal video where I said: "Oh my god, I want to be her. And I'm going to be in a rock and roll band."

Samantha: Right.

Ann: That is when I said: "I am going to be in a band!" Yep. And a year later I was.

Samantha: And I would say that even though you were, kind of doing the Mod thing and stuff when you were a teenager, there was a lot of Chrissy Hynde in your look, as well.

Ann: Oh my god! The haircut, the eyeliner—

Samantha: The bangs, really like everything.

Ann: Yes. Oh, I loved Chrissy. Oh gosh. You know we have since parted ways, but, yeah, those early albums were just—they just blew my mind, blew my mind. Especially because she was also covering The Kinks. I mean, she ended up marrying Ray Davies for a while—

Samantha: (laughing) For a while!

Ann: —but she was so—she was yeah. (Laughing)

Samantha: Yes, no, true, of course!

Ann: Right! So she was playing songs that I already loved by The Kinks, because of the whole British Invasion thing. So she was just so Uber cool, I couldn't handle it.

Samantha: Right.

Ann: I wanted to be her.

Samantha: Right.

Ann: Never had a pair of leather pants though.

(Lively Jazz music plays)

Samantha: What is your relationship to Queen?

Ann: I love Queen. In fact, I have been listening to a ton of Queen lately. I find it really sad that when Freddie decided to really 'come out' full bore—you know, he was always Glam—

Samantha: (laughing) I was gonna say, he was never really very in,' but okay.

Ann: No, he wasn't ever really 'in,' but when, when 'Crazy Little Thing Called Love' came out and he was dressed in the leather—

Samantha: When he went leather boy, yeah.

Ann: When he went leather boy was when they kind of lost me. And I don't know why, maybe it was just scary. Maybe it was just like: "Oh, I don't understand this. This is a little too risqué for me.

Samantha: Hmm.

Ann: I don't know, but I love Queen.

Samantha: Yes, yes.

Ann: And I listen to Queen a lot.

Samantha: Here is a memory, a shared memory with you.

Ann: Oh!

Samantha: Yes. At our little elementary school, sixth grade, all the little kids, we had this kind of open air cafeteria area.

Ann: Oh!

Samantha: You know where I'm going with this?

Ann: Oh yeah, I do!

Samantha: Can we do it on our table here?

Ann: Yes.

(Both thump tables and clap hands)

Samantha: So thump, thump, slap, thump, thump, slap, and the whole student body singing 'We Will Rock You.'

Ann: Oh, yeah.

Samantha: Yeah. That was very much a part of our childhood.

Ann: It's so sad that there's no video of that, because that truly was remarkable.

Samantha: It was. And it was spontaneous!

Ann: 200 kids at least, you know, all doing it in unison, all singing, all singing together.

Samantha: Yeah.

Ann: That was a beautiful moment.

Samantha: It was.

(Lively Jazz music plays)

Samantha: The end of 1980 through to the middle of 1981 was a very pivotal time.

Ann: Okay.

Samantha: We lost John Lennon.

Ann: Yes, we did.

Samantha: Which devastated us.

Ann: Absolutely.

Samantha: I discovered Kate Bush, which was revolutionary—

Ann: Right. 'Wuthering Heights'? Oh no, The Kick Inside, right?

Samantha: Just Kate Bush, in general. She had three albums out by then and she completely rocked my world. And MTV was born in August of 1981.

Ann: Yes.

Samantha: And the MTV that we knew, that was born right before our eyes, was just such a different animal than whatever it is now. It's just like youth TV now, it's not music TV.

Ann: I have to tell you. I went to see Primus not too long ago, and was having lunch before the show at this place. This was before the mask mandate came back down, but I was wearing a mask. I was doing all the right things and fully vaccinated. They were playing MTV and it was disgusting. Now I know that that's me being older. All it was was Jack Ass-like pranks and really disgusting—and I do mean really disgusting—potty humor. I can remember being with you—

Samantha: Yeah?

Ann: In Trader Joe's and you spent the night, we wore wigs and drank Blue Nun at the Formosa Cafe.

Samantha: (laughing) Yes, I remember this well.

Ann: Okay, but I do remember being in Trader Joe's with you and we were all of like maybe 22?

Samantha: Yeah, we were about 22 then.

Ann: I can remember telling you: "I prefer VH1 over MTV."

Samantha: Yeah!

Ann: "I can't handle that Spring Break bull****!"

Samantha: Right, right.

Ann: Yeah, it just—

Samantha: That was also Beavis and Butthead era—that's when it was starting to become more like youth programming instead of music television. The youth of today don't have any sense of having missed anything—

Ann: Right.

Samantha: —but the MTV that we knew was just so essential to our youth. We were exactly the right age. We were 14 when it was born. I remember when the only place I could see MTV was at my friend's dad's Palm Springs weekend house.

Ann: Mm-hmm.

Samantha: Do you remember the kind of cable boxes where it was like a bunch of buttons? It would be a row of 12 buttons, and that's how you would change your channels. There was this row of buttons that you would press.

Ann: We had it so hard! Nobody even knows! I was the remote control!

Samantha: There's no "we" about it; at home, I didn't even have cable! This was at the weekend home out of friend's dad's house that I had access to MTV and cable!

Ann: I am going to tell everyone right here. It was not until 1984 that my

mother got a color TV.

Samantha: Was it 1984?

Ann: I grew up on black and white TV.

Samantha: I did too. We may have gotten ours a year or two before you, but it was the same thing in my house. Yeah. And never had cable when I lived at home.

Ann: No, it wasn't until I left home that my mom got cable and a VHS player! And I'm like: "What the hell?!"

(Lively Jazz music plays)

Samantha: Since the mid-60s or early- to mid-60s, depending on what you're talking about, there were 8-Tracks and Cassettes.

Ann: (gasping) Yes!

Samantha: But 8-Tracks actually had better sound quality. So they sort of took off first and it wasn't really until the late 70s that Cassette tapes, what we call Cassette tapes. I mean, they're all really cassettes, but the Compact Cassette that we know with the two small reels, um, that the sound quality actually improved enough that it overtook and surpassed the 8-Track and became a real rival to vinyl records.

Ann: Right.

Samantha: That was kind of the real beginning of the Cassette tapes. And of course, what made these Cassette tapes so amazing was that you could get blank Cassette tapes and you could record off the radio. Didn't you record off the radio?

Ann: Oh, I certainly did.

Samantha: You could make your own recordings of like your family or friends or whatever—

An: I have some recordings of us.

Samantha: I know you do! And obviously you can make the ubiquitous mixtape.

Ann: Of course. Right. I have some mixtapes from you.

Samantha: I bet you do. I made many. I do. I made mix tapes. And did I, I I'm sure I do from you too, just they're in a different country than where I am.

Ann: So I purchased—because I'm a nerd—for not even a bucket piece, a bunch of blank, 8-Track tapes and blank Cassette tapes.

Samantha: Well now, see, this is very interesting to me. You have a way to record onto an 8-Track?

Ann: I do not have a way to record on 8-Track, at this point, but I do have this radio that has an 8-Track player in it. It's from 1969 and it looks like an astronaut's helmet.

Neil Armstrong speaking his legendary phrase: "That's small step for (a) man, one giant leap for mankind."

Ann: So in 1979, I saw a film that changed my life: *The Kids Are Alright* is a Rockumentary, if you will. They searched for all these different clips of The Who, and they made this *Who Rockumentary*. And it's brilliant! It truly is brilliant.

From the Smothers Brothers Show to the Shepherd's Bush whatever, when they do 'Won't Get Fooled Again' and all of that—and Who Are You. And so I took my 8-Track tape that was able to record and I took my—and I was able to record from my turntable. I also had a copy of—so I was doing this mix of 'Won't Get Fooled Again,' live and studio, and I was mixing them together. I spent hours mixing songs together using an 8-Track tape, a Cassette deck, and my LP.

Samantha: I don't understand. What were you mixing exactly?

Ann: I was mixing the studio version from *Who's Next* of 'Won't Get Fooled Again' with the live version of 'Won't Get Fooled Again' on the *Kids Are Alright* soundtrack.

Samantha: But what do you mean, you were "mixing them?" So you would take a piece of one and then it would go into—so it would go live, studio, live, studio or something?

Ann: Yep, exactly. Yep. Yep. I think it was, I think it was two Cassette decks, one 8-Track, and my album. I don't know how I did it, but I spent

hours in there just like mixing music together. Why didn't I go to recording school? Oh, it doesn't matter.

Samantha: Oh, coulda, shoulda, woulda—there's so many behind us.

Ann: Yeah, there's so much, so much.

Samantha: Yeah, I would say in a lot of ways the Kids Are Alright movie was kind of almost like our Rocky Horror or something. Like we all knew it inside and out. We could all quote it. We all knew what was coming next in it, we'd seen it so many times. We would watch it in groups. It was, yeah, it was really an important film for us. And it still gets referenced in our conversations. We still do bits from the Kids Are Alright.

Ann: Oh my god. Yes, absolutely. Including, I used to bite people on the legs. Remember that?

Samantha: Yes, you did. I remember it. Yes.

Ann: I was a weird kid.

Samantha: Folks, Ann took a lot of inspiration from Keith Moon. A lot.

Ann: Oh, yeah.

(Lively Jazz music plays)

Ann: So, did you ever watch the movie High Fidelity?

Samantha: Of course.

Ann: You know the scene with Jack Black and that other guy? And they're just like—

Samantha: That other guy—you mean John Cusack?

Ann: No, it wasn't with John Cusack.

Samantha: The other guy who's—right, right, right—the other music nerd guy.

Ann: Yes. And they're going to at it.

Samantha: Right.

Ann: Okay. That is real.

Samantha: I know it is.

Ann: That is so real.

Samantha: You don't have to work at a record store to know that's real.

Ann: I mean, my god. My god!

Samantha: I mean, lot of our friends are like that. Come on, you know that.

Ann: Oh, completely, completely. But for those who may have seen High Fidelity without ever actually spending time in a record store, because there's a lot of people like that.

Samantha: Sure!

Ann: I just want you to know that was like probably the most real scene.

Samantha: Well, explain the scene for those who haven't seen it.

Ann: Uh, you know, so they're talking, uh—you know what, you explain the scene, because I'm going to screw it up.

Samantha: Wha—I haven't seen it in a while—

Ann: Please.

Samantha: —but basically what you have are two music nerds who are kinda sorta trying to top each other, to some degree.

Ann: Right.

Samantha: The big thing is whenever you are a nerd of any kind, part of what is—the appeal is you have secret knowledge, right? And this is part of what makes it really valuable to you; that you can like drop these bombs of information, these bombs of inside info or tidbits that are rare, you know? And so when you get two nerds like that—and let me just say that I was once, I'm not going to say how, but I was immersed into the world of Prog Rock fans at some point in my life for several years.

Ann: (laughing) Yeah.

Samantha: And that's pretty much what every conversation with them is like. Everything is: the more obscure, the better; the more specific, the better. You know, they know details about every recording session, concerts. They can quote it off the top of their head, what year that was and which setlist that was.

Ann: It's like dating a Deadhead, which I did.

Samantha: Yeah, exactly. It's all the same.

Ann: (imitating a Deadhead guy) "Oh man, did you see Jerry's lick in 1974 at Paducah Square?" (regular voice) I mean, I made that up, I don't think there is a Paducah Square. (in Deadhead's voice) "Oh my god, they played 'Dark Star!'"

Samantha: Yeah.

Ann: Oh my god, yeah. Thank god, I'm not that bad anymore.

Samantha: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, we definitely have been guilty of some of this ourselves with the Beatles.

Ann: Oh completely, and The Who.

Samantha: Yeah, and The Who. Yeah, probably I'd have to admit a little bit for me with Kate Bush, like a lot of details and information that we used to store away in our brains.

Ann: Yes, yes.

Samantha: It has happily mostly filtered away over time for me.

Ann: It is interesting how a lot of that information has left. If you don't practice it, you lose it. And I worked at two record stores. I loved working at record stores. I loved being around the records. I love talking to the customers—except for the ones that were buying, you know, the Top 20. I didn't, I didn't have time for them. Again, like High Fidelity.

Samantha: (as a Valley Girl) "Oh, my God, they like Top 40."

Ann: (as a Valley Girl) "Oh my god, they're buying Billy Ocean."

Samantha: Yeah, snobs, snobs, snobs.

Ann: I was definitely a music snob.

(Lively Jazz music plays)

Samantha: There was something that we used to get sometimes in music magazines, in particular—they would feature them a lot. There were these little flexible discs.

Ann: Oh yes! Flexidiscs!

Samantha: Flexidiscs, exactly! So they would come in magazines and you might have like a song or a couple of songs or something on it was super, super flimsy.

Ann: I still have my Haircut 100 Flexidisc from Face Magazine.

Samantha: Oh man! I did not know this before—we know, being Beatle People or whatever, we know the Beatles' Christmas Album.

Ann: Right.

Samantha: Did you know what that they were all issued as Flexidiscs?

Ann: I did not know that.

Samantha: For each year—so it was the Christmas recording that was for their fan club. And that's how it was issued was as Flexidisc. I never knew that before.

Ann: I never knew that either. So somebody very smart decided to get that off the Flexidiscs and record it on Cassette on actual album.

Samantha: Right, right—on an actual album. Hence the Beatles' Christmas Album, which is great. And we know it—we have parts of that memorized as well, which is, you know, whatever. Nerds.

Ann: Exactly.

Samantha: Nerds.

(Lively Jazz closing theme plays)

Samantha: The Age of Vinyl will continue in our next episode of Hey Parco!

We'd love to hear your stories of being a GenX kid. You can contact us on our website: heyparco.com. There you'll find links to our Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook, along with images and info related to this and other Hey Parco episodes.

Thanks for joining us. See you next time!