

# Hey Parco! Ep. 6: Best of GenX - The Age of Vinyl, Part 1

(Phone rings)

Ann: Hey Parco!

Samantha: Hey Parco!

(Lively Jazz opening music 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. And we've been friends since 1977. Today's discussion in our continuing Best of GenX series is: The Age of Vinyl.

Samantha: Part one.

(Electric zap)

Samantha: So although we've titled this The Age of Vinyl, it's really the Age of Vinyl, 8-Tracks and Cassettes, and that's just a little too long a title. So, um, and this is a huge subject for both of us, because music has always been central for both of us.

Ann: Yes.

Samantha: But we're gonna try to manage it a bit.

Ann: So yes, there's so much to say.

Samantha: So, Parco...first, what do we mean by vinyl?

Ann: We mean the, uh, black licorice pizza discs that would go onto a spindle and it would spin around and you would place this little thingy with a needle, and stick it on the beginning, the dark, dark parts of the vinyl. Right?

Samantha: Right, right. The grooves in the record, some of them are super skinny and some of them are a little bit thicker. And I just want to give a

little bit of history of vinyl, which is that, before 1948, it was not vinyl. Records before then were actually some kind of a shellac-compound, and they were played at 78 revolutions per minute.

And it was in 1948 that Columbia Records brought out the vinyl 12-inch disc that we all know and love, that plays at 33 and a third revolutions per minute. You get about 22 minutes of whatever recorded material on each side of a record album. This leads us right to the 45s, because RCA Records introduced the 45 rpm 7-inch disc the following year in 1949. So they were kind of having a VHS/Betamax kind of rock 'em, sock 'em kind of thing. And they kind of both won, basically: Columbia Records' 12-incher became the long form, the LP that we know, and the seven-inch one from RCA became the singles, what we use for singles, 45 RPMs.

Ann: Right. And what they used in jukeboxes.

Samantha: Absolutely right; what they used in jukeboxes. And here's the thing, you know how 45s have the big hole?

Ann: Right.

Samantha: And you have to put a plastic like thingy—

Ann: Yes.

Samantha: —in the middle of it in order for it to play on a standard record player. Well, so there's two reasons for that. One is: apparently it was kind of competitive. Like they wanted to create RCA turntables that already had that bigger hole in the middle—

Ann: Ah!

Samantha: Right. So that would prevent you from being able to play a Columbia Records-style record, and also supposedly they wanted to make up for the fact—because you can only fit, I think, it's five minutes per side. And their idea was that you would stack them up and then let them drop. And that was how you would get, say, an hour's worth of music out of it or something like that. Whereas with the LP, it was 22 minutes per side. Anywho. So that was just—that's how we ended up with these, as you called it, licorice pizzas, basically.

But let's talk a little bit about what it was like when you would go to the store and you would buy a new vinyl record.

Ann: Oh, yeah, that was magical. You know, I did a lot of babysitting, a lot of house cleaning, a lot of mowing lawns for my record money. And I would, um, after school, this is in elementary school walk up to the local record stores and I would buy one record.

Samantha: Oh yeah. It was a big deal to buy us a one big LP. Absolutely.

Ann: Oh, and the magic of carrying that big flat square home.

Samantha: Yes!

Ann: And then coming home and putting it on the record player and just staring at the album cover and reading the liner notes.

Samantha: Oh yeah. And even before you had the record out; peeling the cellophane off of the album and it would be so pristine, so shiny, no fingerprints. And it was almost like having a pet or so you could hug an album. It was big enough for that. It had a presence.

Ann: Not only could you hug a record, you could also practice kissing on the cute boys face on the cover.

Samantha: Yeah. And like you said, um, the liner notes, which could be just the sleeve that the actual record would sit inside within the cover—

Ann: That's right.

Samantha: — often having the liner notes and the lyrics and all of that kind of good stuff. Sometimes it would be printed—if you're super lucky and you've got a gatefold—

Ann: The gatefold!

Samantha: The gatefold, which basically means it opens.

Ann: The gatefold!

Samantha: Yeah, they were the best. But that, that moment when you bring home the vinyl and you do exactly what you described, you put the needle on the first little groove there, and that vinyl is completely unblemished at that point.

Ann: Right.

Samantha: And it's shiny and you would just sit right in front of the speakers.

Ann: Oh yeah.

Samantha: Those liner notes at your face and just get lost, get lost in the music.

Ann: Yes. Oh, so beautiful.

(Lively Jazz music plays)

Samantha: What kind of music was in your household environment before you started buying your own albums or collecting your own music?

Ann: The first album and I loved the album—the first album I ever heard and I remember my father buying it—was the best of the Mills Brothers.

Samantha: Ah, okay. I don't know them at all, I don't know them at all. Is there a famous song they're associated with?

Ann: 'Paper Moon' or that song 'Glow Little Glow Worm.' I hear the Mills Brothers now—because there is a Mills Brothers album at work—and I am immediately whisked back to like 1970, three years old, you know, um, drinking, Kool-Aid, eating that damn Deviled Ham again.

Samantha: (laughing) Don't start!

Ann: I won't, I won't. And my dad played ukulele and he could play—

Samantha: Oh, I never knew that!

Ann: —he could play Mills Brothers songs on the ukulele. And, um, so he would, you know, sing Mills Brothers songs to me. Now my mom, on the other hand, got the Best of the Andrews Sisters. I loved that album. I listened to that album all the time.

Samantha: Yeah.

Ann: And my brother—so I have an older brother, but he was never into Rock. He was George Jones, Merle Haggard, Glenn Campbell. So it was like all Country. He did have a Partridge Family record, which I would occasionally listen to.

Samantha: Right.

Ann: But other than that, it was, it was real old school. It was, you know, um, Big Band kind of stuff and Country. How about you?

Samantha: Yeah. Well, as you know, I'm a fifth kid and—number five in the family—and one of my siblings as much as 10 years older than me. So I definitely had the influence of older kids, teenagers even, when I was pretty young. One of the earliest albums I remember in the household, in general, was the Jackson 5's ABC album.

Ann: Oh! My cousins had that record. It was great!

Samantha: Yeah. Yeah, that was, it was great. And I definitely remember I had a big crush on one of the Jacksons. I cannot remember who, it was either Jermaine or Michael, but I don't remember. Anyway—

Ann: Jermaine was adorable.

Samantha: I think—I really do think it was Jermaine. Because I remember my sisters telling me: "He's too old for you." But anyway, I digress. But my mom's collection was really interesting. You know, that's where Nancy Sinatra and Boots came from, that's where I discovered Dolly Parton and Charlie Pride and yeah, Tom Jones' Greatest Hits, as well, was very influential on me.

Ann: Yeah. Do you remember the Tom Jones TV show?

Samantha: I do remember the Tom Jones TV show, because my mom had the hots for Tom Jones. So she would watch it and get very inappropriate.

Ann: What woman didn't back then?

Samantha: Oh, yeah. Many years later, when I was working at the theater, he performed there and believe me, the lady's still—

Ann: I bet!

Samantha: I mean, he was well into his 60s—and believe me, the ladies were still peeling off their panties and throwing them at him. But my mom's singles were also really cool too. She had 'Me and Mrs. Jones' by Billy Paul, 'If a Man Answers' by Bobby Darin.

Ann: Wow.

Samantha: And 'She's Got You' by Patsy Cline. Patsy Cline.

Ann: I love her.

Samantha: Oh, so yeah, I think—and my whole family are very musical people. They sing a lot. My dad played guitar. So there was always lots and lots of music in the house.

Ann: Right.

Samantha: And then, probably the seminal experience was visiting my cousins, who also were all much, much older and like teenagers. And they had a swimming pool in the backyard. We would go over there and we'd go swimming in the swimming pool, the whole family. And one time when I was there, the family was all swimming and they had just music—they had the thing, you know, with the record drop and they were just playing record after record. But I sat inside and I looked at this album cover and I was really mesmerized by it. And the music that was associated with this album cover was just so delicious. I just didn't even know what to do with myself. And that album was Rubber Soul by the Beatles.

Ann: Really?

Samantha: Yes, yes.

Ann: Wow.

Samantha: So that's a very, very, very early memory of being mesmerized by Rubber Soul.

(Lively Jazz music plays)

Ann: So the first record that I ever received as a Christmas gift was in 1974. And I was fanatical about a television show called Happy Days. And I was really, really into 50s music because, you know, that's what was happening back in 1970.

Samantha: That's true.

Ann: Just like, just like, you know, 20, 30 years later, people are dressing in the 80s. So like, you know, all the whole 50s thing. And I loved this one song so much that I begged for this artist to be—to come into my life. And that would be 'Crocodile Rock' by Elton John.

Samantha: Oh yes! Okay. With just enough 50s flavor, but a current artist at the time.

Ann: So I got Elton John's Greatest Hits, Volume One.

Samantha: It's a great album.

Ann: Where he's sitting in the white suit by the piano.

Samantha: Oh, I know it well!

Ann: Oh my god, I played that album over and over and over again.

Samantha: Yeah. Well, my first record is much dorkier—that's a pretty cool first record, Elton John—that's a good one. Mine was totally dorko. To be fair, I inherited it from my sister, so she's the one who actually purchased it, but it was the first LP that was officially mine. She gave it to me and it was mine.

Ann: Okay.

Samantha: Bobby Sherman, Getting Together.

Ann: Oh my god, that's such a great album!

Samantha: Well, ironically, yes. Um, in its own way. I did have a crush on Bobby Sherman—

Ann: Sure, who didn't?

Samantha: —appropriate for my age and—

Ann: Yeah.

Samantha: And, I don't know if you know, but that album was actually related to a TV show that he was doing, that I guess didn't do very well.

Ann: Right, right.

Samantha: Do you remember that TV show? Because I don't.

Ann: Wasn't he like a paramedic or something? I know later in life, he actually became a paramedic, but—

Samantha: Yeah, that's what you're thinking of: later in life he became a paramedic. But no, he was not a paramedic on the show. He was actually playing like a songwriter, like a contemporary pop songwriter with a partner—they were based on Boyce and Hart.

Ann: Oh, okay.

Samantha: Right.

Ann: Okay. Prolific songwriters. Lots of great tunes.

Samantha: Prolific songwriters, lots of hits songs, especially for the Monkees: 'Last Train to Clarksville,' 'I'm Not Your Stepping Stone, blah, blah, blah. Also, 'I Blow You a Kiss in the Wind' that Serena—cousin Serena—on Bewitched sang.

Ann: Oh, right!

Samantha: I love that song. But they didn't write songs for that show; Boyce and Hart were not involved in this. The guy who produced this album also produced the Brady Bunch Kids.

Ann: Oh god!

Samantha: So this gives you an idea of the flavor of that particular—

Ann: Total bubblegum.

Samantha: Total bubblegum. Just could not be lighter, frothier and thinner.

Ann: So, I will tell you the album that my brother gave me—

Samantha: Oh! When you were a child?

Ann: When I was a child, this is still like 1974. So I'm what, seven or eight years old. And I found this album in his stack of albums, and I immediately fell in love with this man. And this is the album with which I practiced kissing.

(Smooching sound)

Ann: And I—this is dorky—but I'm going to share it for the whole world to hear.



Samantha: Excellent! I'm rubbing my hands together, I'm so excited. Who is it, who is it?

Ann: Oh my god, I'm so embarrassed. Oh my god. Okay, you ready?

Samantha: Yeah. I'm ready, I'm holding on.

Ann: Mac Davis: Stop and Smell the Roses.

Samantha: Woman! This is where it all comes from! You and Mac Davis! Right back to the beginning. Oh, wow!

Ann: Oh yeah. So I actually went, I, you know, I was doing a little research on this for the show today. And so I decided: "Okay, let me go and hear the song again."

Samantha: Right, right. What's the reality?

Ann: The reality is that it's overproduced, in my opinion. It's got lovely words, but yeah, but you know, what's amazing about Mac Davis—I mean, he was a prolific songwriter and I want to tell you two songs that he wrote that I was completely gobsmacked by.

Samantha: Kkay.

Ann: 'In the Ghetto.'

Samantha: (singing) In the Ghetto...

Ann: (singing in a higher key) In the Ghetto... (speaking) And one of my favorite, all-time favorite Elvis tunes: 'A Little Less Conversation.'

Samantha: Ah! Oh yeah, that is a really good one.

Ann: Yes. And I was like: "Mac Davis wrote that? Why couldn't that have been on that album, so I wouldn't be so damn embarrassed?"

Samantha: Well, you know, if you can get Elvis to do your song, you're going to give it to Elvis. Let's face it.

Ann: Right. Do you remember his television?

Samantha: I mean, I remember that he had a television show. I'm quite

certain I watched it, but I don't remember anything about it.

Ann: Yeah, I remember watching it, but I don't remember the show because I was too mesmerized by his beautiful curly hair and blue eyes.

(Lively Jazz music plays)

Samantha: I have three words for you.

Ann: Yes.

Samantha: Columbia Record Club.

Ann: Yes, you could get 10 records for a penny!

Samantha: Or 15 sometimes, they would vary it a bit. And usually they'd give you an extra one on top of it. So for anybody who would not already be familiar with the Columbia Record Club: for me, it was always the pullout in the middle of the TV Guide. Right?

Ann: Right.

Samantha: It was like a little book. And it would list just hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of albums to choose from. And it was impossible not to look through it. And of course that means you end up with some albums you never wanted, because they send them to you automatically. Once you order, you are obligated to buy, like, I don't know, three more albums in the next five years or something stupid like that. But they're gonna automatically send an album to you every month, unless you return a card saying: I don't want this one.

Ann: Right.

Samantha: So they send you a card and say: this is the pick of the month. Do you want it? Or, if you don't want it, send this card back. And so you send the card back, and if you forget to send the card back, the album shows up at your door.

Ann: Right!

Samantha: So that's how I ended up, for instance, with Frampton Comes Alive.

Ann: Yeah! (Singing) Show Me the Way! Yeah!

Samantha: An album I never particularly wanted, but—

Ann: Oh, everybody had Frampton Comes Alive!

Samantha: Everybody had Frampton Comes Alive! That's right. It was, yes, it was everywhere. But what I never understood about it was that it's a live album, so that performance was live and the audience went wild for the song. But the song didn't seem to go onto the radio until after the album came out. So I was always trying to figure out: "How did everybody know that song when the song didn't become well known until after the album?"

Ann: Is this like Cheap Trick Live at Budikon, where Cheap Trick Live at Budikon wasn't really Live at Budikon?

Samantha: Is that really true? Oh my goodness.

Ann: I believe so, yes. Yes, yes! They had, they had audience tracks on there.

Samantha: Ohhhh, wow. That is cheesy.

Ann: I did love Cheap Trick, though.

(Lively Jazz music plays)

Samantha: Favorite one-hit wonders from the 70s.

Ann: Okay, I'm going to give you three.

Samantha: Okay. Got it. I'm ready.

Ann: Okay. Michael Murphy's 'Wildfire.'

(Both laughing)

Samantha: Oh yeah, that's a good one! And every little girl, right? Every little girl loves that song!

Ann: (singing) And he called him Wildfire.

Samantha: Uh, it's so dramatic. It's tragic. It has a horse in it. What more could you want, as a little girl?

(Laughing)

Ann: Um, okay. And then, um, oh god, what was it? Alan O'Day, 'Undercover Angel.' And I'm going to give you one more.

Samantha: Was that 70s?

Ann: Yes.

Samantha: Okay.

Ann: Yes. M, Pop Muzik.

Samantha: Oh, right. That's a good one.

Ann: And that was the very first New Wave hit. 1979. First New Wave hit to hit the Billboard charts at like number one.

Samantha: Okay, well, that's interesting.

Ann: (reciting like the song) New York, London, Paris, Munich, everybody's talking about Pop Muzik! And what's interesting about M, is that M was a man named Robin Scott who put out folk albums in the late 60s and 70s.

Samantha: He was a multi-faceted individual. Don't will label him!

Ann: I'm not labeling that anybody, everybody has the right to do Folk and New Wave and Opera, if they want to,

Samantha: If they want to. Two songs that loomed very, very large for me in early childhood, I'm going to say seven—I was around seven. And what's interesting is I've always associated these songs with one another. They're both story-songs, and then it turns out they were both written by the same songwriting team. And I never knew that before. They are: 'Billy, Don't be a Hero.'

Ann: Oh yes! That is a crazy song.

Samantha: It is a crazy song.

Ann: That is a crazy song. I just heard it the other day and I was listening to the words, I'm like: this song is really dark. It's a really torturing song. Go ahead.

Samantha: Yeah, it's okay. The other song that was a story-song, that I totally associate with 'Billy, Don't be a Hero'—even though it's a completely different song, and was by a different artist: 'The Night Chicago Died.' Same songwriting team!

Ann: Really? That's fascinating.

Samantha: Yes. I never knew that all these many years.

Ann: Wow. One of my all-time favorite songs that I will crank up as loud as possible, which is Gloria Gaynor's 'I Will Survive.'

(FX Cheer!)

Samantha: Oh yes! Yes!

Ann: Written by two men.

(FX Crickets)

Samantha: What?!

Ann: Yes.

Samantha: 'I Will Survive' - the anthem of women?

Ann: Yes! Written by two men.

Samantha: Ohhhh....

Ann: They had been fired from Motown. They were songwriters from Motown. They were fired from Motown—

Samantha: (laughing) And this was their revenge?

Ann: This was their—like, you know, I will survive this. And I was thinking: it does not compare. That does not compute, but yes, it was written by two men.

Samantha: Wow. I just remember gatherings of disgruntled women, smoking cigarettes and drinking, you know, Tequila Sunrises, and singing that song. So pissed at men. "That's right, sister, I'm going to survive too!"

(Lively Jazz music plays)

Samantha: It's huge for both of us that we are fans of British Invasion 1960s Pop and Rock.

Ann: Right.

Samantha: Um, so we, I mean, that was—a big cornerstone of our identity as adolescents was that we were like Beatle People or, you know—

Ann: We were the nerds.

Samantha: Yep. We were known for this. I remember in junior high, having this boy I had never spoken to before in my life, walk up to me and give me this Beatle sticker and say: "Do you want this?" I was like: "Do I want this, uh, why?" He's like: "Well, you like the Beatles, right?" I was like: "Yeah, okay. Thank you." And he just walked away. I never talked to him again. I did not know that boy., and how he knew—

Ann: Really?

Samantha: And so we weren't quiet about it, I guess let's put it that way, that we were into the Beatles, even though we were young.

Ann: Yeah. Right. Exactly. Exactly. Do you remember in junior high, when I had those gold initials on my big, giant, big honkin' glasses that spelt out "The Who?"

(Laughing)

Samantha: Oh, I wish I did remember this, but no, I don't!

Ann: Oh no. There's--there's pictures. There's pictures of this: on the left lens, it said "The" and on the right lens it said "Who"—

Samantha: I mean, it doesn't shock me.

Ann: —in scripty, old lady gold things.

Samantha: Wow. Wow. Yeah, so, obviously we were into these bands. We were very, very into these bands and the Stones—

Ann: We read everything we could about them.

Samantha: We did; we studied them like a religion.

(Lively Jazz music plays)

Samantha: What was huge when we were kids—around nine, ten years old—you already mentioned Elton John—he was huge. And David Bowie. I mean, David Bowie was white hot.

Ann: Yes. So I have a confession to make.

Samantha: Okay, I'm listening.

Ann: This is about David Bowie and Alice Cooper. So I had older cousins and I'm thinking, this is like '72 to '74, because then we became estranged and I didn't see them for like 30 years. And they were, you know, four, five, six years older than me. So they were definitely teenagers at the time. And they had posters of Ziggy Stardust and Alice Cooper.

Samantha: Sure.

Ann: It scared the hell out of me.

Samantha: Of course it did.

Ann: I did not understand. So I was afraid to hear David Bowie, because I thought something wrong was going to happen to me. I don't know why. And definitely Alice Cooper. But by the time I was 13, 14, I was down for Bowie and Cooper.

Samantha: Right.

Ann: I mean, but when I was a little kid, oh god, I wouldn't even go into their bedrooms. Those posters scared me so much.

Samantha: Well, I have a related story, which is, uh, I was nine. We lived in an apartment building that had a pool in the center, and that was the first time I'd ever actually had a pool where I lived, and I learned to swim at this residence.

And we had quite a few teenagers. I'm pretty sure I was the youngest kid in the building, but we had quite a few adolescents and teenagers in the building. We would all hang out around the pool during the summertime. And I developed this huge crush—oh my god—on a boy named Jeff.

Ann: It's always a Jeff, isn't it? It's a Jeff, Todd or Scott—

Samantha: Oh yeah, I had a Todd too. Yeah. Anyway, this was a Jeff and he was 16 and I was nine.

Ann: Oooh.

Samantha: Yeah, I always liked older men.

Ann: Oh, don't get me started.

Samantha: Yeah, okay. So I would do this thing where I would like—he would be on a poolside lounge chair, and I would sit near his knees and I would sort of play with the hair on his legs.

Ann: He let you do that?

Samantha: I know; it's shocking.

Ann: Oh my god! I mean, it seems so innocent, but at my age, It's like: "You did what?!"

Samantha: Yeah.

Ann: Go to your room, little girl!

Samantha: Exactly! So it was kind of like, there was a little bit of a running joke in the crowd of like: "Oh Samantha has a crush on Jeff and you know, isn't that cute?" And so I was—it was one of those days where we were all at the pool and I was playing with the hair on his legs and he said: "That's it!" And he stood up. He scooped me up in his arms and he went running up the stairs, like, you know, a staircase that's on the outside to go up to, where you can get to the second floor. Bursts into his apartment, into his bedroom, threw me on his bed and then said: "Hey, do you like my poster?" And it was a poster of David Bowie from Diamond Dogs.

Ann: Oh my god! Wow.

Samantha: But he then proceeded to tell me that that was really what David Bowie looked like, that he was really half dog—

(Both laughing)

Samantha: —and it was one of those things like: I don't really believe that, but...Maybe?



(Lively Jazz closing music 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](http://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!