



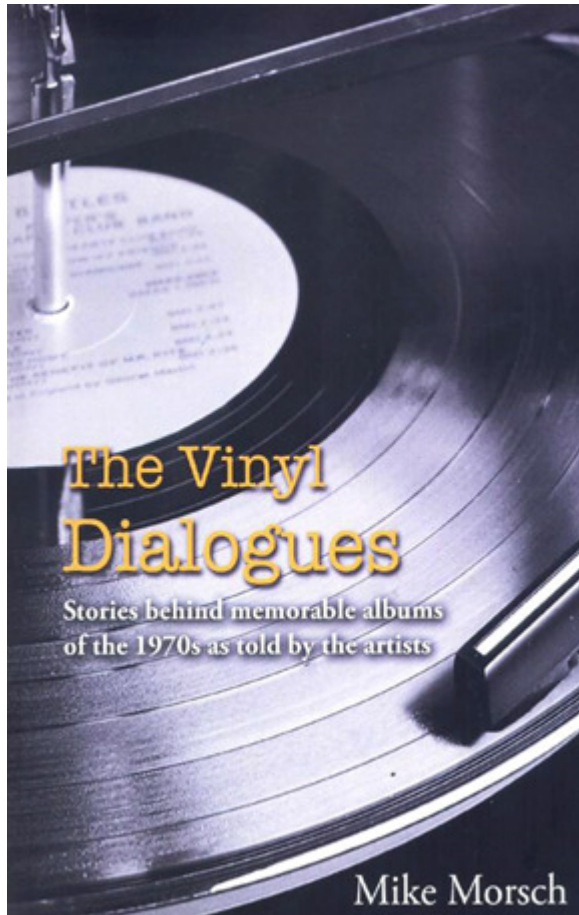
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DAILY NEWS

'Defines my formative years'

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"The Vinyl Dialogues: Stories Behind Memorable Albums of the 1970s as Told by the Artists" by Mike Morsch. Columbus, OH: Biblio Publishing, 2014, 265 pages, \$14.95.



"When I was a kid growing up in central Illinois, my folks had a record collection that consisted of popular music from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s," Mike Morsch explains at the beginning of "The Vinyl Dialogues: Stories Behind Memorable Albums of the 1970s as Told by the Artists," his recently published tribute to some of the best music ever recorded. "I played those vinyl albums – Elvis, The Beach Boys, The Beatles, The Association, and many more – so much that I wore them out."

If you have just experienced an acute case of déjà vu, rest assured you are not alone. I began the 1970s in the sixth grade; when the decade drew to a close, I was in my last year as an undergraduate at the University of Tennessee at Martin. I remember spending hours and hours playing albums on the huge console record player we kept in our living room – before I got my own component set for Christmas in 1972. In those days, music was more than a pastime; it was literally a way of life.

Everything seemed to revolve around (pun intended) the latest recordings from my favorite artists. I started collecting vinyl as a freshman in high school; by the time I left for college I had over 500 LPs. I

suspect I was not alone in my obsession; even now, I still enjoy the latest releases from some of the same artists I first heard some forty years ago -- which is one of the primary reasons I found this particular book to be such an interesting read.

"The Vinyl Dialogues" consists of thirty-three chapters representing thirty-three different classic albums from the 1970s. For those of a certain age, the book is a trip down memory lane. See how many of these names you recognize: The Flying Burrito Brothers, Creedence Clearwater Revival, The Guess Who, Faces, Three Dog Night, Dr. Hook and the Medicine Show, the Doobie Brothers, The Edgar Winter Group, America, Hamilton, Joe Frank and Reynolds, Foghat, Head East, England Dan and John Ford Coley, Orleans, Chicago, and the list goes on and on. Morsch devotes a chapter to each of the seminal recordings by the artists he profiles. And even though I live through the period covered by the book as an avid music connoisseur (I had subscriptions to Rolling Stone and Cream), I learned a lot I didn't know about some of my favorite musicians.

Morsch's career as a writer has spanned nearly four decades. He has served a reporter, columnist, and editor at various newspapers in Iowa, Illinois, and Pennsylvania since earning his bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Iowa in 1982. This is his second book; the first being "Dancing in My Underwear: The Soundtrack of My Life," which was published in 2012. Music is obviously his first love.

"The Vinyl Dialogues" is based on interviews Morsch conducted with many of the artists highlighted in this fascinating primer. Sadly, quite a few of the songwriters, producers, and performers who made such a lasting impact on an entire generation are no longer with us. Still, it is interesting to hear the survivors talk about their deceased comrades. These were people concerned with more than making good music; they wanted to genuinely change the world. In large measure, they succeeded.

For instance, consider the following excerpt from "The smoke shack that produced a 'Sgt. Pepper,'" which deals with the recording of "Cosmo's Factory" by Creedence Clearwater Revival. The chapter is based almost exclusively on an interview Morsch with Doug 'Cosmo' Clifford, the band's original drummer:

"We were literally a garage band. To this day, I consider us the best garage band in the world. That's how I perceived us all these years. We worked hard to do that," said Clifford. "But the neighbors complained about the noise coming from the garage and the police were called on several occasions. The last time law enforcement arrived, they told the band members they had better find another place to practice, or they'd have their equipment impounded and risk arrest."

Another chapter that resonated with me was "The epitome of a 'slow ride' to New York," which deals with the making of "Fool for the City" by the 70s powerhouse Foghat. Full disclosure: I saw Foghat at the Municipal Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee, on November 20, 1976; Boston was the opening act. It's easy to forget now how big they were back then -- they helped define the decade. It was enlightening to hear Roger Earl, the drummer, talk about the recording of "Slow Ride."

"It's actually the only time in Foghat's career that we insisted on a single. And also we refused to edit the song down," said Earl. "What happened was the radio stations edited it anyway, so we eventually did a radio version of it. But that was the only song we felt that strongly about a single. And we were right and other people were wrong. 'Slow Ride' became the band's top single, reaching No. 20 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart."

"There was a lot of great stuff in the 1970s," Earl continues. "I thought it was a really creative time for rock and roll music. There were a lot of great bands around and the music was great. The bands treated their music like it was something special." After forty plus years, you could tell the passion was still there.

I can honestly say I was familiar with every album (and every artist) Morsch deals with in this exquisite volume. In fact, I have most of them in my personal record collection. "The Vinyl Dialogues" defines my formative years as succinctly and as accurately as any book I have ever encountered. If you are in the vicinity of my age, I am convinced it would do the same for you. I recommend it highly.

— Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, Western Kentucky University.