

I Am My iTunes Account Matt Haemmerle

It's that time of my life when I must complete all of those pesky college applications. This means that I also need to answer difficult essay prompts. Though there are many different essay questions, there is one ultimate question that underlies each of these superficial questions--"Who am I?" Can I really answer this?! I am a human, something more complex than any short essay is capable of depicting. There can't possibly be a way of elegantly, concisely, and accurately showing who I truly am. As I ponder this, I glance up at the incandescent glow of the computer screen on the desk before me and open my iTunes account. All of this college application stuff is beginning to get to me. I need to listen to The Beatles to cheer myself up. As the mellifluous sounds of "Here Comes the Sun" gently trickle from the speakers of my computer, the answer to this ultimate question strikes me in a flash of clarity. It sounds absurd, but it is true. I am my iTunes account.

As I scroll down my iTunes account, it becomes apparent that I am an avid listener of The Who, Boston, The Doobie Brothers, Bruce Springsteen, and The Rolling Stones. The euphoric, head-jerking anthems of classic rock are the motor of my daily life. After a long day of distressing tests, befuddling lectures on inverse trigonometric functions, and extracurricular activities, I can't wait to hop in my car and drive home, jamming to the music that keeps me moving. Classic rock motivates me, gives me a surge of life, is the impetus to come home from school, and somehow harness the energy to tackle all of my homework. Classic rock represents my determination.

Midway down my iTunes account, highlighted by the cool blue bar of my cursor, wafts the intimate musical flow of Miles Davis. Here swirls an ambience composed of the ring of the piano, the penetrating, resounding, yet soothing cry of the trumpet, and the pulsating ripples of drums and cymbals. Jazz is free, spontaneous, and introspective. Sometimes, at night, the pulse of jazz will trigger random thoughts. I remember vocabulary words I read days ago but didn't know the meaning of, or things I heard on NPR or in philosophy class that I didn't understand or yet have an opinion on. I find myself going to the Internet out of curiosity, a habit of mind prompted by jazz. Miles Davis is the epitome of adaptation, improvisation, and extemporaneity. I was faced with the challenge of adaptation three years ago when I moved from Chicago to Florida. I had to readjust to a new environment and rebuild my life. Adaptation, I discovered, took time and the will to change. Moving was making a rhythm with no sheet music, something that both Miles Davis and I have mastered. Jazz represents my loose screws and quirks, as well as my ability to adapt and improvise.

Scrolling further down my iTunes account, I see the music I listen to late at night on the way home from forensics tournaments. Except for the glow of my iPod, the inside of the charter bus is always pitch black. The effervescent chatter of students can be heard throughout the bus, but not by me. I prefer to reflect in the solace of the music of U2, Coldplay, and Pink Floyd. This is my "thinking music." With placid sounds simmering in the back of my mind, I attempt to discover esoteric wisdom, transcendental knowledge, whatever strikes me as profound. I contemplate long, progressive chains of thought, and play out arguments in my head. Sometimes on clear nights while driving home, I'll gaze out the window at the stars, billions of white specs frozen in place, scattered across the boundless night sky. Above are planets,

constellations, galaxies. I shiver and am enraptured by some unknown anxiety. Maybe it's my reaction to the anguished voice of U2's Bono straining my ears. Or perhaps it is the fact that I am not as eternal as the night sky, where under it our planet seems so trivial, each individual's life even more so. On a night like this, I made up my mind that I would seize every opportunity, see all I can see, and do all I can do. My place on earth is temporary. My spirit, though, is perennial, just like the voices and melodies of so many musicians. It will live through the people I meet and have an impact on, and the people they meet, and so on. This is why I want to be sure that the difference I make, the imprint I leave behind on earth, no matter how small, is a good one. These are the sort of thoughts that are drawn out by my "thinking music," which represents my reflective nature.

My iTunes account is fully representative of me, my personality, my intentions, and my life experiences. It is the epitome of my self. I am what I eat, and I am also what I listen to. My iTunes account holds the soundtrack to my life.