

My friend Cindy P just sent me a link to The Beatles "Let It Be" on YouTube (see above) and it really took me back. Cindy was in the UWM Union today, setting up for an event, and overheard a student playing this song on a piano, and it took her back. "it really made me stop. breathe, think... she wrote.

I know the feeling. It took me back to the winter of 1970, Christmas time. I'll be dating myself here, but I must confess that Let It Be was my very first record album purchase; the original release. The Beatles were already broken up by the time it came out, but an 8 year old hardly cared about such things.

My uncle Leon, my father's older brother, had sent each of us some money, probably \$10. My older brother Steve had spent some of his on a record, I will spare him the embarrassment and not say which one. I was so jealous! Well, not to be outdone I got all fitted out in my snow gear (we used to have real winters back then) and made the trek around the corner to Green's bookstore, where Panther Books is now, on Downer and Hampshire. My \$10 bill creased into the palm of my hand inside my mitten.

I marched right up to the New Releases rack and waited for my glasses (a childhood curse) to unfog, and then tried to decide what to buy. There was Johnny Mathis and Bobby Gentry, but the only band that I recognized, other than the records my older siblings had already purchased or received as gifts, was the Beatles. Abbey Road and Let It Be were both in the rack, but Let It Be had a nicer cover, I thought, and besides it was an *album* it opened up, that made it automatically better.

I bought it for \$5.59 and took it right home, the spare change jingling in my mitten and the four \$1 bills pressed into my palm. I asked permission to use my mother's Westinghouse portable record player and settled in to listen to the record and read, I mean really *read* the liner notes. I can still remember the first strains of "Two Of Us" coming through the tinny speaker of that phonograph. I loved it all, though I didn't really understand some of it (I probably still don't).

In a way, listening to it tonight, that thin YouTube sound quality playing on my tinny notebook speakers was very much like listening to that old vinyl on the paper coned speaker in my mother's old portable Westinghouse record player (with a penny taped to the tonearm). Paul McCartney's piano playing on Let It Be still sends a shiver down my spine, and "Long and Winding Road" still makes me sad. In many ways all of my music purchases since that first one have paled.

I still have that vinyl, and when my turntable works I will get it out and play it. All except for "Maggie Mae," which suffered just a little too much from my tin-can-and-sewing-needle days of homemade phonograph experimentation. But that's what makes it genuine; it is older and worn and a little the worse for wear, like I am.

Thanks for the memory, Cindy. A long and winding road indeed!