

**NAME THAT TUNE.
ON SECOND THOUGHT, DON'T.**

Got a song stuck in your head? Researchers at Kansas State University say that merely thinking about a certain tune — even if it's not actually playing — can summon vivid memories of a time, place or emotion. "That's why oldies stations are so popular," said Richard Harris, professor of psychology, in a press release announcing the study. "Not because the music is good but because it reminds us of specific times in our lives." (And here we thought oldies stations were popular because America still can't get enough of "I'm Henry the Eighth, I Am.")

In the study, the researchers asked teenage music listeners to pinpoint meaningful songs from five life stages: early childhood, grade school, middle school, high school and college. Then, 124 different American subjects between the ages of 18 and 20 picked the most memory-evoking song from each category, indicating their predominant emotion: happiness, anger, sadness, love, hate, fear, surprise or disgust.

Let's get to the results. For the early childhood stage, the runaway winner, with 1 in 4 votes, was "Sesame Street." However, as happened to so many of us in real life, taste unraveled in the grade-school era, with the highest percentage of participants pointing to Vanilla Ice's "Ice Ice Baby". (Our predominant emotion at this result: a potent mix of "sadness," "fear" and "disgust.")

Things get better in middle school, with 36 percent reporting strong memories associated with Coolio's "Gangsta's Paradise." (No, Weird Al Yankovic's "Amish Paradise" parody doesn't show up on the list, and, yes, we think it would give Coolio a run for his dead presidents.) High school is a real battleground, with Green Day's "Good Riddance (Time of Your Life)" narrowly edging out, believe it or not, "Eye of the Tiger" by Survivor. Even though the latter song was released in 1982, before many of the study participants were born, 24 percent of them said it provoked a strong memory of high school sporting events . . . we're guessing the specific memory is "getting crushed by our crosstown rivals."

So what does it all mean? "Music may be something that our brains are primed to understand and enjoy in the same way we're primed to understand language, although language is much more fundamental," Harris said.

Either that, or Vanilla Ice is *finally* primed for that comeback.

**IS YOUR DINNER PARTY DRAGGING?
NEED A CONVERSATION STARTER?**

You could do worse than mention you've just finished reading the January edition of the *Journal of Peace Research* and were quite taken by David Fielding and Madeline Penny's article, "What Causes Changes in Opinion About the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process?" Discuss.

**OUR FAVORITE STUDY ABSTRACT
OF ALL TIME**

Sometimes we come across a piece of academic research so vital, so flabbergasting and frighteningly prescient, that we simply read on in awe. Here, then, is a reprinting of an abstract by lead author and senior forensic pathologist Stephan A. Bolliger of the Centre for Forensic Imaging and Virtopsy at the University of Bern in Switzerland, from the most recent issue of the *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*. To wit:

"Beer bottles are often used in physical disputes. If the bottles break, they may give rise to sharp trauma. However, if the bottles remain intact, they may cause blunt injuries. In order to investigate whether full or empty standard half-litre beer bottles are sturdier and if the necessary breaking energy surpasses the minimum fracture-threshold of the human skull, we tested the fracture properties of such beer bottles in a drop-tower.

"Full bottles broke at 30 J impact energy, empty bottles at 40 J. These breaking energies surpass the minimum fracture-threshold of the human neurocranium. Beer bottles may therefore fracture the human skull and therefore serve as dangerous instruments in a physical dispute."

Science marches on.

**FROM THE "NOT VERY INTERESTING
WITHOUT THE PARENTHETICAL" FILE**

A recent issue of the journal *Communication Theory* included the paper "Getting Over Our 'Illusion d'Optique': From Globalization to Mondialisation (Through French Rap)." **M2**

— MATT PALMQUIST

Have a cocktail-napkin idea to pass along?
Send e-mail to matt.palmquist@miller-mccune.com.