MY VIEW FROM THE THIRD ACT

Deadhead Sticker on a Cadillac



By Darren Somsen, Founder & CEO · Third Act USA, Inc.

In high school, we heard Don Henley sing about a "Deadhead sticker on a Cadillac" in his song "The Boys of Summer," and it didn't mean a thing to us. This was a song written for hippies who were becoming yuppies, who were still clinging to their perceived rebel spirit while raising three kids in the suburbs in a two-story colonial. They were still clinging to their rebellion while having to conform. The '80s were rife with shows like *thirtysomething* that fictionalized the plight of people who thought they were going to change the world and now were worrying about packing school lunches and getting their kids into a good school.

Those kids were us. We were that generation that was being raised by Deadheads, those who had listened to the Zombies, grown up on the Beatles. Some of us were raised by those who still clung to their Chuck Berry and Martha and the Vandellas 45s.

Now, we're the generation who would put an anarchy sticker on an Infiniti SUV if we weren't afraid how it would affect the resale value.

> *We're not the ones who changed; the world changed around us.*

We've watched our punk icons from the '80s who railed about the establishment become conservative voices. The rebellion moved from Sting telling us he hopes the Russians love their children too, to Johnny Rotten of the Sex Pistols expounding on his conservative views. And as we all say: we're not the ones who changed; the world changed around us.

But we're the ones who ushered in this world of change.

We were the ones who went to work at the places that took the Motorola cell phone from being a brick you carried around in a shoulder case, to carrying a computer in our pocket that we would refer to as a phone. We're the ones who transitioned from using maps to navigate—buying atlases when we were in Europe just so we could get from one country to the next—to just getting turn-by-turn directions on our phone. We used to write our pen pals with a notebook and a Bic pen, to instantaneously being able to send an email to anyone, anywhere across the globe, and we didn't think it strange. We grew up making sure that we always carried change in our pocket so we could use the payphone to call for a ride or help if we had a breakdown, to now, at a touch of a button on our smartphone, getting a complete stranger to come and pick us up and drive us wherever we need to go.

We are the generation who played 45s, owned 8-tracks, spun vinyl, converted to cassette,

© 2026 Third Act USA, Inc.

adopted CDs. We were the first to buy iPods so we could carry our CD collection with us anywhere because we remembered what happened when our cars were broken into and our folder full of CDs was swiped from the backseat. And now we're being told when we use our iPod that we must be old.

We're not old. We're the generation that kicked the world's ass so you can have it.

We went through the scare of Y2K, which only means anything to those of us who are older than 30. That generation has no concept that we went from the threat of nuclear annihilation until the USSR fell, to the planes falling out of the sky because of Y2K—that all of the computers would roll back to 1900 and all systems would fail. Prince told us we were going to party like it's 1999, yet the press and the government were telling us it would be more like 1799. The power would go out. The water would stop running. It would be mayhem and anarchy.

And yet, it wasn't. We woke up January 1st, 2000, and the lights still turned on. There were no crashed aircraft on our front lawn, and our cars still started. We survived the second existential threat that we had been promised.

We're constantly being thrown warnings and threats to our very existence. Yet, we're the generation who has survived and thrived through every threat, every disruption that we were promised.

We are not just living in a third act. We are thriving in our third act.

We're the generation that's going to go out kicking and screaming with The Clash's "Straight to Hell" cranked to 11 at our funeral. But that's not tomorrow. That's a long way off.

So pull out your Sex Pistols cassette, punch it into your Jensen tape deck, and crank it up because we deserve it.

And that's my view from the Third Act.

◆



MY VIEW FROM THE THIRD ACT · THE COMPLETE COLUMN

Part One
A Senior's Manifesto

Part Two
Giving the Finger to the Senior's Angie's List

Part Three · you are here
Deadhead Sticker on a Cadillac

Part Four
Nuking Your Food

Part Five
Grab the Stick

Darren Somsen is Founder & CEO of Third Act USA, Inc., in Melbourne, Florida.

© 2026 Third Act USA, Inc. All rights reserved. Written by Darren Somsen. Reprints or redistribution require written permission. Please credit Third Act USA and the author when quoting.

Read all five parts at **thirdactusa.com/view**
Founder portrait is AI-generated from current reference photographs.