

BROCK'S BANTER: Sliding Scales

By Brock Weir

Adele.

Amy Winehouse.

Snoop Dogg.

Coolio.

The Spice Girls.

Cyndi Lauper.

The Beatles.

Frank Sinatra.

Hell, even Glenn Miller.

Whatever music you consider the soundtrack of your life, I want to see a show of hands right here and now.

Is anyone here immune from the jarring feeling of flipping on a radio station, happening upon a song that was an anthem of your youth, only to hear the proverbial record scratch in your head when the song you grooved to just a little while ago was part of a golden oldies lineup?

Let's be real: if you're over the age of 20 and your hand is down, you're lying to yourself.

Personally, in recent years, this has happened more times than I care to admit ? and this experience is not limited to song.

As a fan of black and white films, it might go without saying that my favourite cable station is Turner Classic Movies (TCM), which prides itself on playing bona fide classic films uncut and commercial free.

Imagine my surprise a couple of weeks ago to find A League of Their Own, a film I saw in theatres, as part of the lineup.

Surely a movie from the nineties ? admittedly, one of my favourite pictures from the nineties ? was an odd fit in a schedule that regularly includes Gone with the Wind and, just a few days previously, had aired a block of silent Buster Keaton comedies.

Then, reality struck. The late, great Penny Marshall directed Geena Davis, Tom Hanks and Madonna in A League of their Own in 1992, nearly 27 years ago. When I first clapped eyes on TCM in 2004, certified classics like Annie Hall and Coming Home were already station staples, yet somehow, despite them having a completely different look and feel to my eyes, they fell comfortably within that quarter-century window.

So, there's no denying it: the music, films and television shows I grew up with are now considered classics or, worse, vintage, and, chances are, so are yours.

It's a fact of life, we have to accept it, and we see examples of it all around us well beyond the tube, theatres, and streaming services. It wasn't all that long ago when, if someone died in their seventies, it was considered a good, long life. Nowadays, when someone draws their final breath in their late 80s or early 90s, it doesn't really seem that old at all.

Our ideas 10, 20, or 30 years ago of what it meant and looked like to be 60 or 70 are wildly different, almost laughable, to how we see those ages to be today.

The goals we might have set for ourselves 10, 20, 30 years ago on what we'd like to accomplish before the ages of 40, 50, 60, 70, 80 now not only seem perfectly doable, but just about as easy as a walk in the park.

Our perceptions on aging and time seem to be on a sliding scale and I'd argue this has nothing to do with perceptions attributable to whatever age we happen to be at this very moment.

Consider last week's discussion in Council Chambers on Library Square.

Planners behind the downtown revitalization project presented, in living colour, their vision for the site.

While the proposed year-round water feature/skating rink has been touted as a hallmark of the plan, my eyes were fixated on the planned addition to the Church Street School.

As presented, its brownish rectangular shape was, to my eyes, a pleasant echo of what previously stood on the site: the former home of the Aurora Public Library, a landmark destination for generations of Aurorans.

Looking towards the Church Street School from the current library, the proposed new addition suggests the building that was there before, albeit repositioned on a jaunty angle.

If elements of the previous building could not be salvaged and incorporated into whatever was ultimately built on Library Square, this is, in my opinion, the next best thing.

Incorporating visible elements of what was there before was my own personal preference, but mine is only a singular voice.

You might ask yourself why on earth I would want to preserve any part of an otherwise non-descript boxy building that was well past its useful date. My answer is this: because examples of this period of local architecture are fast becoming endangered species. In the world of heritage preservation and advocacy, there seems to be an arbitrary, yet elusive, cut off date on what constitutes heritage or, at its base, simply ?old.?

Most buildings that come up for consideration under the ?heritage? banner pre-date 1920, with special emphasis on buildings that dotted Aurora's landscape during the Edwardian and, in particular, Victorian eras.

Little regard is paid to buildings and structures dated after the fact.

While Aurora might have few examples of Art Deco or Art Nouveau-style buildings to speak of, what makes the vaguely Functionalist architectural style of the former Canada Post building on Wellington Street any less worthy of preservation as, say, that local pinnacle of Gothic Revival architecture that is Hillary House National Historic Site?

Or, for that matter, the classic lines of the former CIBC just south of Yonge and Wellington over the Durbar-inspired Church Street School?

Or, the largely Brutalist ? and wholly unique ? former TD Canada Trust building at the same intersection, over the former De La Salle College at Yonge and Bloomington?

For that matter, where in this heated and ongoing debate over the future of Aurora's so-called Stable Neighbourhoods were the arguments that a number of the homes in question, particularly in Regency Acres and Aurora Heights, are Aurora's most prime examples of mid-century modern architecture?

If any such arguments were made, I did not hear them at the podium, either from residents or Council members.

It's often said in heritage debates that in order to know where we're going, we need to know where we've been. But we've come a long way since 1920 and what Aurorans built, used, and occupied since that time are important way-finders that should be given their due, with protection, plaques, or a combination therein.

As should the individuals who built them and flourished within their walls.