

Marshmallow Moon - Box 17

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When I was a teenager, my uncle Bob gave me an old reel-to-reel player / recorder. It is a hulking thing - a heavy, wooden case holds the mechanics - built in speakers, an 8-track player, and quadrophonic sound! I didn't really know what to do with it, but I loved it. It was just when I had started playing guitar. With it, came a box full of old tapes. On a few of them, Bob and an army buddy talked for hours and hours, stoned out of their minds and listening to records! It was so cool to hear that - as it was recorded in Vietnam, where he had picked it up. It had traveled across the world.

By trial and error, I discovered that if I plugged my guitar into the reel to reel player and then plugged the reel to reel into my guitar amplifier, that I could get this warm, analog, amazingly cool but extremely distorted guitar sound. I do not exaggerate when I say that this changed my musical life. Suddenly - even though I was still just a shit guitar player - I could almost sound like my heroes - getting all kinds of feedback and growling noises. I did a very poor rendition of Jimi Hendrix's version of the Star-Spangled Banner!) It was truly awful, but it felt like I now had the tools to be a rock star - I just needed to get the mechanics of playing down. Bottom line: that reel to reel really accelerated my learning. It made me want to learn.

All that said, I am forever grateful to Bob for the gift. Sadly, Bob suffered a stroke not long ago - and passed away soon after. I gifted this box to my aunt Gretchen in memory of him. It was the first in a series of 'moon' themed boxes - wood scorched using a tin can as a template to create a circle, like a full moon over the jungles of a tent in Vietnam.