



CONFESSIONS OF AN ANALOGUE ONLY VINYL MAN

by

Val Herman

“I know it’s only rock’n’roll, but I like it, like it, yes, I do”

(The Rolling Stones)

A **BIG** collection of music

In my Vinyl Record Collection, I have about:

- 800 7” vinyl 45 rpm single records
- 1,040 12” vinyl 33 rpm long player (LP) records
- (And there are also about 850 cassettes).

The number of tracks (tunes) that are in this Collection are about:

- 1,650 for the 45’s (2/record, but there are some EP’s –Extended Players --with 4 tracks)
- 13,200 for the 33’s (12/record, but there are some double albums), and
- 17,850 for the cassettes (21/cassette, half of which are pre-recorded, half of which I have recorded)

That adds up to 32,700 tracks.

But there is some overlap – the same track on more than one 45, 33 or cassette – say, 15%, so the number of different tracks equals 27, 795.

Let’s call it 28,000.

If each track lasts for 3 ½ minutes, this amounts to:

- 98,000 minutes of continuous listening time, or
- 1,633 hours of continuous listening time, or
- 68 days of continuous listening time.

As I said, it’s **BIG**.



Panasonic Stereo Music System Record Player

I'd like to play some of the tracks for you. Correction: I'd like to play all of the tracks for you. But you probably haven't got nearly ten weeks to listen to my records and cassettes for 24 hours a day – starting, if we were to do this alphabetically, with Abba's 'Chiquitita' and finishing with ZZ Top's 'Viva Las Vegas' – so you'll have to settle for a short description of the Collection instead.

I've organised this description into four main sections:

1. Why vinyl?
2. The singles
3. The LPs
4. Musical 'Bits and Pieces' (which you might recognise as the title of a Dave Clark Five hit from 1964)

1. Why vinyl?

In my Collection of recorded music, I have:

- No CDs
- No DVDs

I don't know what other digital ways of storing music there are, but I'm not interested in any of them at all, thank you very much, and I don't want to know anything at all about iPods, digital downloads, MP3s, iTunes, and all that digital nonsense.

You are reading the words of an AOVM (this is an acronym for 'Analogue Only Vinyl Man'. You are probably unfamiliar with it – because I have just made it up.)

I'm an audiophile.

When I first started listening to music, it was analogue only. The choice of format was between vinyl records or reel-to-reel tapes. In the household I grew up in, we only listened to records (although when I was in my early teens my father dabbled with a tape recorder for a short period). In my early years they were black shellac 10" 78 rpm records that broke very easily, and, when they weren't wanted, could somehow – I forget the technique – be made into flower pots: the hole in the middle of the record served as the drainage hole at the bottom of the flower pot. And we also had some LPs. I remember 'The Sound of Music' and 'Carmen'.



That was the 'software', if you like. The 'hardware' in the Herman household in the 1950's and early 60's was a radiogram – a combined radio and record player that was as large as one of today's medium-sized chest freezers. It was big, and it was solid, and as a child you could sit on top of it and listen to the radio - - but you weren't allowed to do so when a record was playing, because if you jiggled about too much you'd make the needle jump & scratch the record.

I would listen to rock'n'roll on the radio in the mid to late 50s when it first became popular. It was a new and controversial style of music then, and, initially, was not given much air-time by the BBC. But as it gradually became popular it could be found on more and more programmes that were broadcast on the BBC's Home Service and Light Programme. I remember listening to:

- 'Pick of the Pops', the best of them all, and broadcast on Saturday evenings and then Sunday afternoons
- 'Saturday Club', another very good programme, which was broadcast on Saturday mornings
- 'Family Favourites', which we would listen to while eating our Sunday lunch
- 'The Billy Cotton Band Show', also on a Sunday afternoon, and "Wakey, wakey!" if you'd fallen asleep after eating too much roast beef and Yorkshire pudding
- 'Music While you Work', not that I did in those days, but it was broadcast on weekday mornings.

And then there was Radio Luxembourg on 208 metres, which played serious rock'n'roll late at night, but the reception was terrible in Darlington, and often I could only get a decent signal on my portable transistor radio if I hung half way out of my bedroom window.

So, the beginnings were family records played on the family radiogram, radio programmes, and I suppose TV programmes too, but I can't remember when we got TV – although I do have fond memories of 'Six-Five Special' and 'Juke Box Jury', but only in later years.

When I had some pocket money I would spend it on Dinkies and sweets, and later I would spend it on 45s and sweets, and later still I would spend it on 45s and cigarettes, and later still I would spend it on 45s and cigarettes and girls.

45s were, occasionally, affordable, 33s much less so -- and really only when I had been given a record voucher, which wasn't all that often, or had worked at the local garden centre or at my father's factory.



45s were the medium of the day, ideally suited to the 2 minute buzz of a classic rock'n'roll tune. They were wonderfully suitable for capturing the raw, the basic sound of rock – go into the studio, record the song very quickly (in very few 'takes'), and get out of the studio, because the longer you hang about in there, the more it's going to cost. Some of the greatest rock songs were

recorded in only 2 or 3 takes. (The Beatles recorded their entire first album –14 songs -- 'Please, Please Me', in one 12-hour session.)

Now this to me is what rock'n'roll is all about. It is raw, it is basic, it is instant, and it should sound like it is being played live. That's how rock started. But it hasn't ended up like that – not when a group takes 3 months to "perfect" a drum solo, or 3 years to 'finish' an album in a studio.

Digital (re-)mastering? Forget it! I remember listening to an interview on the radio with Ringo Starr when a digitally re-mastered – or should that be 'enhanced'? -- version of a Beatles album was released. "At last, Ringo, we can really hear what you were playing on the snare drum on that track!" "I don't want you to hear it", said Ringo. "It wasn't good drumming. I was paralytic at the time. I don't remember a thing about it."

So one reason why I stick to vinyl is because it captures the heart and soul of rock – albeit if it is fuelled by alcohol, drugs, paranoia, craziness or whatever – it is authentic. Another reason is that I have resolutely, 100%, I will not be budged, stuck to a decision I first took in the early 1980's when CDs started becoming popular. There was a lot of advertising hype at the time that went along the lines of “Replace your old LPs with new CDs, and listen to new, better, improved music.”

No, thank you very much. There's nothing wrong with my LPs. I don't accept that digitalising the music makes it better (although I accept that for other forms of music, classical music, for example, this can be a valid argument). I don't see why I should spend money to duplicate my music collection. Or should that be triplicate it, because there's bound to be a new format coming out soon, and then here we go again? (We don't usually replace our favourite books when a new edition comes out: why should we be expected to do so for our favourite music?) I don't see why I should have to invest in new hardware – a CD player – because my tried and trusty record player is now redundant? Etc, etc.

That's why I'm Analogue Only Man.

And that's why nowadays, I only listen to rock'n'roll, and I only listen to vinyl records. I grew up with it. It helped shape my life. I like it. I know quite a lot about it. I can even play some of it. Sometimes I sing along to it. I know some of its history. I've seen some famous rockers and rollers. I don't intellectualise it. I enjoy it. It's my sort of music. There's nothing better.

Let's move on to my Singles Collection.

2. The Singles

I have, as you might recall, 800 or so 7" vinyl 45 rpm records. About 60% of these are from the 1960's, a few from the late 1950s, more from the early 1970's, and the rest from a few years later. Many of the records are still in their original paper covers with the record companies' logos on them. These covers tend to tear very easily when a record is continually taken out of it, and I have had to replace some of the original covers with new, white, plain paper ones.



Fidelity portable record player from the 1960s

Most of my Singles Collection is stored, in alphabetical order (by artist), in 4 wooden ammunition boxes made by 'Excelsior of Gent/Gand' that I bought at Tongeren market in Belgium. They are just the right size for 45s. The boxes are nearly full – they'll hold about another 50 records, and after that I'll have a mini-crisis on my hands as I won't have anywhere to store any new acquisitions. I keep about 40 records in a 'toaster'-style record rack near one of my record players: these are the ones I currently play, and the selection gets changed at regular intervals.



I have no idea what was the first 45 I bought. I probably started buying records in 1957-58, about the time I changed from primary to secondary school. Not many of my earliest records have survived – they’ve been lost, swapped, given away, exchanged, and, in one very sad case – involving my early Duane Eddy and Johnny and the Hurricanes records – stolen. The records that I have had the longest are probably, ‘Bird Dog’, by

the Everly Brothers (1958), and ‘Teen Beat’ by Sandy Nelson (1959). (I have older records, but I bought those in later years.)

Occasionally, my father would bring home records from work, but he wasn’t a DJ. He worked in a clothing factory, and on the main part of the factory floor about 400 machinists, cutters, etc would make artificial (or ‘fun’) fur coats. They would listen to the BBC programme ‘Music While you Work’ and other programmes while they worked. And they would listen to records that had not yet been released that had been supplied by record companies who wanted to get some audience feedback. When the feedback had been gotten – what should be the ‘A-side’, what should be the ‘B-side’? – the copies of the records stayed with the company -- Alfred Morris Furs -- and Dad would bring them home for me. I still have some of these records, labelled ‘Not for Resale.’

Now I buy records whenever I can. Every Sunday morning when I’m in England – that’s 4 or 5 times a year – I buy 20-30 records from Charly at the Car Boot Sale at Scorton in North Yorkshire. He used to have an incredible collection – and was a mine of information about rock – but then he sold all of it, and started selling ice-cream instead. I’m pleased to say that he has now given the ice-cream business up, and gone back to his first love, records. Charly and I always have an argument, about how much the records I want to buy are worth – “That’s on an original RCA label, and must be worth at least eight quid” -- before we settle on a price of 30p per record. I also buy records from a stall at Darlington Market, but they are much more expensive – “That’s on an original Columbia label, and must be worth a tenner.” “I’ll give you two quid for it.” “Three, and it’s yours.” “OK.”

Usually, I try not to pay more than £2 or €2 for a 45, but there are exceptions to that rule.

I try – oh! do I try -- to find decent rock 45s at French vide greniers (flea markets), but I’m very, very rarely successful. The only 60’s 45s you can find there are from French artists, and they are so bad they should be left there. What happened to all the Beatles and Stones 45s that the French bought in the 60’s? Why don’t they turn up at vides? Why can you only find 70s and 80s stuff there? One day, by the law of averages, I will discover a stash of good, low-price 60s 45s in a French flea market, and then I will go on a buying spree.

I don't catalogue my 45s in a proper way, I just arrange them in alphabetical order in the ammunition boxes. As I find it impossible to remember what I've got, I often end up buying copies of records I already have -- 4 copies of the Animals' 'House of the Rising Sun', for example.



The last batch of records I bought from Charley included:

- 'Waterloo' Sunset', by the Kinks
- 'Save the Last Dance for Me', by the Drifters
- 'Diamonds', by Jet Harris and Tony Meehan
- 'Chain Gang', by Sam Cooke
- 'Starry Eyed', by Michael Holiday
- 'Mr; Tambourine Man' by the Byrds

By it's very nature, this Collection can never be complete – there's just too many records out there for one part-time, amateur, not-very-affluent person to collect in the way that I collect them. I am, however, trying to collect all of the original Beatles records that appeared on the Parlophone label. I'm currently missing eight of them (although I have four of these on German and French labels, but they don't really count), so if you have any of the following records and want to donate them to my Collection please contact the Curator (that's me, folks!):

- 'Love Me Do'
- 'A Hard Day's Night'
- 'Ticket to Ride'
- 'Yellow Submarine'/'Eleanor Rigby'
- 'Penny Lane'/'Strawberry Fields Forever'
- 'Hello Goodbye'
- 'Lady Madonna'

- ‘Get Back’
- ‘Something’/’Come Together’



If.....

- ‘If I Ruled the World’ (Tony Bennett).
- ‘If I Can Dream’ (Elvis Presley).
- ‘If I Could’ (David Essex)
- ‘If This is It’ (Huey Lewis and the News)
- ‘If Dreams Came True’ (Pat Boone)
- ‘If I Were a Rich Man’ (Topol)

If.....

I would buy a Wurlitzer Juke Box, and put my favourite 45s on it, organised by decade. These would be my Top Ten selections for the 50s, 60s and 70s.



My friend Doug's Wurlitzer

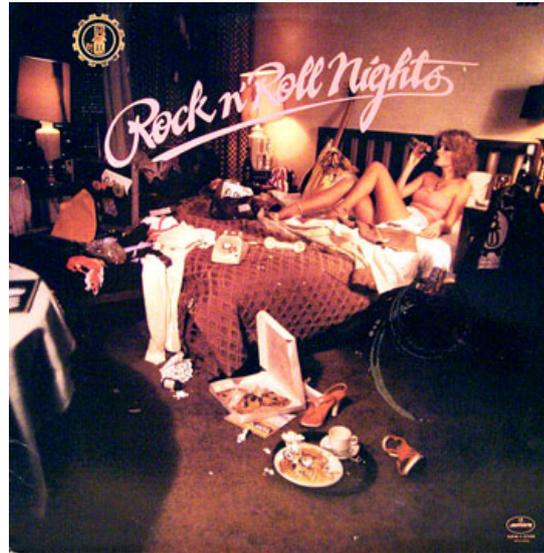
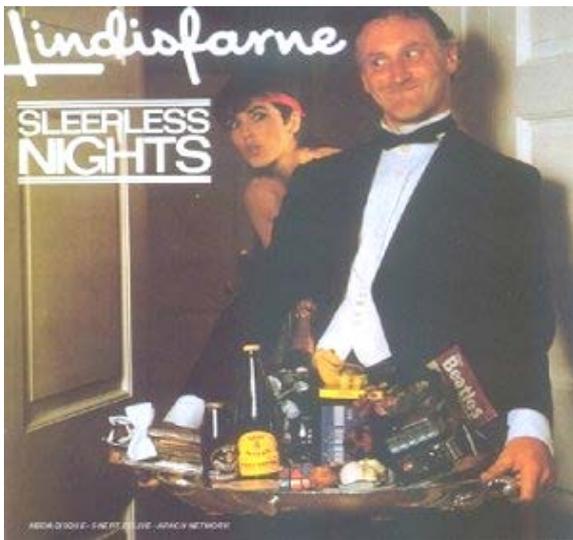
VAL'S JUKEBOX SELECTION

ERA	1950s	1960s	1970s
1	'Diana', Paul Anka	'Satisfaction', Rolling Stones	'Walk on the Wild Side', Lou Reed
2	'Somethin' Else', Eddie Cochran	'Like a Rolling Stone', Bob Dylan	'Drive in Saturday', David Bowie
3	'Rave On', Buddy Holly	'I Got You Babe', Sonny and Cher	'All Right Now', Free
4	'Until I Kissed You', Everly Brothers	'Doo Wah Diddy Diddy', Manfred Mann	'She's Not There', Santana
5	'Oh! Carol', Neil Sedaka	'Runaway', Del Shannon	'Hungry Heart', Bruce Springsteen
6	'Heartbreak Hotel', Elvis Presley	'Twist and Shout', Beatles	'Angie', Rolling Stones
7	'Peter Gunn', Duane Eddy	'You Really Got Me', Kinks	'American Pie', Don McLean
8	'Sweet Little Sixteen', Chuck Berry	'Cathy's Clown', Everly Brothers	'Listen to Her Heart', Tom Petty
9	'Rock Island Line', Lonnie Donnegan	'Shaking All Over', Johnny Kidd & the Pirates	'Lola', Kinks
10	'Maybe Baby', Crickets	'Wild Thing', Troggs	'Another Brick in the Wall', Pink Floyd

I'd have no trouble filling up the rest of the Jukebox from my Collection, but now it's time to move on to my LPs.

3. The LPs

Well, there's over 1000 of them, and most of them live on some shelves under the stairs in the grenier that lead to the terrace. The rest are stored in an antique wooden trunk in my Study and by the side of my record-player. They're not filed in any order, and usually to find one I want I have to make an extensive search of the whole Collection. One day I'll get some proper shelf space for my 33s and organise them properly.



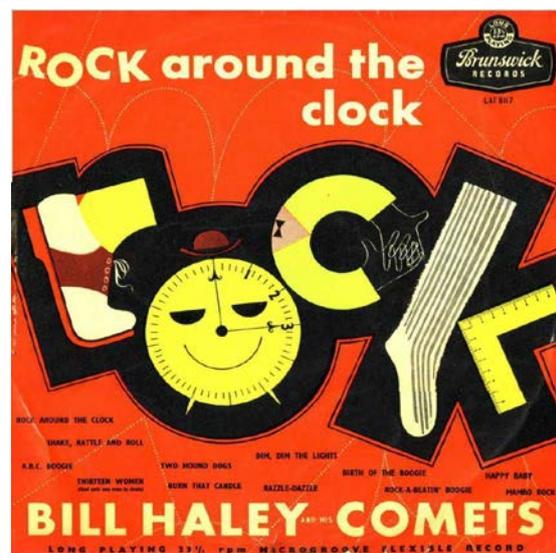
I like vinyl LPs for the same reasons that I like vinyl 45s – they are rock'n'roll. But LPs have some extra advantages. One is that their covers are often contemporary works of art, and what can be expressed on the front, back and inside covers of a 12" LP can never be replicated on the box sleeve and inside notes of a tiny CD – even in booklet form. The covers can be almost as much fun as the records as I hope the 'Sleepless Night's (Lindisfarne) and 'Rock'n'Roll Nights' (BTO) covers show. A second plus point of LPs is that the tracks can be much longer than those on 45s, and this can be a good thing when you're listening to some of Meatloaf and Jim Steinman's musical mini-sagas, but a bad thing when listening to the 17 plus minutes of the title track to Iron Butterfly's 'In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida' LP (yawn). And a third is that you don't have to change the record every 2 to 3 minutes if you haven't got an automatic turntable. (Cassettes are even better – up to 45 minutes of uninterrupted music.)

There are various '**first**' records in my life:

- The **first stereo LP I ever listened to** was 'A Journey Into Stereo Sound'. My cousin Clive, who lived with us at the time, bought a stereo record player, and this fantastic album. With different sounds coming from two speakers, you got the sensation that you were standing on a station platform when a train passed through, or you were at Goodwood racing track during a motor race, or you were at the Tower of London when the 'Ceremony of the Keys' took place, and – best of all – you were conducting an orchestra playing Berlioz's 'Symphonie

Fantastique’. The difference between mono and stereo at that time was astounding -- only really comparable to the difference between black and white and colour TV. I recently bought a pristine copy of this ‘Journey’ album at a French flea market for €1, and when I played it all the initial magic came back.

- The **first LP I was ever given**, also by cousin Clive, was Bill Haley and the Comet’s ‘Rock Around the Clock’ in 1955. I still have it, and the sleeve is now yellowing with age, but it’s almost 55 years old.
- The **first LP I ever bought** was a collection of Buddy Holly’s greatest hits. I used to play it every morning before I went to school. My favourite track was, and still is, ‘Rave On’.
- The **first LP I bought when I got my first ever portable record player** and went off to University in the autumn of 1965 was ‘Another Side of Bob Dylan’. I still have this, too, complete with my scoring system for each of the tracks, my favourites being ‘All I Really Want to Do’ and ‘It Ain’t me Babe’.
- The **first LP Carol and I bought when we moved into our first ever house and got our first ever proper record player** – ‘The Everly Brothers’ ‘Original Greatest Hits’. Of course, I still have this too.



I don’t usually buy LPs these days, but I do look at what’s on offer at the flea markets I go to. The last albums I bought (in Darlington) were both by the Ramones, ‘End of the Century’ and ‘The Ramones’. The track I play more than any other these days is ‘Baby, I Love You’ from the Phil Spector produced ‘End of the Century’ album.

(A short deviation. When I was in Berlin in September 2008 I decided that I’d go to the world’s one and only Ramones Museum that was only open for two hours every Sunday afternoon. I read that the Museum contained over 300 photographs, records and other Ramones’ memorabilia, including an unwashed pair of jeans owned by Johnny Ramone, the drummer Marky Ramones’ sneakers, and an autographed black leather jacket. The Museum was set up by a hard core German Ramones fan and collector extraordinaire, Florian Hayler, whose collection of 170 Ramones t-shirts is also in the Museum. Herr Hayler opened the Museum because “I didn’t have any more space at home.” A true collector!

So, on a hot Sunday afternoon I traipsed across Berlin, getting lost on the underground, getting lost on the overground, and then just as I thought I’d never find the Museum I stumbled across

it – or rather I stumbled across where it should have been. But it wasn't there any more: it had closed and was being moved to another part of Berlin where it was going to open in the next month. Grrrr! With the words of 'The KKK Took My Baby Away' going round and round in my head, I gave up and went for a glass of cool German beer instead.)



Like the 45s, my vinyl LP Collection will never be 'complete' in any sense, but it is representative of classic rock and the best UK and US albums of the 60's and 70's – including all of the Beatles' and nearly all of the Stones' albums.

I sorted through all the albums before writing this chapter and they brought back so many memories that I was overwhelmed. Also, I realised that it was going to be an impossible task to describe how much these records mean to me. So I sorted through them again, and selected a few that are my favourites (and the best tracks in them) and a few more that are attached to 'significant' moments in my life. Here are the highlights – only 5, but it could have been so easily 15 or 50 -- of these selections;

My **favourite** albums include:

- 'There Goes Rhymin' Simon', by Paul Simon. My favourite track is 'Kodachrome', which contains the lyrics, "When I think back/On all the crap I learned in high school/It's a wonder/I can think at all." As someone who has spent an awful lot of his life learning and teaching, I really agree with you Paul.
- 'Aladdin Sane', by David Bowie. Favourite track, 'Drive-in Saturday': "Let me put my arms around your head/Gee it's hot let's go to bed." Well, let's not waste any time with preliminaries.
- 'Pearl', by Janis Joplin. Favourite track, 'Mercedes Benz': "Oh Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz/My friends all have Porsches, I must make amends." I had a Porsche for a short while, Janis, but the engine blew up.
- 'Déjà Vu', by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young. Favourite track, 'Our House': "Our house is a very, very, very fine house/With two cats in the yard/Life used to be so hard/Now everything is easy, 'cos of you." When I got this record we

had just bought a very, very, very fine house, and we had two cats in the yard, too.

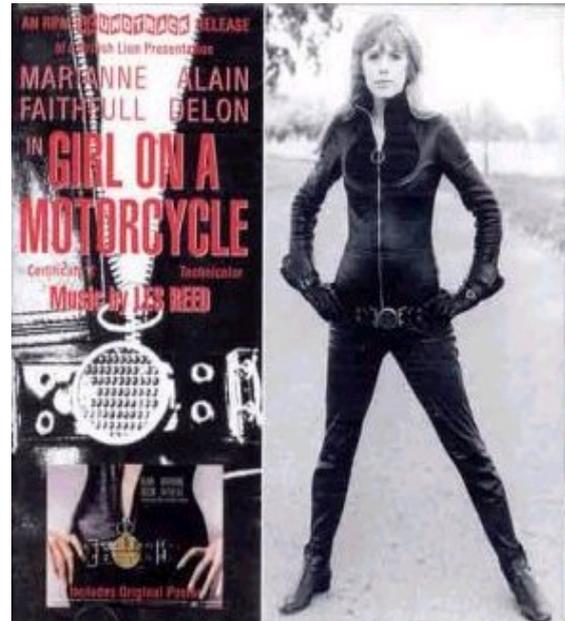
- ‘Transformer’, by Lou Reed. Favourite track, ‘Walk on the Wild Side: an incredible, incessant, bass line, and then, “Holly came from Miami F.L.A./Hitch-hiked her way across the U.S.A.” (I spent years wondering why it was ‘Miami F.L.A.’ and not ‘Miami Fl’.)



And five ‘**significant**’ albums (well seven really):

- ‘The Beatles 1962-66’ (red album) and ‘The Beatles 1967-70’ (blue album). The best sounds from my teen and student years
- ‘Get Yer Ya-Ya’s Out’, by the Rolling Stones. In my opinion, the greatest live rock’n’roll album ever (also from my student days).
- ‘Willy and the Poor Boys’, by Creedence Clearwater Revival and the soundtrack to ‘Girl on a Motorcycle’. These were significant because of the year I spent studying in Canada. I had a picture of The Girl reclining on The Motorcycle on my office wall at the University. I know who The Girl is (Marianne Faithfull), but not what the motorbike is. Can any nerd who is more interested in motor bikes than beautiful blondes enlighten me?
- ‘Making Movies’, by Dire Straits. This one helped me through some not-so-easy years in Holland. ‘Skateaway’ is the best track.
- ‘Bruce Springsteen and the E-Street Band, Live/1975-85’. More great live rock’n’roll, and it contains a track called ‘Darlington County’: “Driving in to Darlington County/ Me and Wayne on the 4th of July/... Driving out of Darlington County/My eyes seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.” This is very significant if you come from Darlington, County Durham, which I do.

There’s still more than 1000 other LPs I could tell you about, but now, taking it from the top, it’s time to move on to the ...



4. Musical bits and pieces

There are lots of bits and pieces that are linked to my vinyl collection. They include:

- 2 record players – a Panasonic Stereo Music System (bought for my daughter in the mid-80s) and a Fidelity portable record player (from the early 60s, and bought from Charley the Record Man)
- About 20 rock videos, including the classic ‘This is Spinal Tap’
- 150 or so rock books
- Tickets and programmes from most of the concerts I’ve been to
- A box that contains what I call my ‘Rock’n’Roll Relics’. It includes leaves and a stone from the cemetery where Buddy Holly is buried in Lubbock, Texas, and leaves from Elvis’ Graceland and the original ‘Heartbreak Hotel’. Thanks to Doug and Ange Embleton for bringing these back for me from their Rock Pilgrimage.

“Well, folks, that nearly brings to an end tonight’s ‘Vinyl Record Highlights Show’ from Analogue Only Man on Radio Languedoc-Rousillon. Join us next week – same time, same place – for some more musical highlights from the golden days of rock’n’roll. We’re going to sign off with a song from Joan Jett and the Blackhearts, ‘I Love Rock’n’Roll’.”

“I love rock’n’roll,
 So put another dime in the jukebox baby.
 I love rock’n’roll,
 So come an’ take your time an’ dance with me.”