

Why Music Causes Memories to Flood Back

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When Laura Nye Falsone's first child was born in 1996, the Wallflowers album "Bringing Down the Horse" was a big hit. "All I have to hear are the first notes from 'One Headlight,' and I am back to dancing ... with my brand-new baby boy in my arms," she says. "It fills my heart with joy every time"

When Carol Howard's early-onset Alzheimer's worsened, often she couldn't recognize her husband. She once introduced him as her father. But if she heard a 1960s Simon & Garfunkel song playing, Howard, a marine biologist who died in 2019, could sing every word "effortlessly," her husband says.

This ability of music to conjure up vivid memories is a phenomenon well known to brain researchers. It can trigger intense recollections from years past — for many, more strongly than other senses such as [taste](#) and [smell](#)— and provoke strong emotions from those earlier experiences.

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