

# The Sound In Your Mind

by John Farrow

*The road goes on forever  
and the party never ends.*

The road is a long one, all right, but that's not the way it seems with the party in full swing. At least that's the way my mind sees it with Robert Earl Keen blasting out a steady beat and my feet going stride for stride with the bass line.

But there is no Walkman, no radio, no tape deck -- it's just the juke box in my mind. And often its song selection reflects the kind of run that I'm having, or perhaps just my mood in general. Even though I've been down this same road so many times over the years, the music always seems to be there to keep things interesting. Occasionally, it keeps me going.

Like the time I left work with a splitting headache after spending the entire day in meetings, interspersed with a quick trip to a repair shop to fix a tire that had picked up a nail. My first thought was to just go home and lie down. Fortunately, my better judgment prodded me into running shoes and shorts.

*Well, my mama told me there'll be days like this . . . .* Soon the easy rhythm of Van Morrison's song was in my head as I found a comfortable pace and began to draw down deep breaths of fresh air. The headache was soon gone. Yes, there'll be days like this.

Some days it's hard not to take the problems of the office on the road, but the exertion of the run seems to stimulate the mind as well as the body. Sometimes those problems that seemed so insolvable at work quickly unravel themselves during a run. Other days it's simply an opportunity to ponder the state of my profession according to Tom Paxton: *Soon there'll be one million lawyers, how much can the poor nation stand?*

Off to the right around the next bend is a pretty little trail that heads up into the mountains among the evergreens and overlooks the valley below. The air is much cooler as the trail winds around boulders, and sighting a deer is a distinct possibility. Coming out onto an outcropping of rocks, the beauty and majesty of the mountain comes into full view, bathed in the afternoon sun. The soaring voice of Melissa Etheridge seems all around: *When all your promises are gone, I'm the only one.*

Is it just me? A running back-beat fool? Not at all. Music exerts a powerful influence on everyone -- mind, body and spirit. Study after study has shown that athletes who listen to relaxing music experience a significant decrease in perceived stress and fatigue.

There is nothing quite like soothing music to relieve tension and help you relax before an event. Try the music of Sarah McLachlan . . . *you're in the arms of the angel, may you find some comfort here*, or Ireland's Mary Black -- *Hard times, come again no more*. Let yourself be wrapped in a warm and gentle embrace of sound as you unwind. And no matter your musical preference, the timeless recordings of Patsy Cline also seem to do the trick: *I'm crazy . . . .*

Music is also a great way to get your mind in shape before any workout or race. Visualize what you hope to accomplish. Don't worry about specifics. Concentrate on the qualities you hope to achieve, then use the music to reinforce those qualities in yourself.

Is it a track workout or a race that requires a fast, powerful pace? That old-time rock and roll such as "All Shook Up" by Elvis Presley, or the Rolling Stones' version of "Little Queenie" will get your heart-rate up and your feet moving at race pace. For something a bit more urgent, give a listen to the Reverend Horton Heat: *The devil is chasing me . . . .*

Maybe you simply want to feel loose and carefree while you put in some miles. The Eagles always come through, *I'm standing on the corner in Winslow, Arizona, . . . .* as does Stevie Ray Vaughan -- *She's my pride and joy . . . .* And B.B. King seems to slip into that set, too: *Well, it's three o'clock in the morning, baby.*

Whatever you do, run with all of your senses. Open up and experience this beautiful world of ours, the sun, the rain, the breeze, the flowers, the trees, the sounds and scents, people and animals. It's a great time to be alive, to be a runner, listening to the sound in your mind. Or, as Van Morrison has so aptly put it:

*Let's enjoy it while we can  
Won't you help me sing my song?  
From the dark end of the street  
To the bright side of the road.*

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