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## Person to Person in France

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*Field Notes From Abroad: Person to Person in France*

Art is extremely revelatory of a culture; the literature, painting, and music of a culture can give an enormous insight into the ideology, motivations, norms, and social and political movements within a culture. Music is something that touches people across languages, countries, cultures, and generations. It certainly seems cliché to say so, but during my time in France I have discovered that this particular cliché exists because it is absolutely true. While in France, I have met many people because of a shared interest in music, whether it was because I had my guitar with me, because I was wearing a t-shirt for a band I like, or because I was carrying around an interesting record, I have had many interesting conversations with people I would never have met because music gave us a reason to talk. One of these people was Frank Cassai, a used vinyl vendor at the market and lead guitarist of Still Life, a local psychedelic rock group.

In interviewing Frank, I saw many similarities between life in France and the United States but I also became more aware of some of the differences. There are subtle differences between the rock and roll subcultures in the United States and France that are revelatory of some of the differences between the mainstream cultures of the two countries as well as some of the reasons for the beliefs and customs that have made these cultures the way that they are today. First off, rock music is much less popular in France than in the United States, much less, according to Frank. The French prefer something a little bit closer to what we call "singer-songwriters" in America and this is a reflection of the spirit of the nation. France places a strong emphasis on the lyrics of songs and their poetry and this could be a reflection of the pride the French take in their language and its beauty.

By discussing the ideals that surround musical culture in France with Frank, I got an insight into the French culture as a whole; looking at a small part of the culture helped me see how the ideas and beliefs behind the French lifestyle function in everyday life. In short, what I learned from this interview is that, even though there are some differences between the French and Americans, at the heart of the matter we are all very similar. People are driven by their interests and what moves them, be it art, music, sports, or their work and that is something that does not change by simply passing over a border. Our cultures help shape us and give us all different perspectives but these perspectives all combine to form the human experience, an experience shared by everyone and through which we can all relate to each other.