

STILL LIKE THAT OLD TIME ROCK 'N' ROLL

BY TRISTAN BRONCA
PHOTOGRAPHY BRADLEY REINHARDT

**CLASSIC ROCK IS THE GO-TO
SOUNDTRACK AT THE LAKE. YOUNG
OR OLD, WE ALL WANT TO TURN BACK
TIME—AND WE THINK WE KNOW WHY**

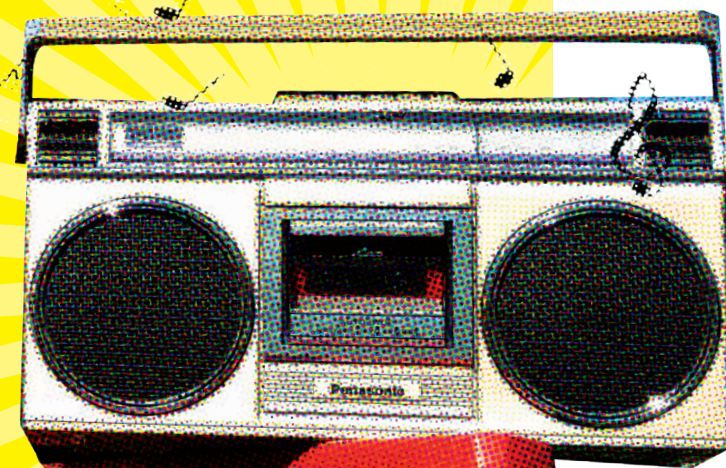
WE WERE ALL HAVING A PERFECTLY pleasant evening at our friend's cottage on Kennisis Lake, Ont., when Jeff decided to bust out his old CD collection. Twelve of us were there on a night late in the summer, two generations—us in our twenties and our parents in their fifties—who had been friends for almost two decades. Jeff started cycling through the albums, playing one or two tracks from each disc before the next song request rolled in: the Eagles, the Clash, Tears for Fears, the Police.

Then, as is known to happen when strong opinions and strong drink commingle, things got a little tense. Jeff, who has long held the title for the most laid-back grown-up I know, was trying to accommodate the enthusiastic requests from Norm, a big Led Zeppelin fan, as well as those from my mother (Norm's partner), who earnestly refers to most bands of Norm's choosing as "drug music." Catherine, Jeff's wife, someone who carries the quiet authority of a high school principal, was the diplomat, which worked pretty well until you threw into the mix my cocksure younger brother, who had some thoughts of his own about what we should be listening to.

Some were not happy about the length of time it was taking for that song they requested four songs ago to make it to the front of the queue. Some were upset that after the delay, their song was switched prematurely. Some simply could not believe that anyone would request *that song right now—are you kidding me?*

But then something wonderful happened. Even with all the opinions in the room, Jeff managed to find a song that was, in a word, perfect: "Sister Golden Hair" by America. For the next three-and-a-half minutes, no one asked him to change it. He turned up the volume, and the atmosphere in the room completely changed: all that tension dissipated, and we danced.

ALL OF MY COTTAGE MEMORIES have a classic rock soundtrack. You know the songs (cue radio announcer voice): the greatest hits of the '70s and '80s. Bands like the Rolling Stones, Kiss, the Doors, Queen, and dozens of others shaped the feel-good rock 'n' roll ethos, and their songs remain timeless little packages of those same feelings. These songs also tend to appear early



SONG OF THE SUMMER

What's your song of the summer? We asked cottagers and contributors to tell us about their favourite jams, for this year and every year:



ROY MACGREGOR

To a child of the Sixties, three songs come instantly to mind. “**Summer in the City**” by the Lovin’ Spoonful; the Beach Boys’ “**California Girls**,” which speaks instantly of summer, though it also speaks, in 2020, of adolescent objectifying and is a bit...awkward...for a guy in his seventies to be bellowing; and the song that still says “summer” best for me: the Rascals’ “**It’s a Beautiful Morning**.” This being the year of international lockdown, there’s something magical in lyrics that tell you, “It just ain’t no good if the sun shines / When you’re still inside / Shouldn’t hide, still inside, shouldn’t hide.” Better, I say, to celebrate a song that begins with nothing more than “It’s a beautiful mornin’ / I think I’ll go outside a while / And just smile...”

Roy MacGregor is working on the Ice Chips series for young readers with his daughter Kerry MacGregor, helping an Indigenous leader with a book on First Nations leadership, and writing a memoir. Tune in to the Cottage Life Podcast this summer for a chat with Roy.



CHEF MICHAEL SMITH

“**Spread a Little Happiness**,” by Nathan Angelo, is the first song that I added to our “Inn At Home Playlist.” Sometimes you hear a song just when you need to, and the poetry of the lyrics say it all in this one. Once you hear it, you will understand why—the clarity and perspective seemed perfect for these trying times.

Michael Smith owns the Inn at Bay Fortune, on Prince Edward Island. The Inn is celebrating Picnic Days this summer with takeout picnic feasts for Islanders (and others, once travel restrictions are lifted).

COLIN AND JUSTIN

Colin: “Kill the Lights”

by Alex Newell and DJ Cassidy with Nile Rodgers. It’s an utterly, utterly joyous sound, basically Chic, Sister Sledge, and Martha Wash thrown together in a blender to create the most delicious disco smoothie ever. I pop this on at the start of the day for a musical energy boost that immediately de-stresses and makes me dance.



Justin: “Deacon Blues”

by Steely Dan. Bliss, heaven, *nirvana*, this track reminds me of the first time I spent a summer in North America, when I was 14. I bought a Sony Walkman and the lady behind the till threw in a Steely Dan compilation album. As soon as summer’s first breaths arrive, I’m flat out on a sun lounger with those melancholic “jazzrockpop” sounds flooding my mind. And suddenly I’m that easy-breezy 14-year-old boy all over again, with not a care in the world...

Colin McAllister and Justin Ryan’s show Great Canadian Cottages is now available to watch on the Cottage Life channel on the Apple TV app.

KEN HEGAN

“**In the Evening**” by Led Zeppelin is my pandemic survival song. I’ll play it nightly to feel good about the darkness. First, it drifts into focus like a storm building across the lake. Then, after 59 ghostly seconds, the guitars and drums kick in to assure you that the day is done.

Ken Hegan is working on Goners, his cottage zombie movie, and Brewed, a comedy series set in a craft brewery.



on in our musical education, which is to say they’re bigger than our tastes and they bridge generations.

Many of the bands we listened to that night on Kennisis, and on other cottage visits over the years, belong to a sub-genre I’ll call “cottage rock.”

What is cottage rock? For most Canadians the first musician who probably comes to mind when you mention that term is Kim Mitchell, who is as good an answer as any to the question “What if Ontario were a person?” They’d say that the Platonic ideal for a cottage rock song is “Patio Lanterns.” Which, fine. There is a time and a place for that song, and that place is definitely the cottage, but to me, Mitchell’s bit always felt a little on the nose, a brand of Canadiana as caricature. (To the uninitiated, Mitchell was known to wear an OPP hat over his legendary mullet in his music videos.) I still love that song, but I think cottage rock is broader than that, and that’s because my ideas about cottage music have been shaped almost exclusively by one Ontario radio station: 104.1 The Dock.

One of the moments I most closely associate with the cottage happens almost every weekend of the summer before I even get there. It’s when we pass Hwy. 9 on our way up Hwy. 400—the place where The Dock begins to come through clearly on the dial. The Dock is how I discovered bands such as Chilliwack, April Wine, and Blue Rodeo, and it is the reason why, to me, they will always have an unshakeable connection with the cottage.

But I think there’s another reason “cottage rock” has to be classic rock. The cottage feels to me like a place stuck in time; nostalgia is braided through the spirit of the place. Think of the radio, itself a technology as rustic and dated as some of the weathered parts of cottage life. It is particularly well suited to the long drives, the yard- and dock-work outside, and the very important activity of having a few beers lakeside. It exists in the background, a charming companion that, unlike your favourite Spotify playlist, doesn’t require constant futzing to find an agreeable song.

Classic rock seems to fit in a similar way. It could have something to do with what has been called “the soundtrack effect,” based on the aesthetic theory of

Arthur Schopenhauer, the German philosopher. As Schopenhauer wrote, “when music suitable to any scene, action, event, or environment is played, it seems to disclose to us its most secret meaning, and appears to be the most accurate and distinct commentary on it.” In other words, it’s not just that the right music sets the mood; it also reveals something special about a place that would otherwise be invisible, like how the right amount of salt in a dish brings out all the other flavours. That’s what cottage rock does at the cottage.

But maybe you think that’s a pretentious load of crap, as Rob Bowman, a music scholar and associate professor at York University, does. “I don’t think there’s any such thing as cottage music,” he wrote to me in an email. “When I was a kid at my uncle’s cottage they played jazz as that was the popular music of his generation. In another 20 years, Beyoncé, Bieber, and Drake could be cottage music.”

That’s not untrue. Most cottages are owned by baby boomers, which is to say, people who grew up when classic rock was just rock. And not just baby boomers but white, affluent baby boomers. Their musical tastes have certainly shaped my ideas about what cottage rock is. Amid generational and demographic shifts, as cottage country begins to include more people of different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, the music we listen to will change. I think that’s definitely a good thing, something we can all celebrate and enjoy.

Still it’s difficult for me—someone who grew up after the proverbial heydays of classic rock and who otherwise has little personal connection to these songs—to believe that in another 20 years, I’ll see cottage rock replaced by other songs that forge similarly meaningful links to cottage country; as if Justin Bieber could punch out and plaster over a Tragically Hip-sized hole in this particular part of my musical imagination because his songs have greater emotional salience with a new generation of cottagers than “Little Bones.” There has to be more to it than that.

The people at The Dock sit somewhere in the middle, between the business of crafting playlists for the current generation of cottage

HOPE SWINIMER

This year we’ll be enjoying “**Need a Little Hope**,” a song one of my interns, Rachel Schmitz, wrote. She sang it to us as a surprise at the end of one of our huddles (meetings).

The new season of Hope Swinimer’s show, Hope for Wildlife, is now airing on the Cottage Life channel.



CHANTAL KREVIASZUK

My fave song of summer has to be “**Bobcaygeon**” by the Tragically Hip. Not much needs to be said about this one, I guess. Wine. Willie. Location...all the mentions. Stars. I am on my way back to the dock with my dog in the canoe, someone is asking me if I want a beer or a crisp glass of wine, and I can hear the song in the distance... Day or night, it’s always right at the cottage.

Chantal Kreviazuk’s new album, “Get to You,” is out now.



SHANTELE AND YANNICK BISSON

Shantelle: As an ex-professional dancer, it’s so hard to choose just one. I love them all. I recently started running and find the song that really gets me pumped is “**Closer**” by the Chainsmokers. Also, I love everything Bruno Mars and really love his song “**Marry You**.” Our anniversary is on May 26th, and we always play that song, and it always feels like summer on that day.

Yannick: I don’t have one favourite summer song, but I will say that I do love rolling up to the cottage listening to Moose-FM because they play all my favourite summer songs. If I had to pick one catchy tune I’ve been hearing a lot, it would probably be “**Jungle Love**” by the Steve Miller Band.

Shantelle Bisson’s first book, Raising Your Kids Without Losing Your Cool, is out now. Yannick Bisson’s show, Murdoch Mysteries, has been renewed for a 14th season.

What you said on social media:

Marylou Lawrence, via Facebook
“**Crushin’ It**” by Brad Paisley.

@RHFES_Chief83
“**Life Is a Highway**,” by Tom Cochrane, because nothing beats a well-earned cold beer after a long and crowded highway drive to the cottage.

@kellyneely8
“**All Summer Long**,” by Kid Rock, reminds me of endless, worry-free summer days at the cottage!

Janis Cooley Leonard, via Facebook
“**Patio Lanterns**.” Kim Mitchell is a good ol’ Canadian boy, and there is

always a chance you can see him sing this live at the Kee to Bala or one of the outdoor summer music festivals. I can’t help but smile when this feel-good song comes on the radio.

@CPudel
“**Love Shack**” by the B-52s. Who could resist a 20-person car, glitter everywhere, and a funky little shack to get down and have a dance party?!

@HubertPellerin
“**In the Summertime**,” by Shaggy, because it’s fun and rhythmic and makes you want to reach up and touch the sky. Perfect car song with the sunroof open.

@adashofchris
A couple of summers ago, going to the cottage, “**Suddenly Last Summer**,” by the Motels, came on as we were driving down the weedy, dusty road. It’s a melancholic song, and we were going somewhere sublime, but it imprinted on me.

@ChrissyCakes1965
“**Bobcaygeon**” by the Tragically Hip. R.I.P. Gord.

@Lesleyfeipel
“**Dancing in the Moonlight**” by King Harvest. The vibe and the sound captures the essence of cottage life.

owners and the more romanticized ideals pushed by yours truly. To them, cottage music is “the music people in our demographic grew up with and were influenced by,” says Mora Austin, an executive at Bell Media, the station’s parent company. “It’s what they are singing around a campfire, playing on their dock or on their boat. We like to think of The Dock as an escape—it’s the ‘Margaritaville’ of radio. Like comfort food or your favourite pair of slippers. You know every song, and it makes you feel good.”

If you were selling the cottage life, that might be your pitch. But, to me, even that doesn’t quite evoke life at the cottage the way those songs—and only those songs—can.

MAYBE YOU’VE EXPERIENCED MOMENTS like that impromptu dance party. It’s entirely possible that yours came with a different song. Maybe you don’t see what classic rock has to do with the cottage, in which case, I apologize sincerely for trying to convince you otherwise.

Still, the soundtrack on the lake feels like a pretty clear indication that I’m not the only one who thinks this. While The Dock’s listenership surveys don’t include cottagers, its regular weekly audience usually clocks in at around 110,000. But the area to which it broadcasts—from Parry Sound and Huntsville in the north to Wasaga Beach and Collingwood in the west to Alliston in the southeast—brings in many more thousands of visitors on summer weekends. And many of them are tuning in to The Dock’s blend of hits from the ’70s, ’80s, and ’90s.

That night when “Sister Golden Hair” came on, I knew I’d heard it before. It might have been when we were driving through the boreal forests and past the towering Shield rocks off the Trans-Canada Highway. It might have been on some other day on a different wide, glassy lake, with the lingering smell of damp firewood in the air. Or maybe it was during a previous visit to Kennisis. But maybe not. I doubt anyone else who was there that night felt the exact same thing. But I am sure we all felt something we couldn’t have felt anywhere else. 🐾

Tristan Bronca listened to a lot of April Wine while writing this story.

@Frankszabo2
“Friday I’m in Love” by the Cure.

@Lmaldev06
“Radar Love,” by Golden Earring, reminds me of summer at my camp.

@Lisamalama
Supertramp! Brings back fabulous cottage memories out in the boat on hot sunny days.

@JobieIobrien
“Rock the Boat” by Hues Corporation. We used to love rocking the tippy canoe and capsizing, just to swim under and talk in the air bubble. Fun childhood.

@Tara.salvatore
“Summertime” by DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince. I love the smooth cool vibe, and it always gets me up dancin’.

@Muskokaval
“Island in the Sun” by Weezer. We took all six of the grandchildren out in the boat from our island—all those little voices singing it. Such wonderful memories!

@Tammi_inwoodsawyer
“Margaritaville” by Jimmy Buffett or “Escape (the Piña Colada Song)” by Rupert Holmes.

@Aloofnewf
“Pink Moon” by Nick Drake.

@Aimee_wilson
“This Is How We Roll” by Florida Georgia Line.

@Tiffany_davey
“Soggy Bottom Summer” by Dean Brody. The kids and I crank this one!

@Chessiegrama
“A Summer Song” by Chad and Jeremy. It was a perfect song on a sailing trip in Sweden.

@Amarakate_
“Loving Is Easy” by Rex Orange County. Cocktail in hand, you can’t not dance to it.

@Cbart03
“Vacation” by Dirty Heads.

@Kimgaskincasey
“Sunday Morning” by Maroon 5. Just a really feel-good summer song!

@Hl.whynot
“Saturday Night” by Bay City Rollers. An oldie but a goodie. Turns any summer Saturday night into a good night.

@Randalldoug
“Saturday in the Park” by Chicago.

@Kaminidesilva
“Summer of ’69,” by Bryan Adams, just brings back my memories of Sri Lanka, where I grew up.

@Sailsnorthern
“When Summer Comes” by Oscar Peterson.

@Binkyrem
“Fame,” by David Bowie, will always remind me of summer. It played non-stop on the radio in July and August 1975. Great memories.

@Humeford
“In the Summertime” by Mungo Jerry.

@Sheppan
“Buzzin’” by Shwayze.

@Boubikes
“Summer Breeze” by Seals and Crofts.
#because

@Courneyacontracting
“Walking on Sunshine,” by Katrina and the Waves, brings back hot summer days of my teenage years: boating, swimming, not a care in the world. Good friends and much laughter. Every time I hear it, it takes me back.

@j_mags_
Anything Tragically Hip.

**What’s the ultimate
cottage song of the summer?**

**Vote for your favourite tune
at cottagelife.com/song**