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## Chapter Seven

# Remembering Songs through Telling Stories: Pop Music as a Resource for Memory

José van Dijck

### Introduction

“You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave...” The knife-sharp guitar solo following Don Henley’s last words rack up a series of emotions and memories in my brain. Ever since my definite return from California, where I lived from 1987 to 1991, the song is intensely colored by experiences: staying at a desolate hotel in the desert, driving a pick-up truck up north on Highway 101, playing a frisbee at Pacific Beach. The song is also inevitably associated with the old tape recorder in my apartment’s living room, a red ghetto blaster from which many awkward traveling tapes originated. The memories triggered by this song are so personal, and yet, they feel like a huge cliché. “Hotel California” must have featured in the top five of almost every golden oldies hit list in the past decade. It’s unlikely that there are many people who are now in their forties who have no memories at all upon hearing this song; younger generations have heard the song and the stories connected to it from their parents or through radio DJs. The song persists in both my personal and a collective memory. You can try to forget it, but you can never escape it...

In this chapter, I propose to study the interrelation between personal and collective memories of popular music, as these memories are constructed through stories *of* and *about* recorded music. Pop songs are often considered vehicles for reminiscence; they glue particular experiences to memory. While these memories may have happened in reality, actual references can never be verified. Memories tend to alter each time we recollect them (Van Dijck 2007). As all memories do, musical memories reflect as well as construct experience. Recollective experiences are often articulated in personal stories (Nelson 2003; Wang and Brockmeier

2002). The question I raise in this *Sound Souvenir* contribution is: how do we construct personal and collective musical memory through stories? What function do narratives have in the construction of musical memory?

To analyze the intertwining of personal and collective memories of recorded music, I will turn to a readily available online set of narrative responses generated through a national radio event, the *Dutch Top 2000*. Since 1999, a public radio station in the Netherlands (Radio 2) has organized a yearly, widely acclaimed, five-day broadcast of the 2000 most popular songs of all times – a list compiled entirely by public radio listeners who send in their five favorite pop songs.<sup>1</sup> During the event, the station solicits personal comments, both aesthetic evaluations and memories attached to songs. Besides having disc jockeys read these comments aloud during a live broadcast, they are also posted in their entirety on an interactive website. In addition, the station opens up a chatbox for exchanging comments. The result is an extensive database of comments and stories, constituting an intriguing window on how recorded music serves as a vehicle or resource for memory.

### Recorded Pop Music and Autobiographical Memory

Recorded pop songs are often signifiers of individually lived experiences; they are also items of culture that we select and collect to store in our minds or in our private “jukeboxes” to be recalled at a later moment in time. We can’t possibly retain all the music we hear in our lifetime, so there must be a mechanism accounting for why certain melodies get stuck in our long-term memory while others do not. In order to last, a song needs somehow to catch our attention, to stand out from other experiences or perceptions. American ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino (1999, p. 224) has tackled the intriguing problem of musical memory by approaching music as a system of signs. He uses Peirce’s notion of indexicality to explain how music is not *about* feelings but rather involves signs *of* feeling and experience. Musical signs, he says, are sonic events that create effects and affects in a perceiver the way a falling tree creates waves through the air. Rational effects or conscious responses are responses that involve reasoning – the interpretation or appreciation of music. The affect of music lies not in the sounds or words *per se*, but in the emotions, feelings, and experiences attached to hearing a particular song. Musical signs thus carry strong personal connotations, betraying an emotional investment. At the same time, however, members of a social group share indices proportional to common or communal experiences (Frith 1987). Musical signs thus integrate affective and identity-forming meanings in a direct manner, and it is through the recollection of songs that we may come to see the nature of this integration.

We may gain valuable insights in the connection between personal and collec-

tive memory by applying narrative analysis to stories relating how people feel affected by recorded popular music. Many respondents to the *Top 2000* create stories around certain songs to help them communicate a particular feeling, mood, or to express their affective ties to them. Through these stories, we learn how people came to invest emotionally in a song, how the song came to mean something to them in the first place, and how they retained that attached meaning – a meaning they like to share with a large anonymous audience. The following comment was posted in response to the U2 song “With Or Without You”:

My father died suddenly in November 1986. That night we all stayed awake. I isolated myself from my family by putting on the headphones and listening to this song. The intense sorrow I felt that night was expressed in Bono’s intense screams. I will never forget this experience, and each time I hear this song I get tears in my eyes. (Jelle van Netten)

Memories tied up with extreme pleasure or intense sorrow, like the one above, are likely to linger in our minds, due the brain’s tendency to store sound perceptions along with their affects and somatosensory impact (Bower and Forgas 2000). The (explicit) narratives created out of these memories are deemed worthy of sharing because they resonate with both universal and intimate experiences.

The comment above implicitly suggests that a memory aroused upon hearing a song is an exact repeat of an original listening experience stored in one’s memory. The idea of a record reiterating the same content each time it is played is subconsciously transposed to the experience attached to hearing music. People’s expectation that they will feel the same response each time a record is played stems from a craving to relive the past-as-it-was – as if the past were also a record. Many of us want our memory of an original listening experience to be untainted by time, age, or life’s emotional toll. And yet, it is improbable that repeated listening over a life time would leave an “original” emotion (if there ever was such thing) intact. Instead, the “original listening experience” may be substituted by a fixed pattern of associations, a pattern that is likely to become more brightly and intensely colored over the years.<sup>2</sup> A memory changes each time it is recalled, and its content is determined more by the present than by the past. As Geoffrey O’Brien eloquently puts it in his musical memoir: “The age of recording is necessarily an age of nostalgia – when was the past so hauntingly accessible? – but its bitterest insight is the incapacity of even the most perfectly captured sound to restore the moment of its first inscribing. That world is no longer there” (2004, p. 16).

As much as people believe their “original” experiences remain intact, cognitive research confirms that musical remembrance alters with age. An American clinical study shows a significant difference between how older and younger people remember recorded music. Whereas young adults connect recorded music with

memories of specific autobiographical events, seniors use familiar songs as stimuli to summon more general memories and moods from the past.<sup>3</sup> Recorded music infused with feelings elicits stronger, even if less specific, autobiographical memories later on in life. Since the narratives posted to the *Top 2000* website do not systematically disclose the respondents' ages, I cannot confirm or disprove researchers' empirical observations. In general, though, respondents who give clues to their age as being over forty-five tend to refer more to nostalgic moods triggered by specific songs than respondents who identify themselves as being young adults. However, this might just as well be attributed to the fact that a majority of songs featured in this collective ranking were popular in the era when baby boomers came of age.

Recorded pop music may also construct a cognitive framework through which (collectively) constructed meanings are transposed onto individual memory, resulting in an intricate mixture of recall and imagination, of recollections intermingled with extrapolations and myth. One listener, in response to The Beatles' song "Penny Lane," comments on the oddity of certain music invoking an historical time frame she never lived through:

This song elicits the ultimate Sunday-afternoon feeling, a feeling I associate with cigarette smoke, croquettes [the Dutch variant of the hamburger], and amateur soccer games. This feeling marks my life between the ages of five and fifteen. A nostalgic longing of sorts, although I have to admit I was not even conceived when this record became a hit song.... (M. Klink)

The respondent transposes the general mood of an era onto her childhood, even though these periods are distinctly apart. It is not unthinkable that she has projected a general impression of a decade, generation, or *Zeitgeist* onto this particular song (Kotarba 2002). Recall and projections thus curl into one story even when the respondent realizes that remembrance cannot possibly be rooted in actually lived experience. Mixing memory with desire or projection is a common phenomenon acknowledged by cognitive scientists and neurobiologists (Damasio 2003, pp. 93-96).

Turino has theorized about this unmistakable intertwining of personal and collective memory (1999). Narratives about music often braid private reminiscences in with those of others or connect them to larger legacies. Certain songs become "our songs," as they are attached to the experience of various collectives, be it a family or peer group. Verbal narratives appear to be important in the transmission of both musical preferences and the feelings associated with them, to the extent that it becomes difficult to tell "lived" memories from the stories told by parents or siblings (Misztal 2003, p. 84). This does not mean, of course, that children uncritically adopt their parents' memories, nor, for that matter, their musical taste.

Young people construct their own favored repertoire by relating to peers as well as to older generations either positively or negatively. Musical memories become the input – resources to adapt to or resist – used when building one’s own repertoire. A few assorted comments posted to the *Top 2000* website may illustrate this. One respondent, reacting to the Doors’ hit song “Riders on the Storm,” writes:

One of the things my father passed on to me was his musical taste. His absolute favorite was Jim Morrison, and as a child I would sing along with every Doors’ song. Remarkably, my father thought “Riders on the Storm” was one of the worst Doors’ songs, but I think it’s one of their best. (Joanna)

What we see here is an inter-generational transfer of personal and collective heritage, not only by sharing music, but also by sharing stories. Many comments posted on the website testify to this cultural process of sharing memories connected to songs. Like photographs, recorded songs relate to personal memories, and it should come as no surprise that older people are eager to pass on their stories along with their preference for certain recorded music.

Stories appear as a distinct aid in remembering the mental associations attached to a particular kind of music. These stories, like the memories themselves, are likely to change with age, and as much as we like to capture the “original affection” triggered by music, we want the story to freeze that feeling for future recollection. Yet stories, like records, are mere resources in the process of reminiscence, a process that often involves imagination as much as retention. In other words, our personal musical repertoire is a *living* memory that stimulates narrative engagement from the first time we hear a song to each time we replay it at later stages in life. It is this vivid process of narrative recall that gives meaning to an album and assigns personal and cultural value to a song.

### Recorded Music and “Technostalgia”

Technologies and objects of recorded music are an intrinsic part of the act of reminiscence. Even though their materiality alters with time, generating resentment, their aging may partially account for our very attachment to these objects. Personal memory evolves through our interactions with these apparatuses (record players, CD players, radios, etc.) and material things (records, cassettes, digital files), as both are agents in the process of remembering. Media technologies and objects are often deployed as metaphors, expressing a cultural desire for personal memory to function *like* an archive or *like* a storage facility for lived experience. When it comes to music, it is easy to see where this metaphorical notion originated. The record’s presumed ability to register – to record and hold – a particular mood, experience, or emotional response can be traced back to the record’s historically as-

cribed function as a material-mechanical inscription of a single musical performance. It is almost a truism to expect technologies and objects to replay the presumed original sound of a song, notwithstanding our awareness that objects and apparatuses, like bodies, wear out, age, and thus change over time.<sup>4</sup> The “thingness” of recorded music is unstable, and yet this knowledge does not prevent a peculiar yearning for the recreation of audio quality as it was first perceived, evidenced for instance by the recent “vinyl nostalgia” accompanying the surge in CD sales (Katz 2004; Rothenbuhler and Peters 1997). People who use recorded music as a vehicle for memories often yearn for more than mere retro appeal: they want these apparatuses to reenact their cherished, often magic experience of listening.

It may be illustrative to filter this kind of technostalgia from the comments posted on the *Top 2000* website, espousing the integrality of technology to people’s reminiscing. Many respondents recall the sound equipment through which they first heard a particular song, emphasizing how it defined their listening experience. Writing in reaction to The Beatles’s song “The Long and Winding Road,” a woman writes:

The first time I heard this song I almost smuggled into my transistor radio. This was the most beautiful thing I had ever heard. When I got The Beatles’ album, I remember pushing the little Lenco-speakers against my ear (they were sort of the precursor of the walkman). Whenever this record is played again, I get on my knees, direct my ears downward, pushing them toward the speakers on the floor. I still want to live in this song.... (Karin de Groot)

In this comment, the experience of listening seems inextricably intertwined with the primitive equipment that first enabled its broadcast – and that memory has become partial to its reenactment in contemporary stereo systems. Needless to say, the reenactment never brings back the equipment and the context of the original sound – a fact that the respondent is very aware of – but certainly brings about the intended affect.

In other instances of reminiscence, the role of technology should be understood indexically rather than metaphorically, adhering to Thomas Turino’s Peircian apparatus, as it stands for taking control over one’s sonic space. Memories of an original listening experience often include allusions to a newly acquired freedom to listen to songs, alone or with friends, outside the living room, where the soundscape was usually controlled by the musical taste of one’s parents. Many are still committed to the sounds mounting from the radio (especially transistors and car radios), a medium that first confronted the baby boom generation with pop music. In contrast to personal stereos (record players or tape recorders), radio sound is ephemeral yet material in its texture. Listening to music on the radio often allows for a momentary “insider” sensation that the listener is part of something larger. It

creates relationships between the self and others that contribute to an individual's sociality (Tacchi 1998; Rothenbuhler 1996). Narratives that testify to the liberating role of music technology abound on the website postings to the *Top 2000*. Read, for example, this reaction to the Herman Hermits' song "No Milk Today":

Because this was the first song to wake me up to the phenomenon of pop music in the years 1966-1970, it reminds me of how magical it felt to just listen to my small transistor radio, often secretively, because I needed to hide it from my parents. When I listen to this song now, I turn up the sound as much as I can, preferably when I am driving my car and listening to old tapes. (Maarten Storm)

For this respondent, hi-fi equipment was (and remains) a technology that endowed him with the liberty to create his own sonic space. There are many responses similar to this one, all attesting to the importance of stereos in forming an autonomous sense of self and the mental-physical room to develop one's personal musical taste. Some respondents explicitly relate how their attempts to capture favorite songs played on the radio resulted in tapes of very bad quality. And yet they still treasure their amateur recordings, not in spite of, but *because of* their obvious technical shortcomings.

Audio artifacts and technologies apparently invoke a cultural nostalgia typical for a specific time and age. The ability of digital recording techniques to meticulously recapture a worn-out recording and reproduce its exact poor auditory quality, may offer only partial solace to a cultural yearning. Joseph Auer (2000) has suggested that every new medium in a way authenticates the old, meaning that each time a new audio technology emerges on the scene, the older ones becomes treasured as the "authentic" means of reproduction or as part of the "original" listening experience. In the digital era, scratches, ticks, or noise can be removed from tapes to make old recordings sound pristine, but they can also be added to make a pristine recording sound old. Sound technologies thus figure in a dialogue between generations of users. Think, for instance, of a young musician's sampling of original pop songs into digital sound experiences, or the creative use of old telephone sounds as ring tones on teenagers' cell phones.<sup>5</sup> The dialogue with outdated technologies, frequently used in contemporary pop songs, symbolizes recorded music's ineffable historicity. Paradoxically, sound technologies are concurrently agents of change *and of preservation*. With the new digital technologies, sonic experiences of the past can be preserved and reconstructed in the future.

Incontrovertibly, the materiality of recorded music influences the process of remembering. "Recorded music" has become a rather generic container for vinyl albums, cassette tapes, CDs, and MP3 files stored in computers or on hard disks. But the status of each item varies and that variation affects their function in memory formation. Music listened to from live radio, records, cassette



tapes, or MP3 players each have a different emotion attached to them. Prerecorded CDs or records are more valuable as objects to keep and collect, whereas MP3s or cassette tapes have a different function: they are more like a back-up. As music theorist Mark Katz (2004, p. 171) has shown in his study on sound capturing, which includes a survey among young downloaders of recorded music, a large majority of respondents still buys prerecorded CDs, often after having listened to them in rerecorded form or after having shared them in whatever mechanical or digital form: "The tangibility of the CD is part of its charm. A collection is meant to be displayed, and has a visual impact that confers a degree of expertise on its owner." In semiotic terms, the indexical function of the musical sign is bound up with its auditory materiality: hearing a familiar song on the radio constitutes a different memory experience than playing that very song from one's own collection, perhaps even more so when these recordings are played from MP3 formats. As one respondent to the *Top 2000* puts it:

It is so strange: I keep most songs [featured in the *Top 2000*] on CDs and I have the entire list of songs stored in MP3 format on the hard disk of my PC, so I can listen to these songs any day any time. And yet, I only swing and sing along with my favorite songs when I hear them on the radio, during this yearly end-of-the-year broadcast.... (Jaap Timmer)

Materiality and technology often become integral to memory, something that is unlikely to change with the advent of digital equipment. As long as listening to music remains a mediated experience, memory will be enabled and constructed through its material constituents.

### **Shared Listening and Exchange**

Memories attached to songs are hardly individual responses per se. Recorded music gets perceived and evaluated through collective frameworks for listening and appreciation. Individual memories almost invariably arise in the context of social practices, such as music exchange and communal listening, and cultural forms like popular radio programs, live concerts, and so on. These social practices and cultural forms create a context for reminiscence and become vehicles for collective identity construction. Sociologist Tia DeNora (2000) observes in her ethnographic study of how young adults use audio equipment in everyday life that recorded music helps individuals evolve into social agents. Since the introduction of sound recording in the last decade of the nineteenth century, sonic experiences have been assigned meaning as collective memories through performative rites, like shared listening and exchanging music. Listening to recorded music has always been a social activity: listening with peers or sharing musical evaluations with friends helps

individuals to shape their taste while concurrently constructing a group identity (Frith 1996).

It is therefore understandable that the sociability of listening to pop music becomes an inherent part of people's memories. For instance, one respondent adds the following general comment to the *Top 2000* chatbox:

It was 1976, and with a number of friends I organized disco events for the local soccer club. These events always turned into choose-your-favorite-pop-song tournaments. The *Top 2000* reminds me of those days. (Henk Vink)

If you read through the *Top 2000* comments, almost one in every ten relates how groups of people, varying from three-generation families at home to labor crews and office personnel, stay tuned to the five-day, non-stop event and listen *as a group*. One woman entrusts to the chatbox how listening to the *Top 2000* during a house remodeling project facilitates previously deadlocked communication between grandfather, parents, and children. The radio event engenders collectivity at the same time and by the same means as it generates collective memories. The actual sharing of music and singing along with a group hence becomes part of the emotion triggered by a song.

Even if some sound technologies by nature of their hardware promote listening to music as a solo activity, they can still be deployed towards social activities. Ever since the emergence of the Walkman in the 1970s, personal stereos have been associated with the construction of individual sonic space. As Michael Bull (2000, p. 40) argues, personal stereos can function as a form of "auditory mnemonic" in which users attempt to reconstruct a sense of narrative within urban spaces that have in themselves no narrative sense to them. And while it is true that the Walkman, just as its most recent reincarnations – the MP3 player and Discman – are designed with individual urban listeners in mind, these recording technologies can also be put to social use and serve as collective listening instruments. Read the posting of an eighteen-year-old respondent to the *Top 2000* website, who commends the 1961 song "Non, Je ne regrette rien" performed by Edith Piaff:

Last summer, half a dozen of my classmates [and I] drove to France to celebrate our high school graduation. We played a lot of oldies, and as both cars had their own iPods attached to the stereo system, we sang along as loud as we could with our self-compiled repertoire. Now we've all gone off to different colleges, but next month we'll have a reunion, and I'm sure we'll bring our iPods along, so we can bring back some cherished memories. (Willem van Oostrum)

The iPod plugged into the car's stereo system, allowing these students to sing along with its recordings, is inscribed in the narrative recollection of a generation of

young adults. They consciously create their own sonic memories, using the newest devices to recreate golden oldies. Rather than being a mere vehicle for individual listening and storage of favorite songs, the MP3 player thus figures as agent in the conscious process of building up a collective memory. MP3 files lend themselves particularly well to multiple and effortless exchange, although such digital materiality, in recent years, has become the center of a controversy over stealing and freely downloading recorded music. As Jonathan Sterne (2006b) argues, however, the new material quality of recorded music obviously deserves to be examined in its own right as it generates new cultural practices involving mixing and sharing.

To sum up, cultural practices such as communal listening and swapping recorded music appear crucial in understanding how and why we construct shared memories through narrative experiences. Musical memories are shaped through social practices and cultural forms as much as through individual emotions. New digital technologies allow music fans to customize their favorite collections of songs and use them as a symbolic resources in the construction of identity and community. Let us now turn to the particular role of the *Top 2000* itself as a media event that actively tries to instill a sense of collectivity in its listeners. In what sense do the *Top 2000* stories of individual memories contribute to a sense of collective memory and communal cultural heritage?

### **The Top 2000 as Collective Cultural Memory**

The postings to the Dutch *Top 2000* website nicely illustrate how “mediated memories” are shaped precisely at the intersections of personal and collective memory. Stories about songs and the memories connected to them constitute channels for shaping individuality while concurrently defining the larger collectivity we (want to) belong to – ensuring autobiographical as well as historical continuity. Recorded music becomes part of our collective memory at the same time and by the same means as it gets settled into our personal memories. Theorized from a semiotic-cultural perspective, personal emotions and affects attached to songs are articulated in explicit memory narratives that people like to exchange – reminiscences of lived experience expressed through musical preferences. These stories are not only about emotions triggered by music, but directly bespeak musical memory as it relates to personal and group identity often handed down from generation to generation. Through shared musical and narrative experiences, people construct collective reservoirs of recorded music that become our cultural heritage.

Building a national heritage of favorite popular music is obviously the purported goal of the *Top 2000* and an important contribution to its success. The eminent value of creating collective musical repertoires, as American historian William Kenney (1999, p. xix) points out, has proved vital to the “ongoing process of indi-

vidual and group recognition in which images of the past and present could be mixed in an apparently timeless suspension that often seemed to defy the relentless corrosion of historical change.” But as important as creating a cultural heritage may be as a key to understanding the *Top 2000*’s popularity, its success as a national event – more than half the population of the Netherlands tunes into the event every year – can hardly be explained by the nation’s craving for a collective repertoire. The significance of this event as a platform for exchanging personal stories of musical reminiscence cannot be overstated as a crucial function in the formation of collective memory. It is in the public spaces between individuals and communities that memory gets shaped and negotiated. The process of narrating, discussing, and negotiating personal musical reminiscences and collective musical heritage is far more important than the ultimate ranking of songs.

In 2006, after realizing that listeners were interested specifically in storytelling, the Dutch *Top 2000*’s organizers decided to launch a separate “storytelling platform” as part of the annual event. Listeners had become used to sending in their spontaneous comments, as illustrated by the comments above. But to allow space for more “literary” contributions, the radio station called for short stories relating a specific musical memory or experience. In the months leading up to the last week of December, listeners were invited to send in personal short stories (750 words maximum) based on a specific song featured in the ranking. The response from listeners was overwhelming: over a thousand listeners sent in their stories. A jury selected the ten best stories, and during a special celebratory radio event in January, the winning stories were read out loud by professional speakers, embellished with suitable background sounds, which was followed – of course – by the song. All of the stories were given to the Dutch National Archive, which has created a special website to make the collective heritage of these musical stories permanently accessible to everyone interested. The collection will grow as people add more stories each year. Storytelling has now become an integral part of the musical event.

The cultural historian Paul Grainge (2000) proposed a relevant distinction between nostalgia as a commercial *mode* and a collective *mood*. In the case of the *Top 2000*, nostalgia emanates from a collectively experienced mood, in contrast to a conception of nostalgia as a consumable stylistic mode espoused by commercial outlets, such as the Top 40 or oldies stations. The *Top 2000* thrives on the inseparable exchange of songs *and* stories. Through a combination of the annual radio event, website, and television broadcast, this multimedia platform offers space for consensus building a national heritage of pop songs, while simultaneously serving as a podium for collective nostalgia and communal reminiscences. The extensive archive of responses generated by the Dutch *Top 2000* constitutes a valuable source of data on personal musical memory and cultural heritage formation. It opens up new perspectives on the importance of public space for sharing personal stories and constructing a collective musical kinship, which in turn feeds

our individual creativity and identity. The *Top 2000* encourages both individual memories and collective recollecting. Indeed, it is vital to keep alive a vibrant heritage of old and new music shared through stories, because it provides individuals with cultural resources to understand their pasts and guarantee a shared interest in a communal future, both of which are essential forces in people's long-term commitment to music. This musical heritage of pop music, constructed through songs and stories, may become the epitome of cultural memory: you can check out any time you like, but you can never leave...

### Notes

1. Started as a one-time millennium event in 1999, the Dutch national public radio station, Radio 2, invited listeners to send in their personal all-time top five songs, resulting in a collective *Top 2000*. See <http://top2000.radio2.nl/2005/site/page/homepage>. The response to this one-time event was so overwhelming that the station decided to repeat it the next year, and the tradition has continued ever since. In December 2004 and 2005, the national *Top 2000* was selected by well over one million Dutch citizens who sent in their personal top five songs. The number of people involved in such an event is unprecedented in the history of mediated events in the Netherlands. In that year, almost 6.5 million people listened to the radio broadcast, 5 million people watched the accompanying daily television shows and the website registered 9.2 million page views in just five days. Cast against a population of 16 million, the event engaged more than half of all Dutch people over twelve years old. The comments used in this article are derived from the 2004 database. The database is no longer publicly available, but has been archived by Radio 2. The comments used in this article were originally in Dutch; all translations are my own, and I have identified the respondents in the same way they identified themselves on the (public) website. I would like to thank Kees Toering, station manager and initiator of the *Top 2000*, for making all statistics and archives available.
2. A few cognitive psychological studies have shown how older adults' memory grows more positive over the years; older adults are more motivated than younger adults to remember their past in emotionally satisfying ways, and older adults' positive bias in reconstructive memory reflects their motivation to regulate emotional experience (see Mather 2004; Kennedy, Mather, and Carstensen 1994).
3. Clinical psychologists Schulkind, Hennis, and Rubin (1999) tested how various age groups remember through music. For their experiment, the researchers tested two groups of adults: younger adults between eighteen and twenty-one years old and older adults between sixty-five and seventy years old. They made them listen to a series of songs that were popular between 1935 and 1994, but only appeared on the hits lists during a defined period (in contrast to evergreens). The subjects were asked whether each song reminded them of a general period or a specific event from their lives.

4. On the material temporality of recording, see Sterne's discussion on "triple temporality" in *The Audible Past* (2003), pp. 287-333. For a historical discussion on the relation between materiality and functionality of audio technologies, see Morton (2000).
5. In the early stages of digitization, Alan Goodwin (1988) already argued for a new postmodern theory of musical creativity, based upon the new digital cultural practice of sampling. However, the politics and aesthetics of sampling are beyond the boundaries of this article's thesis.