

Christine Sixteen



SEPTEMBER 18, 1970. JIMI HENDRIX IS FOUND DEAD in the basement apartment of a London hotel at the age of 27. Officially deemed a drug overdose, though as with Kurt Cobain conspiracy theories came in droves and ranged from ambulatory malpractice to a mob hit to straight suicide.

I effortlessly blinked forward to this date soon after leaving my father's house in 1969. Since I wasn't scheduled to be born until 1974 I would still be within my theoretical existence window, and thus still had time to see how the matchmaking events I set into motion had played out. Ideally Dad would have parlayed our stolen songs into fame, lost the girl, and be ready to accept the persuasion that would set him on his path towards Mom, me, and eventually a Nelson-free sister.

Dad had moved out of his parents' house since I was last here. From the looks of things, my grandparents had moved on as well. The house was missing, replaced by a parking lot and a record store. Even though I sometimes had trouble finding it, this was a house I had known all my life. Now it was gone before my time. The area behind the house had changed as well. A large red barnlike structure stood where the field once was. I wondered how I managed to cause such a major ripple.

"Who Knows?" from Jimi's *Band of Gypsys* live album played as I entered the record shop, hinting at the right year. The employees listening in silence with glum looks on their faces confirmed the rest. The store was an obvious enough first step to figuring out what went astray with it being new and all. Locating Dad was my first logical task. Browsing the bins of vinyl proved to be out of the question with my inability to physically touch any objects, and the few potential record-buying customers in the store weren't in the right alphabetical section for me to read over their shoulders. Not that reading over their shoulders would be a valid option unless the person browsing decided Dad's album was one they wanted to purchase. Otherwise I'd just see a brief glimpse of the cover as it flipped by like a forgotten page of a photo album. And this assumed he even recorded an album in the year I'd skipped over.

The featured items on display didn't help much either. I stopped for a moment when I saw a poster advertising Don McLean's *Tapestry* album. I wondered why I hadn't thought to teach my Dad "American Pie" when I had my chance, and also if the follow-up album would still exist at all without that staple hit song as the title track. Granted, Don McLean would likely still be making music, but he's more or less only known to the masses for that one extended classic. He'd still have "Castles In The Air," "Vincent," and the notoriety of being the inspiration for "Killing Me Softly," but in the scheme of things *American Pie and Other Hits* was a bit of an oxymoron.

Another display showed "brand new" sixty-minute Memorex recordable audiocassettes. Is it real, or...?

Just as I was beginning to long for the convenience of online shopping—or at least the days of clearly labeled CDs with white stickers on top—I noticed a small section of wall racks holding cassette tapes. Unfortunately the selection was quite limited. It only took a couple of minutes to determine that an album by my father was not here, unless in a daze he found God, changed genres and took up gospel while I was out. Scanning the room I noticed another, wider set of wall racks in the back of the store that held more cassette tapes. Closer inspection revealed they were not cassette tapes, but eight tracks.

The evolution of music formats has always fascinated me. It's always bigger, better, faster, more! Striving for the largest capacity in the smallest possible space without sacrificing aural quality. Vinyl to eight tracks to cassettes to compact discs to mp3s. A man made example of natural selection