

this will
change
your life

Tune Up

Music lover Val Haller's ingenious Web site helps keep your playlists current—even if you lost track of rock 'n' roll circa David Cassidy.



IN BOARDMAN, OHIO, Val

Haller brought upbeat tunes by the '60s pop band the Hollies to her raucous high school cheerleading practices. When she drove off to college in 1975, Haller tossed a box of records and eight-track tapes—Joni Mitchell, Stevie Wonder, Carole King—onto the passenger seat of her Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme. These days, when she goes to friends' dinner parties in the Chicago suburbs, Haller brings an iPod filled with songs by bands like the Portland indie rockers Blind Pilot. "Life feels flat unless there's music in the background," she says.

When a pal complained about her teenager's thumping Top 40 songs, Haller, a stay-at-home mother of four, was inspired to launch the Web site Valslist, which helps fellow baby boomers—not to mention busy working moms and anyone else who hasn't followed music since before the days of MTV—find tunes of their own to play at top volume.

Valslist is now stocked with purchasable playlists, including both new and "vintage" music, to suit any mood, from "all dressed up and looking good" to "pensive tunes for a pensive day." Most songs are by bands with names like Rubblebucket and Communist Daughter that Haller delights in discovering on arcane music blogs and Web sites. But she also sprinkles in tracks by better-known artists like Adele and Jackson Browne. A "sounds like" page helps readers find new songs that channel



Music aficionado Haller in her home office, August 2011.

their old favorites. (Love the Dave Matthews Band? Try singer-songwriter Pat McKillen. Former Deadhead? Queue up the band Moe.)

Haller's offbeat, adventurous taste has already won her fans of all ages: Her site has readers in 33 countries, and this summer she'll release an iPhone app. Meanwhile, her college-age twins—who once teased her for starting a Web site when she could barely navigate her cell phone—admit that she's often the first to discover artists who become popular on their campuses. "Sometimes when my kids call me with a band they're excited about," says Haller, "I pretend I haven't heard of it, just so I don't embarrass them." —LIZ LOGAN

Songs of Summer

Valslist.com founder Val Haller shares six songs that will help you jump-start the warm-weather fun.



FOR A BACKYARD BARBECUE WITH FRIENDS

◉ Miles to Dayton, "Firefly"

"This song is part Irish folk music, part Fleetwood Mac. But it also has a real country twang. I do love a fiddle, especially on a summer afternoon."

◉ Suzanna Lubrano, "Tudo Pa Bo" "Suzanna's sultry music, recorded in the Creole language of her native Cape Verde, is perfect for setting the mood when you're entertaining."



FOR A ROAD TRIP

◉ Electric Guest, "This Head I Hold"

"This song has a vaguely Motown feel—but it also conjures '60s girls in bikinis doing the jerk on a beach. It'll make you want to sing along."

◉ Yukon Blonde, "Wind Blows" "You'll swear this folk-rock tune is Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. The upbeat melody always makes me picture rolling down the windows on a beautiful day."



FOR KICKING BACK AT THE BEACH

◉ Zach Heckendorf, "Pompeii"

"Zach is a young guitar prodigy. You could easily mistake his sexy, husky voice for John Mayer's in this slow, chill song."

◉ Rose Cousins, "All the Stars" "Rose has a voice like Carly Simon and a vibe like the Dixie Chicks. This track is a kind of lullaby."