

1987. With fairly limited access to culture or interesting culture at that, as an impressionable elementary school student in the northwest of the northwest of America. I was very much a receiver of the channels of mass communication that made their way here. MTV was easy consumption. Easy consumption that also was something different. I knew it was something for us. For kids. Or I guess young people. For those with little on their minds. For those with nothing much to do. Pop culture aside, it felt like a place to reside. From the limited broadcast channels we had at this time, there were just a few places that felt like places to reside on these networks. Places for us to enjoy. This was pop culture for the lowest common denominator. A place for cattle to gnaw on grass. But it was fascinating and to me, there was nothing quite like it before or after. I saw into other worlds. I saw things I did not see at school. I saw the candy coated cupcake sparkles of pop culture and was joyed. This was the time of hair metal. Kim Wilde. Bangles. U2 with ponytails. Many memorable one hit wonders. Peter Gabriel in stop motion. Genesis and lots of puppets. Our understanding of the content probably had its limitations. But, it felt right. It felt different. And my first experiences with such visual culture still remain with me to this day. But in this sea of maximalist expression that we were

1 slowly being groomed to become

addicted to, I once heard a woman's voice. Just one woman. It was Dusty Springfield. And it felt like she was singing to me. It was a one-time collaboration with the Pet Shop Boys. What Have I Done to Deserve This? It felt like she was talking to me. Something was restrained about this expression, this song, the atmosphere of this video, their expressionless faces. And it all felt like she was talking to me. This song was perfect. Perhaps this was what fueled my interest in subtlety later. The non-over-expressive. The bits of restraint. Atleast this was my impression of it. Perhaps it was nice to experience something that felt less desperate. Something less dependent on instant gratification. Something where I felt less like grazing cattle. Perhaps it was just the simple refreshing combination of synthesizers and her voice. It was still pop. It could have been a number of things.

Many years later, as we became a generation of walkmen and portable cd players, I remember going on a class field trip. Sometimes if a friend had nothing to listen to, we would share our headphones. One player, one headphone in one ear and the other headphone being listened to by said friend. He had been listening to Mudhoney and we had been listening to it together during the first portion of our trip. This was actually my cassette player and so when it came time to switch things up, I put in my favorite.

Pop Culture Aside.

Dusty. I could listen to this song over and over again. But as we were sharing this music. Within a minute or so, he pulled his headphone out and gave it back to me. Not an expression of distaste or criticality of my music. Just a face that told me, this was not for him. And for the first time I felt that there were no such thing as a universal experience. That despite these broadcast channels being constructed to feed grass to hundreds of cattle. We all eat different kinds of grass. And sometimes the grass goes uneaten.