THE (NOT SO) GREAT EAGLES

by: Isaiah Bellamy

There is a scene in the iconic movie, "The Big Lebowski," where you would see a beat up and disheartened Lebowski slouched in the back of a cab. Initially The Eagles’s “Peaceful Easy Feeling,” seems to be the perfect song to settle a tired soul, but after a short and hostile exchange with his driver, Lebowski shouts, "I hate the fucking Eagles man!" The cab’s tires squeal to a halt and The Dude is ejected from the cab and onto the curb. At the time I saw this I thought there was no way this desperado could have any support for his opinion but I was far from right. While The Eagles have had immense success in the industry they have also created a crowd of displeased rock fans.

It all started in Los Angeles, California in 1971, when The Eagles band was born consisting of drummer Don Henley, guitarist Glenn Frey, multi-instrumentalist Bernie Leadon, and singer Randy Meisner. After a few tequilas sunrises with Linda Ronstadt, the band found themselves playing for her touring band in the hub of the country rock scene, the Troubadour club in Los Angeles. By 1975, with the addition of Don Felder, “The Best of My Love” had become The Eagles’s first #1 hit, selling 1 million singles. In 1976 The Eagles made history with the release of “Their Greatest Hits 1971-1975.” The compilation of 10 tracks consisted of the best songs drawn from The Eagles first four albums. By 1999 it had already gone on to sell 29 million copies claiming the spot over Michael Jackson’s Thriller for album sales. It was the first album to be certified platinum by the Recording Industry. By 1977 The Eagles’s Hotel California album was released and stayed at the top of the charts for eight weeks. The accolades don’t lie. The Eagles reigned supreme at the top of the charts for a good span of the ’70s, so what is there to hate about them?

Glenn Frey’s death on January 18th 2016 initiated more conversation surrounding The Eagles. The band’s legacy and greatness were almost immediately put under the critic’s microscope, and they didn’t care to take it easy on them. Self-proclaimed Dean of American Rock Critics Robert Christgau is infamous for railing on the quality of The Eagles’s music. He says, “Another thing that interests me about the Eagles is that I hate them. ‘Hate’ is the kind of upright word that automatically excludes one from polite post-hippie circles, a good reason to use it, but it is also meant to convey an anguish that is very intense, yet difficult to pinpoint.” Possibly one of the things that perpetuated this hate was the seemingly endless “farewell” tours The Eagles played. Since they were reunited in 1994 after the split in 1980, the Eagles decided to take it to the limit with their sales. The band accumulated about $253 million, selling over 2 million tickets to 147 shows. To the real rock fan, The Eagles were a band milking bandwagon fans and the music industry.

To some listeners the country, folk, soft rock sound of The Eagles is the product of a band that was well fashioned in its roots and true to its form giving them the peaceful easy feeling they desired. To others like Chuck Klosterman, the sound was unoriginal and it deteriorated the culture of what rock should be. In his book I Wear the Black Hat: Grappling With Villains (Real and Imagined), Klosterman says, “They were rich hippies. They were virtuosos in an idiom that did not require virtuosity. They were self-absorbed Hollywood liberals. They were not-so-secretly shallow.” The Eagles band was actually infamous for their groupies and drug use, specifically Frey. His lyin eyes never failed to attract the witchy women. As the band grew in popularity their music became more influenced by the drug culture than the actual creativity in music. To critiques like Klosterman, the songs never diverted from relaxation, women, and drug use. The content was passive and lack luster. They were popular because their hedonistic vision of the world was what people wanted to hear. They neglected the grit of real life and the grit of rock and roll culture.

To some The Eagles became everything that rock shouldn’t be. Their egos were bloated, they sang about the same things, and they were corporate sell outs. But none of this takes away from the fact that people actually loved their music. With all things considered The Eagles were a perfect feel-good band; the sound you can put on when you need reassurance that you’re not the only one running from your troubles. The Eagles were able to capture their audience by selling us a lifestyle of indulgence. While this lifestyle was nothing to be encouraged they offered us something that we can keep near our stereos to be played on one of these nights of relaxation. The Eagles will always have the best of my love.

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"I'm retired didn't you know," tweeted Keith Cozart. "Too many n***as sound jus like me or saying sh*t like almighty would." Cozart, who goes by Chief Keef, flipped the rap game on its head through the subgenre of rap he helped define known as "drill." Drill is primarily South-Side of Chicago based and focuses on the gritty life of Chicago life mixed in with menacing beats and simple lyrics. Chief Keef’s peak and decline is analogous to the path drill took. To track this similar path both took one looks at Chief Keef’s sudden come up, his tracks’ lyrical content, and finally how he influenced rappers everywhere including Kanye.

Chief Keef was born on August 15th, 1995 in Chicago. Importantly, however, was where he grew up. Keef was raised by his grandmother in the Englewood neighborhood in the Chicago South Side, which is known as the rough part of town noted by the media’s portrayal of the South side as “Chiraq”, a combination of Chicago and Iraq. This moniker was put on the South side due to the lawlessness, rampant gang violence and neglect in the community.

His rise can be attributed to his local notoriety adding authenticity to his music leading to viral success. In December of 2011, Chief Keef was arrested for firing a gun and was sentenced to house arrest for 60 days. Meanwhile in early 2012, he posted several videos to Youtube. All of these music videos received millions of views which eventually led to being signed to Interscope records. By the end of the year a 17-year-old Chief Keef released his debut album Finally Rich.

Finally Rich. as a title itself is all that embodies the drill rap scene. Keef who was raised with his maternal grandmother is finally rich after signing a multi million-dollar record deal with Interscope Records. Getting rich was an escape from the gritty Chicago that he raps about in many of his songs. His breadwinner, “I Don’t Like” is literally a rap about stuff around him that he dislikes. He doesn’t like what he sees, he doesn’t like the “fakes” that are everywhere around him, and he is ready to on multiple occasions shoot and let the “guns fight.”

The song reflects the attitude that drill is all about. At the forefront of the movement, Keef released multiple other records that describe the tough situations he was raised in and multiple others are currently living in. Where he is “finally rich” others have not escaped. Part of the reason Keef made it was that drill music is so raw and exposes the lifestyle that rap and hip hop were afraid to tackle in 2011-2012 as NY Times editor Jon Caraminca states, “But that’s an outmoded value in contemporary hip-hop, which skews heavily toward the triumphant, the fantastical and the unattainable — Drake and 2 Chainz talking about stealing girlfriends, Rick Ross boasting about wealth and so on. No one’s struggling, everyone’s celebrating.”

Also one looks at other contemporaries of the genre that were Keef’s peers to understand the influence of drill. For instance, Lil Durk mentions, “I try to go for real music when making a record, stuff I’ve been through that other people can relate to, my day to day life, I’ve got a baby, it’s stuff people can feel.” This statement by Lil’ Durk reflects the attitude the rappers are taking with their new sound. It is a reflection and shedding light where there is none. The kids in Chicago cannot relate to the champagne popping videos of Drake, what they can relate to are these rappers that have grown up with them in the South Side. “We just took to the drill music just to really rap about it, not even to brag about the violence,” says Fatzmack. “We just brought it up to open people’s eyes to say this is what’s really going on out here.” Fatzmack was one of the first to coin the term and used to be a reference to automatic weapons and drilling someone and now has been synonymous with retaliating or fighting.

Drill rose to popularity quickly and its fall was the same. One of the difficult parts about Drill is that disassociating it from the violence. Since drill hit the forefront of rap in the early 2010’s countless murders and arrests happened to the so called drillers. Similar to 50 Cent and his rise to fame and NWA before him, the violence and culture is so ingrained with the music that separating the two and calling it just entertainment is near impossible.

We go back to Keef’s tweet, “I’m retired don’t you know,” he said, “Too many n***as sound jus like me.” Chief Keef was the embodiment of drill and brought it to the forefront. However, in doing so the market was overly saturated and delusional. With big name artists like Rick Ross and Kanye jumping on the bandwagon it was impossible for the originally Chicago South Side to distinguish itself from the mainstream.

Having such an underground movement abruptly surge to fame was its own demise. Some escaped the Chicago life and made some decent albums and "finally rich", yet the attention given to the Chicago South Side has moved on. While Drill came and went it lives on in many hits such as OG Maco’s "U Guessed It" and has influenced many producers to incorporate dark, raw and gritty beats and melodies as their backing tracks.

Chief Keef released Bang 3 in August 2015 with output dropping as of this moment.

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Over the next three decades, Partch built a small orchestra of original instruments designed to avoid the Western diatonicism he loathed. His first instrument to regularly appear in his ensembles was an adapted viola. It looked similar to a normal viola, except its extended fingerboard allowed the performer to play scales with 29 notes in each octave. He used his adapted viola for some early works utilizing poetry from 8th century Chinese poet Li Po. As the human voice can adapt to any tuning system more easily than an instrument, vocalists played key roles in all of his musical works. Next, he utilized a wide variety of materials to build reed, string, and percussion instruments from “found objects like artillery shell casings, Pyrex jars, bottles, and old fuel tanks” (Morrison). Some of his fantastically named instruments include Chromelodeons I & II, Blobboy, Harmonic Canon III/Blue Rainbow, Quadrangularis Reversum, and Zymo-Xyl.

During the early 1930s he travelled around New York and California, playing shows and demonstrating his ideology in an effort to raise funds. In 1934, Partch was funded to collaborate with poet William Butler Yeats to produce music centered on the theme of King Oedipus, a play Yeats had translated and adapted. His final product was a sold-out, opera-scaled work that represents the union of his instrument-building skills and “theatrical ambitions” (McConnell 2009). After returning to America, Partch encountered the Great Depression and entered a “hobo period” from 1935-1943. During these eight years Partch constantly moved between Phoenix, Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York, sleeping and working in federal camps alongside other unemployed men along the way. In 1940, he hitchhiked in the Mojave Desert and wrote a musical work commemorating the inscriptions he found on a highway railing: “Barstow: Eight Hitchhiker Inscriptions from a Highway Rail.” Critics embrace this piece for its accessibility, citing it as an example of Partch’s understanding of “American cultural sensibility” (McConnell 2009). He moved from university to university in his middle age, teaching and creating instruments. However, to the dismay of the many faculty and students who embraced his music, Partch never accepted tenure offers because he couldn’t obtain enough financial support.

Many would pinpoint “Delusion of the Fury” as the pinnacle of Partch’s career. By the time of its completion in 1966 and production at UCLA in 1969, some twenty meticulously designed instruments filled out his orchestra. This piece draws from Japanese Noh theatre and African ritual. Because his instruments are unique and difficult to access, very few reproductions of Partch’s works have been performed. However, his own record label Gate 5 Records broadened his audience by releasing recordings of his work. Columbia Records did the same near his death in 1974. His legacy of originality and creativity lives on at the Harry Partch Institute at the University of Washington School of Music and in aspiring musicians searching for alternatives to typical Western styles of music.

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The Sex Pistols burst onto the scene in 1975, totally shaking up the music industry while revolutionizing rock’s punk sound. They were vulgar, angry, and designed to affront conventional sensibilities. Wreaking havoc and generating controversy from the moment they took the stage at a London school until their final show in San Francisco in 1978, the Sex Pistols epitomized a nihilistic ideology that came to define punk rock. Just three years after coming into existence, punk rock’s paramount band dissipated in a swirl of squabbling, drug abuse, questionable management practices, and scandal. The Sex Pistols’ undeniable musical legacy, however, continues to this day.

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The Sex Pistols’ only album, “Never Mind the Bollocks…. Here’s the Sex Pistols”, rocketed to the top of the charts when it was released in November 1977. Continuing his aggressive promotional tactics, McLaren agreed to tour in the United States. Some have suggested that it was this tour that hastened the band’s demise. The band was not warmly received in some locales and the numerous hours on the tour bus only added to the increasing personal tension among the band’s members. Additionally, Sid Vicious’ drug use escalated during the tour. It all came to an abrupt halt at Winterland Theater in San Francisco on January 14, 1978, when Johnny Rotten famously ended the show by uttering his last words as a Sex Pistol, asking the crowd, “Ever get the feeling you’ve been cheated? Good night!” With these words, Johnny Rotten quit the band. The members went their separate ways, with Sid Vicious traveling to New York to be with his girlfriend, Nancy Spungen. Later, Rotten would dismissively refer to the Sex Pistols as a farce.

The implosion of the groundbreaking band led to darker events. Sid Vicious died of a heroin overdose in February, 1979. He was only 21 years old. At the time, Sid was out on bail from prison due to charges that he stabbed Nancy to death several months earlier. The punk icon had prophesized his grim future, telling the Record Mirror, “I’ll die before I’m very old…. I don’t know why…I just have this feeling”. The others involved fared better. Johnny Rotten changed his moniker back to John Lydon and successfully performed as part of a calculated publicity stunt. Immediately, the song was banned from British radio and criticized for its crude anti-monarchist message that was perceived as threatening the country’s very foundation. This did not stop it from being a huge hit and climbing to No.2 on the British charts (although some believe it actually should have been No. 1 but the system was intentionally altered to prevent it from achieving the top ranking). More anarchistic than political, the song reflects the band’s wholesale rejection of authority with lines like, “Don’t be told what you want/ Don’t be told what you need” and “They made you a moron, potential H-bomb”. The lyrics resonated with the minority working class that felt suppressed by the governing elite.

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What does sound do for us in music? It helps convey a history, shows opinion and emotion from the artist, and helps create something we can all relate to. Lou Reed, a band member of the Velvet Underground, but also a solo artist, has a way of interpreting sound which is displayed through his music. He uses sound as a way to tell stories and focuses more on the essence of sound rather than the commercial success that can come with it.

In a Rolling Stone interview Lou Reed states, in a simple way how he has a personal relationship with the sounds he creates. Reed says, “Sound is more than just noise. Ordered sound is music,” he said. “My life is music.” (Rolling Stone 2013). This quote helps convey a sense of honesty about Lou Reed’s commitment to his “ordering of sound”. When thinking about how he interprets his life as music it’s hard not to reference his song “Walk on the Wild Side” that was released in 1972. In this song, he paints a story with sound. He draws images and characters of his real life into play, and uses that to help create this sense of reality. This song, “became an unlikely cultural anthem, a siren song luring generations of people... to a New York so long forgotten as to seem imaginary.” This was Lou Reed’s reality, the music and his real life were the same.

One important figure that he talks about in this song is Holly Woodland. He writes, “Holly came from Miami, F.L.A./Hitchhiked her way across the U.S.A./plucked her eyebrows on the way/ Shaved her legs and then he was a she.” (Trebay 2013) His writing about Holly represents a peak at his life, and the people he was surrounded by. This song characterized a time when everyone was exploring their identity and image. Holly Woodland looks back on this song and sees it as iconic and as a creation of her own identity in history. She says, “Paul Morrissey made me a star, but Lou Reed made me immortal.” (Trebay 2013) He had created so much more by just referencing his life, he had emphasized a memorable moment in time.

Lou Reed describes sound with a passion that is easily heard in his music. “I am very emotionally affected by sound. Sounds are the inexplicable. . .There is a sound you hear in your head, it’s your nerves, or your blood running.” (Rolling Stone 2013) The track “Heroin”, released in 1967, acts as a clear depiction of the emotion behind the sound he was creating. The rising beat in the background creating the sense of a heroin rush creeping up on the listener. The song’s length acts in order to push on you the importance of the strenuous sounds and emotions. Perhaps Lou was writing this song from his own experience with heroin. This song was used to grab the memory of the listener and make them remember their time, and experience with heroin. Rather than it sounding sweet and commercialized, the song’s intensity builds on a moment and feeling.

When listening to the Velvet Underground there is a strong sense of intent behind the music. An intention of making the listener react to the sounds in a way which becomes very clear. You can tell, then when Lou Reed is writing music that he believes in this escalation of sound. He says, “The first memory of sound would have to be your mother’s heartbeat, for all of us...but then there are nature sounds...The sound of the wind. The sound of love.” (Rolling Stone 2013)
Embarrassingly, I didn’t really get into Bob Dylan much until taking this course—I had only really listened to “Like a Rolling Stone” a few times, and that was about the extent to which I knew him. Immediately upon hearing about his life and a few of his other songs though, I was completely enamored. I admire so much about his songwriting, singing and just general presence in the music world. I have been trying to figure out why though, I became so instantly attracted to the idea of him like so many others before me. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly what about Bob Dylan is so incredibly special and captivating. There are many books, websites, and interviews devoted to discussing Dylan and his influence on folk music and songwriting, and I’ve looked into a handful of these media. One thing I’ve noticed that’s been a common thread throughout is Bob Dylan’s seeming ambivalence to the hype surrounding him. His nonchalance and almost denial of his fame may be something that draws people to him. I don’t want to insinuate much about what is actually going on inside his head, but I will use some of his words to try and delve deeper into my idea as to why he resonates with such a wide audience.

When prompted in interviews, Bob Dylan has stated that he felt from a young age that it was his “destiny” to become a famous musician. It is truly fascinating that this notion did indeed lead him to a life as a beloved singer, but what is more interesting to me, is the fact that he consistently denies this fame. Dylan knows that he is beloved by many and is seen as a formative figure in the folk revival, yet he still seems to feel like it could all slip away at any moment. In an interview for 60 Minutes, Bob Dylan was asked how he felt about having the number one song of all time according to Rolling Stone Magazine. He basically shrugged it off and said “Who knows how long that’s gonna last?” Even after around 50 years, Bob Dylan is still considered one of the most influential songwriters of all time, yet he feels like he will only be “popular this week.”

According to the same interview done with 60 minutes in 2004, Bob Dylan has been referred to in many different ways like “The voice of his generation”, “a messiah”, or “a protest singer”, but throughout his career and even until this day he denies any and all of those claims. In his memoir written in the same year, “Chronicles”, Dylan says, “All I’d ever done was sing songs that were dead straight and expressed powerful new realities. I had very little in common with and knew even less about a generation that I was supposed to be the voice of.” In some of his interviews and writings he doesn’t even consider himself a folk singer. In the 60 minutes interview the reporter asks him why, if he doesn’t himself believe it, do so many people consider him these things. He just replies, “They must not have heard the songs.”

I think this could be something that resonates with many of his fans, during the 60s through today. Bob Dylan just wants to be Bob Dylan. He doesn’t seem to want to be influenced by what he sees or hears, he wants to do what he wants to do because he wants to do it. In a press release in 1965, Dylan was asked if he would be making a film because many people were wondering and wanted him to. He replied, “yes I am making a film, but because I want to, not because anyone else wants me to”. Bob Dylan represents an ultra-contrarian in many ways. He’s not just contrary to the politics of his time, but contrary to the idea of being contrary to anything. In Chronicles, he states, “Whatever the case, it wasn’t that I was anti-popular culture or anything and I had no ambitions to stir things up. I just thought of popular culture as lame as hell and a big trick. It was like the unbroken sea of frost that lay outside the window and you had to have awkward footgear to walk on it.” Although many of his songs are revered as war protest songs—like “Masters of War” which clearly depicts war in a negative light — he still insists that he is not taking sides, just writing about what he feels like writing about.

As much as he claims to not believe it, people are still becoming attached to his music, lyrics, and what they seem to stand for: a rebellion to the mainstream. His music continues to resonate with young people at many stages of life, and although he is in his 70’s, he is gaining new fans who idolize him every day. I can’t say for sure, but it seems that Bob Dylan doesn’t want to be your hero or idol, Bob Dylan wants to be Bob Dylan and that’s all. This speaks to the youth in all of us. Deep down I think we all just want to do our own thing, and Dylan really represents this. There really is no doubt that his music was and continues to be some of the most influential music of all time, but his being and presence seem to be something that resonates with his fans as well.

Work Cited

60 Minutes Interview with Bob Dylan: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6p9cBA7B9o


We all know the story of the boy who lived, who was thrust into the Wizarding World at the tender age of eleven with nothing but “Yer a musician, Harry” as explanation—oh, wait. That’s not how the story actually goes, is it? Oh right, Harry Potter was a wizard, not a musician…but what if he was? What if scrawny “Just Harry” played the guitar? Or sang lead in a band with Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger called The Golden Trio?

The answer to these questions lies within the fandom, beyond the film adaptations and fan fiction, and with the fandom conventions. J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series has spawned, via fans, an entirely new genre of music called Wizard Rock. As the name would imply, Wizard Rock is a sub-genre of rock—more specifically, considering the fandom it has arisen from, it is a sub-genre of
“Geek” Rock, which as that name would also imply, is also a sub-genre of rock.

While predominantly having a rock sound, there are some fans that want to branch out into different genres of music while many Wizard Rockers prefer to stay within the theme that originated from the films. This theme was introduced in 2005 with the release of the film Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, which had portrayed a Wizard band playing at the Yule Ball in some of the scenes. This band, portrayed by Jarvis Cocker, Jonny Greenwood, Jason Buckle, Steve Mackey, Steven Claydon and Phil Selway had had a distinct rock sound. This was due to the fact that two of the aforementioned six had been a part of the British band Pulp while another two were of another British band called Radiohead, both bands being of the rock genre themselves. Though the movie had not explicitly stated the name of the band due to copyright complications with a Canadian band of the same (phonetically) name, it was alluded to as Harry’s favorite band, the Weird Sisters (the Canadian band being the Wyrd Sisters).

Wizard Rock, better known as “Wrock” (pronounced as ‘rock’) or “WizRock” to some, is a genre of music that is dedicated entirely to the Harry Potter universe, from the names of the bands to the lyrics and even down to the costumes. Many Wrockers are typically seen wearing Harry Potter regalia during live performances, usually in the Hogwarts uniform corresponding to their character’s chosen house. The fandom-centric genre is often characterized by the performance of humorous songs about the Harry Potter universe, usually on taking points of views of the various characters throughout the books.

Whether the characters are only mentioned in passing, such as Justin Finch-Fletchley, or are more prominent supporting characters, like Nymphadora Tonks, the fandom-centric Wrock bands play songs exclusively for, and about, the Harry Potter series. Unlike many other fandoms, which may be referenced to or mentioned in songs by various artists, such as Led Zeppelin’s “Ramble On” or “Misty Mountain Hop,” which alluded specifically to Lord of the Rings, or “White Rabbit” by Jefferson Airplane, which makes strong reference to Alice in Wonderland. Wrock songs, while in the point of view of the chosen character, give a retelling of the events or a different perspective (or following Harry’s perspective) of said character. The first Wrock song “Ode to Harry Potter,” released in 2000 by the non-Wrock band Switchblade Kittens, takes on the point of view of one of the main supporting characters: Ginevra “Ginny” Weasley. Typical of the genre, the song tells a tale from Ginny’s days as a love-struck young girl with a crush on the ever-so-famous Harry Potter and her transformation into an independent woman as shown throughout the series, in both novel and film.

Despite the release of the song in 2000, the official start of the genre began two years later, with the creation of one of the to-be-popular Wrock bands called Harry and the Potters. Other popular Wrock bands include, but are not limited to: Gred and Forge, Tonks and the Aurors, The Ministry of Magic, Justin Finch Fletcherly and the Sugar Quills, the Remus Lupins—though not to be confused with another Wrock band called Remus and the Lupins—and the ever-popular Draco and the Malfoys. Draco and the Malfoys, named to parody their friends’ band Harry and the Potters, aided in the expansion of the genre, being one of the most popular bands, along with Harry and the Potters, in the genre. Since both bands had created Myspace pages which were popular at the time, there had been an increase in Wrock bands. The genre eventually grew internationally, though primarily centered in the U.S., where Harry and the Potters had been formed in Norwood, Massachusetts. The genre had grown so exponentially that, at the end of 2009, two years after the release of the seventh novel, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Wrock had grown to around 750 bands.

Both Harry and the Potters and Draco and the Malfoys had created their Myspace pages as one method to distribute their music since both bands were self-produced. Many other bands also embraced this self-directed ethic, namely due to not being created for profit but for fun along with their fellow Harry Potter fans; most Wrock bands were not meant to be taken seriously. Many in the genre had ended their “reign” with the release of the last film of the fandom, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2. The few that had risen, however, remained popular and even now, five years since the release of the final Harry Potter film, continue to tour and give performances—the main band being the one that started it all, Harry and the Potters. One in particular, has risen to stardom from their start in the Harry Potter fandom, despite not being Wrock exclusively: Darren Criss, known for his role as Blaine Anderson in hit T.V. show Glee, was first made popular through the internet with a series of musical performance with Team Starkid, called “StarkidPotter” on YouTube. Given the inspiration and dedication of these bands, the avenues of which they played were often bookstores, libraries and schools to help promote that which brought them together in the first place: the Harry Potter novels.

Even after the “fall of Wrock,” despite starting out in music, Harry and the Potters had grown into greater things, helping in the creation the “The Harry Potter Alliance”, which was founded by comedian Andrew Slack in 2005 to draw attention to human violation rights in Sudan. The nonprofit organization later had campaigns for literacy, U.S. immigration reform, economic justice, gay rights, and sexism, to name a few—most likely due to the various meanings and messages within the Harry Potter novels, which touched upon subjects not typically touched upon at the time of publication. An interview with Time magazine found that J.K. Rowling supported the group, stating, “It’s incredible, it’s humbling, and it’s uplifting to see people going out there and doing all that in the name of your character.” What was once a silly band in a silly genre was now a popular band in a still growing genre, that while its “reign” ended, continues to make its impact.

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When asked about name pronunciation in a YouTube interview last winter, Anderson .Paak stated, “Pack or Pac [is fine] just don’t forget the dot…cause they slept on me for so long, now they have to pay attention to everything.” This quote very quickly sums up one of the hottest artists in the industry’s rise to popularity. Brandon Anderson is now becoming a household name after the release of his most recent album, Malibu, in January of this year. Anderson, an R&B/rap fusion artist from L.A., had a nearly 10 year journey of pushing and critiquing his music before he was finally signed just four months ago.

From somewhat of an imperceptive viewpoint the credit of Anderson .Paak’s success could be given to one simple song. The song “Suede,” which was released in 2015 was one of the main reasons Anderson was signed to the Aftermath Entertainment label. In the song Anderson teams up with Knxwledge to create the R&B/rap duo called NxWorries. The song, which perfectly personifies Anderson’s mixture of R&B and rap as well as soulful chorus singing, caught the ear of none other than rapper and producer legend Dr. Dre himself. Despite the song being released in 2015, .Paak did not meet with Dre until January of this year. According to a YouTube interview on Hot97, the first day he was brought into Aftermath, he met Dr. Dre, they quickly started to bump “Suede” over the speakers, and just like that Dre gave Anderson the thumbs up, telling him to get into the studio. It was now time to record.

Anderson’s career, however, was not as nice as this small portion makes it seem. He struggled in popularity for a very long time before a label finally picked him up. Anderson is what some would call a “late bloomer” in rap, as he is already 30 years old and is only now reaching critical acclaim and gaining a label to back him up. While he did put out some songs that gained YouTube popularity under the pseudonym Breezy Lovejoy, he was not a hot topic in rap until the release of his 2014 album Venice. Upon the release of his current album Malibu, he became a household name.

Anderson first got into music in the sixth grade when there were no more saxophones left at his school so he had to settle for the drums. Luckily for him he fell in love. He began to play more at his local Baptist Church, and with the incorporation of church music he became infatuated with beats and rhythm. The energy he got from the church songs was overwhelming, and just as with great artists like Little Richard, Elvis Presley, and James Brown, church music would forever influence his style. From sixth grade on he was “in love with the energy” he could produce on the drums. This type of energy is what .Paak tries to recreate in his songs.

As a drummer Anderson was in numerous rock and punk cover bands and even played at weddings in a Top 40 band. He also sang for that band. The influence of his long musical background can be seen in practically every single one of his songs. The sounds that he creates when making a song are not typical of rap; it is really not typical of any genre of music, it is simply a fusion. To this day, he will not even consider himself just a rapper because he does not want to be limited to one metaphorical box or another. He believes that his music could take multiple routes before he is finished with his career, so why limit it?

It is very easy to see Anderson’s fusion when looking upon his alter ego of Breezy Lovejoy. In a song that Lovejoy put together in a podcast on YouTube with Knocksteady TV his understanding of music is seen as he perfectly sings melodies alongside a guitar and a producer, showing that he is not just a rapper, but a singer as well. Anderson .Paak is simply full of mixtures. This defines him. Culturally .Paak is both black and Korean. His father is a black American and his mom was originally born in Seoul, Korea, but moved to the states when she was adopted. Anderson’s mom works in Oxnard, a city just outside of L.A., in the strawberry business. His dad however was never too close to .Paak and left before Anderson turned seven.

His relationships with his parents can be seen in his music along with many other aspects of Anderson’s life. In an interview with NPR, Anderson was asked, “Do you work things out in the music?” and he responded by stating that he does, of course, work out his problems in his music, but he is also conscious that he cannot get too “heady.” .Paak is truly an artist and really views his work as art, so he treats it as such. Anderson stated in the same interview, “I just try to express the art and work to get better, to learn more, and get sharper and inspire and put out things that people are going to feel good about—feel good and sexy, and the things I feel when I’m making it.” From this quote alone it is clear that Anderson is a different type of rapper (even if he does not want to consider himself a rapper). When he creates his art he does so with the intention of making people feel good, he wants them to be able to groove, and with so much of today’s rap, convoluted with watered down mainstream sounds, it is a breath of fresh air to see a person like Anderson .Paak, a true musician, finally getting the note he deserves in the rap game.

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HOW ZEDD WENT FROM BEING THE DRUMMER OF A HEAVY METAL BAND TO PRODUCING THE SOUNDTRACK FOR AN M&M COMMERCIAL

by: Arjun Malhotra

Anton Zaslavski, better known by his stage name ‘Zedd,’ is one of the most renowned EDM artists of his time. He is also a successful producer, regular festival headliner, and his songs, both as an artist and producer, have regularly featured on the U.S Dance charts. However, arguably his biggest achievement so far has been winning the Best Dance Recording Grammy in 2014 for his single “Clarity” featuring Foxes. The single was part of the album Clarity that debuted at number two on the Dance/Electronic Albums chart. His new album, True Colors, also achieved success by hitting the number one spot on the Dance charts. Apart from his album success, Zedd has also produced hit songs, such as “Beauty And A Beat,” for massive artists like Justin Bieber and Nicki Minaj. His latest number one spot on the Dance/Electronic Albums chart. His new album, True Colors, also achieved success by hitting the number one spot on the Dance charts. Apart from his album success, Zedd has also produced hit songs, such as “Beauty And A Beat,” for massive artists like Justin Bieber and Nicki Minaj. His latest album, True Colors, which was released in 2015, did not have as much hype around it and was similar to Clarity in most respects. Corban Goble, a music critic for online magazine Pitchfork, claimed that Zedd, “consistently failed to open the playbook or alter the formula,” suggesting sticking to the same style as Clarity was not much appreciated. “I Want You To Know” and “Beautiful Now” are probably two of the most famous songs of the album and they feature Selena Gomez and Jon Bellion respectively. Following the album, in 2016, Zedd agreed to create the soundtrack for an M&M advertisement marking their 75th anniversary.

The soundtrack for the advertisement is called “Candyman” and it features R&B singer Aloe Blacc. The duo attempt to cover the song “The Candy Man” from Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory. The biggest criticism of the track came from fellow EDM DJ, Diplo. He tweeted in response to the release of the song, “Zedd, wtf is this? Fake flume drop ft m&ms? It’s not OK [to] do this man come on.It’s not all about the (money emoji).” Most people do agree with Diplo and it is crazy to think that Zedd has gone from remixing a hard hitting Skrillex track to creating “Candyman.” However, with the path Zedd’s career has taken, it was inevitable. Ironically, Zedd was quoted in an article written by Zack O’Malley Greenburg for Forbes, saying, “I’m not making the music because I want to make a million dollars or I want to make a big hit. I make the music that I make because I love it.”

Looking back, it is difficult to believe that Zedd meant this. Over the years, Zedd has moved away from dubstep and electro house to progressive and almost tropical house. Along with this transition, the use of pop stars in his music, and now the sound tracks of a candy brand advertisement, it is clear Zedd has always thrived from commercial success and, regardless of his critics, he is undoubtedly one of the most successful mainstream DJ’s around.

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For generations, “Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll” has been the motto for rockstars. Drugs have played a major role, both positive and negative, throughout the music industry. Although the negative effects outweigh the positive, have you ever thought what music would be like if certain artists never used these drugs? Would The Beatles still be one of the greatest bands of all time? Would people still celebrate Bob Marley’s birthday? Many of the artists who experimented with drugs such as cocaine, cannabis, LSD, and heroin describe them as mind-enhancing, which escalated their music to another level. Unfortunately, these brain altering toxins often create addictions, abuse, and have resulted in the deaths of numerous artists. The usage of certain drugs varied throughout the decades, as certain genres rose into popularity. Artists often talked about their trips within their own lyrics, which relayed it to the public as acceptable and fashionable. I believe it’s fair to say that artists and the music industry have most definitely influenced teens, college students, and the entirety of the public experimentation with a variety of drugs.

The first true look into drugs affecting the music industry came in the early Sixties when psychedelic drugs, such as LSD, mushrooms, and cannabis, flooded the streets of the San Francisco Bay Area. Bands such as Jefferson Airplanes, the Grateful Dead, and The Beatles caught the full effect of this psychedelic movement. The cutting-edge genre of psychedelic rock claimed these drugs provided a creative pathway for lyrical writing and also enhanced the experience of performing. Many bands were very open about their experience, and Paul McCartney let this usage slip through the media. The Beatles were among one of the most commercially influential bands of this era. Early in their career they used Benzedrine (stimulant) to stay awake through prolonged performances, followed by their introduction of cannabis from Bob Dylan, leading up to their infamous addiction to LSD. Their usage of these drugs contributed to a major part in their music, allowing for a more melodic and meditative flow, as seen in Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band. This album was said to be a “full blown acid trip” in which they used numerous studio effects, such as backward tapes, panning, and reverbs, to enhance the full effect of the audience’s trips.

The following decade of heavy-metal turned for the worst, with a much darker path for many bands who began their fix for heroin. The “party like a rockstar” image came into full effect with bands like Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin. These bands epitomized the aspect of the rebellious, youthful counterculture that continued to spread through America like an epidemic. In 1979, after Black Sabbath’s numerous attempts to reach out for help, Ozzy Osbourne was fired from the group due to his out-of-control behavior and excessive abuse of heroin. Lead guitarist, Tony Iommi, was quoted saying “We just couldn’t continue with Ozzy…We didn’t want to fire him but we had to if we wanted to continue.” Another band on the rise, known as one of the most aspiring groups in the heavy-rock world, was Led Zeppelin. Unfortunately, controversial issues around drugs have always cycled throughout the group, most notably when Jimmy Page was seen onstage playing a completely different song than the rest of the band. To this day the whole band denies the use and addiction of heroin, even though it was pretty evident that they struggled with the usage of drugs throughout their careers.

As the genre of hip-hop and gangsta rap began to take full stride in the Eighties, the crack generation followed, fuming through the inner cities of America. Snoop Dogg, B-Real of Cypress Hill, and Wu-Tang Clan’s RZA and Raekwon are some of those who were considered dealers-turned-rappers. This detrimental drug, crack cocaine, provided an escape from poor neighborhoods and ghettos and served as a pathway into the rising hip-hop industry. Many artists similar to Snoop Dogg (Rollin’ 20 Crips) were often seen as affiliated with violent gangs, which provided protection, money, and a sense of family. In an interview with The New York Times, Snoop Dogg comments on the conspiracy that the government placed crack cocaine in the ghettos to break them down. Due to the everyday struggles these artists grew up with, hip-hop provided a sense of clarity and venting. This style of music often talked about the struggles of those who came from nothing and rose to the top, including groups like Run DMC from New York and N.W.A from Los Angeles.

In the early Nineties, the gloomy image of heroin saw its rebirth, primarily connected with lead vocalist, guitarist, and songwriter of Nirvana, Kurt Cobain. Nirvana was an alternative rock group who caught much attention after the release of “Smells Like Teen Spirit” on their second album Nevermind in 1991. Post-release of this hit album, they were branded “the flagship band” of Generation X, and Cobain as “the spokesman of a generation.” Even with all this success, Cobain struggled with
depression, which resulted in his heroin addiction. His inability to cope with fame and everything that came with it led him to take his own life in April of 1994, marking the end of Nirvana.

In recent years, the spotlight has primarily shifted towards electronic dance music (EDM) and the new era of hip-hop. Artists throughout the hip-hop industry, such as Kid Cudi and Rick Ross, are seen continuously rapping about drugs, like marijuana, in almost every song they've released. EDM is known for its rhythmic, upbeat, and bass-dropping music by artists like Avicii, Skrillex, and Zedd. EDM is home to an audience of mostly teens and college students who love to party. Concerts centering on this genre, such as Ultra Music Festival and Electric Daisy Carnival, are also known for the excessive use of illegal drugs. These drugs are mainly dance correlated stimulants such as MDMA, acid, and cocaine, which have been seen to cause fatal deaths at such events.

The music industry has seen major cultural shifts over the past decades that have affected artists and their music for both good and bad. Under the influence of drugs like cocaine, cannabis, LSD, and heroin, some bands and artists have had breakthrough singles and albums, some have ruined their careers, and others have come at the extent of their life. Artists today are influenced by the past success and fame of the previous generations. Aspiring artists will attempt to follow in similar footsteps of the famous and do what it takes to make it. So what would the music industry be if artists never used drugs to open these creative pathways to lyrical and instrumental development? We will never know.

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slowed his progress, but he followed in 1992 with the release of his successful solo debut album, “The Chronic”. His album ushered in a new style of rap in terms of musical style and lyrical content. Dre revealed a new G-funk sound anchored by live instruments, wah-wah guitars, whiny synth melodies, and a heavy Parliament-Funkadelic influence. Death Row Records continued to breed talent through the 1990's with Snoop Dogg, Eminem, 2Pac, and many more ali with the supervision of Dre. Young followed his debut album with an equally (if not more successful) album “2001”, this being a 6-time platinum album.

As the hip hop star approached the 21st century his focus turned more on the production of others music. He brought many of his clients and friends success; the most significant being Eminem. However he also slated the release of his own third album titled “Detox”, but it was never actually released because Dr. Dre was dissatisfied with his work. In the late 2000’s Dre announced that he was going to take a break from music to work on his new ‘Beats by Dre’ and to spend time with family. Most recently he has received success for his production of the movie “Straight Outta Compton”.

So what makes Dr. Dre so renowned and successful? There are several things that come to mind. First, is that he is a perfectionist. This can be seen in the fact that he didn’t release “Detox”; he was critical of his work and didn’t want to promote anything his fans wouldn’t appreciate. He expects perfection with whoever he works with; previous rappers and singers claimed they spent hours on hours recording the same verses until they were flawless. Another reason for his success is that he lets the artist be themselves and express their own creative ideas. Dre agreed in a Make Beats Forever article, “I try to get inside of the head of the artist I’m working with. The record has to be them.” By doing this he is able to produce a unique sound and message with every different artist. An important skill that Dr. Dre has mastered is not letting the critics bother him. He sticks to his guns and doesn’t allow anyone to influence his work. Lastly, Dre was an expert sound engineer; the buttons and knobs fascinated him so he was able to make subtle adjustments along the way. Accordingly, his beats are extremely crisp and clean, he is able to easily mix and master a track.

Importantly, Dr. Dre has not been deterred by faults in his career. He now continues to strive for perfection as a movie producer and entrepreneur. Attention to detail is crucial to Dre and it is clear even outside of his music. In order to create Young’s ‘Beats by Dre’ he prioritized top of the line quality and marketing with celebrities. Through this Dr. Dre has established a headphone-empire that owns 59% of the $1 billion industry. Adding to his desire for the best, Andre decided to produce “Straight Outta Compton”, which grossed over $121 million and covered the story of the young N.W.A. group.

Remarkably and against all odds, Andre Romelle Young became a successful music artist, producer, film maker and businessman. His setbacks were answered with more attempts and more success. His roots may be in Compton, but his future is wherever he writes it.

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The Beatles were able to monopolize the pop music industry, by their enormous success in terms of commercial and critical reception. The combination of their string of consecutive #1 singles and albums along with their creative artistic experimentation, growth, and influence has secured their place in rock history, and has yet to be matched.[1] Along with the success came one of the largest fan bases in history, there seamlessly timeless music has lasted 40 plus years after their last album, Abbey Road in 1969.

Coincidently however, in 1969 rumors swept around the world alleging that one of the most iconic members of the Beatles, Paul McCartney, was dead. In fact, it was said that he had died three years prior, on November 9, 1966 in a horrible car crash in London.[2] The evidence was dug up by college students, who then proceeded to publish articles claiming that there are clues that elude to McCartney’s supposed death, and could be found among various lyrics and artwork of The Beatles. This caused an uproar within The Beatles community, turning beloved fans into skeptical critics. The allegation suggests that the surviving band members were fearful that the news of Paul’s death would harm their success as a group and their individual careers. So as it’s rumored, they secretly replaced him with a look alike. A man by the name of Billy Shears, an orphan, who had won a Paul McCartney lookalike contest in Edinburgh would supposedly take his place.[3] Many believe that the guilt of the band members led them to reveal these clues to the public. Furthermore, The Beatles are known to play tricks on their audience, more specifically in Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band’s “A Day in the Life”. In this song, The Beatles have confirmed that at the end of the song they play a sound only dogs can hear. Just as a practical gag to those who listen, proof that they like to play games with their listeners.

The entire Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band is loaded with Paul-Is-Dead clues. Many Beatlesmaniacs find it rational that it would be loaded with hints, being that it was their first album released after the alleged death of their close friend. Lyrics like “He blew his mind out in a car” in the song “A Day in the Life” helped provide proof that McCartney might have died in 1966. Even the name the of the album, Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band, confounds many to believe that the surviving members have lonely hearts to mourn the death of their fallen friend. Even the elaborate

by: Corey Aviles
album cover shows a handful of possible clues. Such as the foreground scene on the front cover of the Sgt. Pepper’s album shows a floral arrangement, similar to one you would see at a funeral. Yet, what makes it out of the ordinary is the arrangements of the white flowers on the bottom right that form what looks like a left-handed bass guitar, the instrument that McCartney played. [4]

Also The Beatles are noted for playing around with their words and songs. For example, when certain songs are played backwards the songs allegedly can sneak messages into your subconscious mind that you would never pick up on. When you reverse certain songs on The Beatles’ White Album, you can actually hear John Lennon say “Paul is dead, miss him, miss him.” Also, Lennon plays around with his words when he is heard mumbling what sounds like, “I buried Paul!” at the end of “Strawberry Fields Forever.” However, when confronted in interviews, Lennon states that the phrase was actually “cranberry sauce”, and also denied the existence of any backward messages.[5]

Finally a few months after all the allegations, The Beatles’ press office issued statements denying the rumors, claiming the rumors are “a load of rubbish,” however, for many of the fans the rumor lived on, even after Paul did an interview with Life on November 7, 1969.[6]

Most people can agree that the real Paul McCartney is still alive and well today. However, many also question if the rumors of his death were a deliberate hoax. Was it to make The Beatles even bigger than they already were? Possibly to expanded their already enormous fan base? Did either the record company, or maybe The Beatles themselves carefully plan this all an elaborate hoax out?

From a financial standpoint the whole situation did not only make Paul McCartney a bigger star, but The Beatles as a whole. The Paul-Is-Dead rumor created a considerable influx in sales of all The Beatles albums. People were actually buying multiple copies of the albums in order to play them backwards to listen for hidden messages.[7] Capitol records, the label that The Beatles produced under, denied all claims about starting the rumor. Contraariwise, Capitol didn’t do much to discourage the rumors, being that it put more money in the pockets of the executives.

McCartney went on to release a live album in 1993 called Paul Is Live, and produced more than 20 solo albums — and that’s not counting the ones released by Wings.[8] So, is it the real Paul McCartney who is still among us? The world may never know.


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In 1980s and 1990s gangsta rap was an influential expansion of self-expression in the music industry because of its portrayal of harsh American realities, it quickly evolved as record labels began to commercialize and popularize the “gangster” persona of misogyny, violence, and masculinity in order increase album sales. Tupac Shakur, like many other artists, was known to have a musical persona that was not necessarily an accurate reflection of his true character. Shakur, an influential figure in gangsta and alternative rap, has stated “let me say for the record, I am not a gangster and never have been. I’m not the thief who steals your purse. I’m not the guy who jacks your car. I’m not down with people who steal and hurt others. I’m just a brother who fights back. I’m not some violent closet psycho. I’ve got a job. I’m an artist.” Shakur, like other rap artists during the ’90s, frequently came under fire by critics for glorifying gang violence, but he admits himself that he was not actually the “gangster” he portrayed in his lyrics. More recently, Future, a popular rapper who almost exclusively raps about explicit drug use in his music, has claimed that he does not actually do the drugs he so often raps about. If these artists are not true representations of their lyrical content and personas, should they still be held accountable and criticized for their problematic lyrics and music videos?

In my opinion, the controversial issues of sexism, misogyny, violence, and homophobia that hip-hop often encounters penetrate far deeper than the actual artists themselves. The popularity of these hypermasculine, violent, drug-addled personas is the result of the major music labels selectively choosing what types of artists they will sign in order to achieve the most sales in the largest market. Byron Hurt explores this matter in Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes when he questions why hip hop artists choose to rap about violence or objectify females rather than rap about more progressive themes; most of the artists’ responses blame the restrictive nature of the rap music industry. One rapper tells Hurt that the major record labels “usually don’t give us deals when we speak truthfully.” As hip-hop has transitioned from realistic, critical portrayals of gang violence towards more commercialized ones, the heads of production in the genre have also changed. Whereas rap initially started under independent labels with artists that often portrayed life as it was whilst offering social critiques of the institutions behind it, the proliferation of commercialized violence and misogyny can be largely attributed to hip-hop’s cross over into the mainstream, where major, white-owned record labels began to sign more graphic rap artists.

In an analysis of hip-hop album sales, production, and content, one study finds that “starting in 1988 the largest record corporations charted substantially more ‘hardcore’ rap songs than did independent labels.” As the market opened to mainstream audiences and major labels, white consumption of hip-hop music increased. While record labels quickly began to capitalize off the portrayal of black rappers as violent, sexist figures after realizing its large success in the commercial market.

In its beginnings, hip-hop music did not heavily rely on explicitly violent, sexist, or hyper masculine themes in order to appeal to a mass commercial base. Early hip-hop groups, like The Sugarhill Gang and De La Soul, often focused their lyrical content on issues pertaining to their surroundings and were produced by independent record labels like Tommy Boy and Sugar Hill. These independent hip-hop labels also helped expand musical opportunities for women through their production of popular female rappers like Roxanne Shanté and Queen Latifah. Later on in hip-hop, as groups like N.W.A. came to the music scene, more rappers began to expose and critique aspects of violent street life through their portrayal of gang violence in lyrics and music videos. Towards the end of the 1980s, this genre of gangsta rap began to increase in popularity in South Central Los Angeles before spreading to other parts of the country. Frequently when people condemn early gangsta rap groups like N.W.A. and Public Enemy for their portrayals of violence, they ignore the music as a form of self-expression of real aspects of the groups’ lives as well as disregard the political and social criticisms in the groups’ lyrics. While in many ways gangsta rap began as a realistic portrayal of gang violence in U.S. neighborhoods to criticize social institutions and societal racism, it also created a hypermasculine gangster persona that would soon be commercialized by major record labels and sold to white consumers.

While much of 1980s and ’90s gangsta rap was an influential expansion of self-expression in the music industry because of its portrayal of harsh American realities, it quickly evolved as record labels began to commercialize and popularize the “gangster” persona of misogyny, violence, and masculinity in order increase album sales. Tupac Shakur, like many other artists, was known to have a musical persona that was not necessarily an accurate reflection of his true character. Shakur, an influential figure in gangsta and alternative rap, has stated “let me say for the record, I am not a gangster and never have been. I’m not the thief who grabs your purse. I’m not the guy who jacks your car. I’m not down with people who steal and hurt others. I’m just a brother who fights back. I’m not some violent closet psycho. I’ve got a job. I’m an artist.” Shakur, like other rap artists during the ’90s, frequently came under fire by critics for glorifying gang violence, but he admits himself that he was not actually the “gangster” he portrayed in his lyrics. More recently, Future, a popular rapper who almost exclusively raps about explicit drug use in his music, has claimed that he does not actually do the drugs he so often raps about. If these artists are not true representations of their lyrical content and personas, should they still be held accountable and criticized for their problematic lyrics and music videos?

In my opinion, the controversial issues of sexism, misogyny, violence, and homophobia that hip-hop often encounters penetrate far deeper than the actual artists themselves. The popularity of these hypermasculine, violent, drug-addled personas is the result of the major music labels selectively choosing what types of artists they will sign in order to achieve the most sales in the largest market. Byron Hurt explores this matter in Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes when he questions why hip hop artists choose to rap about violence or objectify females rather than rap about more progressive themes; most of the artists’ responses blame the restrictive nature of the rap music industry. One rapper tells Hurt that the major record labels “usually don’t give us deals when we speak truthfully.” As hip-hop has transitioned from realistic, critical portrayals of gang violence towards more commercialized ones, the heads of production in the genre have also changed. Whereas rap initially started under independent labels with artists that often portrayed life as it was whilst offering social critiques of the institutions behind it, the proliferation of commercialized violence and misogyny can be largely attributed to hip-hop’s cross over into the mainstream, when major, white-owned record labels began to sign more graphic rap artists.

In an analysis of hip-hop album sales, production, and content, one study finds that “starting in 1988 the largest record corporations charted substantially more ‘hardcore’ rap songs than did independent labels.” As the market opened to mainstream audiences and major labels, white consumption of hip-hop music increased. While record labels quickly began to capitalize off the portrayal of black rappers as violent, sexist figures after realizing its large success in the commercial market.

**MASCULINITY AND MISOGYNY IN HIP HOP: THE RAPPER’S PERSONA**

**by: Aili Francis**

In 2006, the documentary Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes brought issues of violence, misogyny, masculinity, and homophobia within hip-hop culture to the forefront of the music industry. In the film, director Byron Hurt explored controversial themes in hip hop through a series of interviews with hip-hop lovers, artists, and scholars. Through interviews with both famous rappers and want-to-be-famous rappers, a disconnect between the lyrical content of rap music and the rappers themselves became clear. In many cases, the rappers cited that their often homophobic, violent, and sexist lyrics were not necessarily accurate reflections of their own feelings, but rather a portrayal of the hypermasculine rap figure, a stereotype created by the music industry.
Universal Music Group is responsible for a significant number of the hip-hop singles popular today, and, unsurprisingly, is run by white executives. Universal, along with other production and streaming companies in the music industry like Pandora, Apple, Spotify, and Warner Music Group, are also dominated by white executives. In examining and criticizing the prevalence of misogyny, violence, and masculinity in hip-hop, critics must change the subjects of their criticism from the artists themselves to the producers and consumers at large. Many aspects of the hip hop industry that perpetuate black stereotypes are produced by white executives and consumed by white audiences. In one study, researchers analyzed the lyrics of twenty hip-hop songs included in Billboard’s Year-End “Hot 100” singles and found that 40% of the songs had physical violent lyrics and another 40% contained misogynistic content. Issues regarding the glorification of violence and misogyny are serious problems that hip-hop continues to face today, but in order to change them, we must first look at changing the leading authorities in the music industry that perpetuate these very issues.

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TOTO: A BAND WORTH REMEMBERING AGAIN

by: Joachim Samson

Honestly, I had not heard of the band until the beginning of the 2016 spring semester. I was not really a rock and roll listener until I took this course. Once I started exploring the rock and roll era from the 1960s up to the '90s, I immediately fell in love with the band Toto. I discovered the band while watching an episode of the television show Family Guy. Joe, a paraplegic cop on the show, played Toto’s song “Africa” to rekindle his love with his wife, Bonnie. The song was so intriguing that I had to know where it came from. After discovering Toto, I decided to listen to their albums. It was like I fell in love with music all over again, comparable to when I first listened to The Beatles. Toto’s music is very catchy and simple, similarly to rock songs in the '60s. I admire their creative songwriting and music production; their recordings exhibit world-class musicianship and genius melodies that stick in one’s memory forever. Toto’s music combines pop, rock, and disco elements into “one slick combination, which heavily influenced mainstream pop music.” After hearing their records, I wondered why am I only listening to their music now. I have been listening to major soft rock bands like The Police, Boston, Foreigner, Chicago, etc., but Toto seemed to have slipped through the cracks. Now that I know who they are, I am interested to know what people thought of them during their reign in the 1980s (without any knowledge of their musical successes).

The band was formed in 1978 in Los Angeles and consisted of David Paich (keyboards, vocals), Steve Lukather (guitar, vocals), Bobby Kimball (vocals), Steve Porcaro (keyboards), David Hungate (bass), and Jeff Porcaro (drums). With six talented and experienced musicians who had back up artists like Boz Scaggs, Aretha Franklin, Barbra Streisand and Jackson Browne, Toto was, with cracks. Now that I know who they are, I am interested to know what people thought of them during their reign in the 1980s (without any knowledge of their musical successes).

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The band did not have similar successes with their succeeding albums Hydra and Turn Back. Both albums were certified gold, but less successful than Toto. An article from “New Musical Express” by Max Bell states, “Their success is assured but Toto have no more chance of coming up with a half-way decent song than a chimpanzee in front of a typewriter has of writing the complete works of William Shakespeare.” Right now you would think Bell is a fool; however, the article was written after the release of Hydra and Turn Back. Little did he know that, in 1982, Toto would release their most successful album Toto IV. The multiplatinum album received six Grammy awards, including Album of the Year. Although the band’s record “Africa” was their most popular song, “Rosanna” was the track which put Toto back on the gravy train in America.” The track swept the Grammys and placed Toto back on the top charts in the U.K. and the U.S.

Toto’s music is very appealing to almost any generation. According to an article written by Harry Doherty, “The overwhelming attraction of Toto is undoubtedly the level of craftsmanship on display, and the integrity with which it’s exercised.” I completely agree with Doherty; the level of musical experience each member had prior to Toto’s success led to the development of masterpiece records. My favorite record by Toto is the song that led me to the band, “Africa.” David Paich (keyboard) was inspired after watching a documentary about the killings and sufferings amongst Africans. The song’s introspective lyrics, like “I seek to cure what’s deep inside, frightened of this thing that I’ve become,” and the band’s creative composition make the song resonate with me well. Ironically, guitarist Steve Lukather and singer Bobby Kimball said the song was almost not added to the album, but their producer convinced them to include it. I guess the band and I do not see eye to eye.

According to Virgin Yearbook’s John Tobler, “Toto’s music is eminently disposable.” I completely disagree Tobler’s statement. The band’s work should be highly praised for its creativity and world-class production. In my opinion, Toto should be given more credit for their work and contributions to the music industry. In today’s world, a young adult like me could appreciate Toto’s music, and so can many others. It is a pity people are not attached to their music anymore. Toto still remains as one of the top selling tour and recording acts in the world, and one of my favorite bands of all time.

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How Napster Revolutionized the Music Industry

by: John Fought

Like food and water, the consumption of music has become an important part of our daily lives ever since the advent of the phonograph and the introduction of music to radio. With each passing decade, new technologies emerged from the record to the cassette, signaling the next evolutionary step in the process. Then in May of 1999, something revolutionary happened that would change the way we interact with music forever. That something was the file sharing software Napster.

Before this date, if music fans wanted to listen to a specific song, they were forced to buy an entire album. If they wanted to bring their collection with them, they were forced to lug around a massive tome of CDs and pray that none got scratched or else eat the cost of repurchasing the product again. If they wanted to listen to multiple songs by multiple artists they had to accept the hassle of switching disks, and if there was some obscure song from an album that was out of print, most likely they were out of luck. The mass adoption of the mp3 format changed all of that forever.

This story really begins with a man named Karlheinz Brandenburg who, as a PhD student in Germany, was given the challenge of finding a way to transmit music over digital phone lines (Albright). After several years Brandenburg, along with the Motion Picture Experts Group (MPEG), arrived at the mp3. In a foreshadowing of things to come, an English entrepreneur once asked him “Do you know that this will destroy the music industry?” (Albright).

Getting music off the Internet was not new before Napster, however it was difficult and unreliable, often requiring the use of chat rooms and requesting songs from other users. Then in 1998 a user by the name of "napster" revealed his plan in one of these chat rooms to release a piece of software to fix this problem (Lamont). Named for his nappy hair, that user was Shawn Fanning. Recognizing a potential market hole that needed filling, another user by the name of Sean Parker suggested they meet up and collaborate (Lamont). Both were 17 and 18 at the time, and had no idea of the implications their actions would have on the music industry.

Shawn Fanning worked tirelessly day and night building his platform, while Sean Parker scraped together $50,000 from investors to launch the software company. In May 1999 Napster was officially launched, acquiring 4 million users by October, a number that would grow to 20 million by March the following year (Lamont). At its peak, Napster’s number of registered users soared to a high of 80 million (Sessions X). Napster was particularly popular among college students, with some administrators of colleges reporting between 40 and 61 percent of all traffic flowing through their networks going to Napster (Albright). By the summer of 2000, 14,000 songs were being downloaded via Napster every minute (Lamont).

In 2000, the heads of major record labels met in the Washington offices of the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) signaling the beginning of the end for Napster. The executives were encouraged to play a fun little game called “Stump the Napster” in which they were asked to find at least one of their new hit singles that wasn’t being shared online (Lamont). Needless to say no one won the game, and the executives were not amused. At the same time, Metallica discovered that their new single “I Disappear” was leaked to Napster and had even made its way to radio before it was officially released (Albright). Both the RIAA and Metallica filed lawsuits, with Metallica’s Lars Ulrich becoming one of Napster’s most outspoken critics, a move that has undoubtedly tarnished his and Metallica’s reputation with music lovers.

Many young people, ignorant to copyright laws, saw nothing wrong with Napster or at least considered it a grey area. The recording industry did not see it that way and neither did the courts when Napster was finally shut down in February 2001 (Lamont). Many in the media and music industry vilified Napster for enabling piracy, while others praised Fanning and Parker for disrupting the industry and turning it on its head. People’s attitudes about music were changed forever, a legacy that is evident in the fact that 44 percent of US Internet users and just 64 percent of Americans who buy digital music think the music is worth paying for according to a 2010 study (Goldman).

There were some last-ditch efforts to revive the service and change its business model before its demise but all attempts failed. Both Fanning and Parker left before its ultimate death—with Parker being fired—and neither made a dime off the venture. Fanning went on to start a video game company that he later sold and Parker partnered up with Mark Zuckerberg in the early days of Facebook and later invested in Spotify making him a billionaire (Lamont). Both have since reunited to work on a new video conferencing application called Airtime (Lamont).

The real tragedy of the death of Napster was a missed opportunity 15 years ago to change the way the music industry interacts with its listeners. No effort was made to embrace the 50 million users still with Napster during its final days at a time when CD sales began to fall, as lamented by Island Record’s founder Chris Blackwell (Lamont). Instead a rift was created between producers and consumers, as the RIAA pursued draconian tactics in its witch hunt to save CD sales with its lawsuits, even extending such suits to some 18,000 users of Napster (Lamont). Both have since reunited to work on a new video conferencing application called Airtime (Lamont).

In the wake of Napster, various other peer-to-peer services like Gnutella, Kazaa, LimeWire, and others began sprouting up like weeds and proved much harder to shut down (EntertainmentEzine). It wouldn’t be until almost 4 years later when Apple launched iTunes that digital music would finally be monetized, but the damage had already been done (Goldman). According to an analyst at
Since its creation, hip-hop music has always been intertwined with social and political activism. Due to the fact that hip-hop music is widely inhabited by people of color, who face institutionalized racism and inequality, they speak on these social issues in their music and celebrity appearances. In the recent surge in social movements like Black Lives Matter, artists like Kendrick Lamar, Killer Mike and Ana Tijoux have brought light to the injustices they face while giving a voice to people of color that has often been silenced.

Public Enemy’s hit song “Fight the Power” became an anthem against racial tension depicted in Spike Lee’s film “Do the Right Thing.” The anthem called for an end to the oppressive white power and racial injustices, as they call out Elvis Presley for appropriating black music, reference James Brown’s “Say it Loud – I’m Black and I’m Proud,” and lack of representation. Public Enemy was able to be commercially successful while still being highly political. However, the group still faced much criticism. At the same time, N.W.A shed light on the double standard the police force enacts between whites and blacks and the mistreatment of black people in songs like “Fuck Tha Police.”

The gangster rap sub genre of hip-hop told the living conditions of what it means to be low income, black, and in a rough inner city neighborhood, a life that was usually ignored by mainstream media. Killer Mike is a very outspoken activist and rapper as he has been able to merge poetic social commentary with modern hip-hop. In his song “Reagan,” Killer Mike equates the war on drugs to the war on terror in the way that the police force “terrorizes... mostly black boys” and are quick to pull the trigger on these people, which is a reference to the multiple police shootings of young black men. He offers a political critique on a modern form of slavery: the prison industrial complex that primarily targets men of color. He raps “But thanks to Reaganomics, / Prisons turned to profit...
Cause slavery was abolished, / Unless you are in prison, / You think I’m bullshitting, then read the 13th Amendment / Involuntary servitude and slavery it prohibits.” Outside of his music, Killer Mike is very vocal about political issues and has appeared on The Colbert Report and CNN to discuss white privilege, classism, and racist political policies. In 2016, Killer Mike interviewed presidential candidate Bernie Sanders and they discussed the history of segregation, social inequality, and modern race relations in the US.

One of the leading voices of activism in our generation is Kendrick Lamar. In his second album, Good Kid, M.A.A.D City, Lamar tells the story of a young black teenager making his way through Compton and encountering drugs, sex, gang violence, and poverty. It shows that it’s hard for kids to grow up in this environment and come out alive while staying a “good kid.” Lamar has also given back to his community through donations and volunteer work.

Lamar recently caused controversy, mainly among many white critics, for his 2016 Grammy performance. Dressed as a prisoner with metal shackles rattling on his wrists, Lamar sang “The Blacker the Berry,” which is an ode to blackness and voices the struggles of being black in America. He claims “You hate my people, your plan is to terminate my culture” which tells of the simultaneous discrimination and hatred that blacks face while white people appropriate black culture and claim it as their own. The costume and prison stage décor are a critique on the mass imprisonment of black men in America and the unfair practices of the legal system towards people of color. However, the second half of the Grammy performance, Lamar raps “Alright” with a new background and costume: African tribal aesthetics. He shows that there is hope in this fight for equality and black people will be prosper as he chants “We gon’ be alright.”

Latino rappers have also been at the forefront of activism discourse. Immortal Technique, Calle 13, and Ana Tijoux have very socially conscious and politically motivated music. Immortal Technique’s song “Dance with the Devil” tells of the harsh life of gang affiliated Latino teens and their demise into drugs, violence, rape and murder. He speaks out against the greed of American corporations and politicians, imperialism, institutionalized racism, and other societal issues. Immortal Technique has news interviews where he speaks out against American war efforts; he’s stated that his music can be seen as offensive because he is offended by what happens in the world, like “seeing the graves of civilians that are there because they are the ‘collateral damage’ of a drone strike in Afghanistan or Pakistan.” Calle 13, a Puerto Rican rap duo, has become one of the most loved and most hated bands in Latin America due to their political ideology. Calle 13 is the new generation of “musica de protesta,” Spanish for protest music. Calle 13 fights for the independence of Puerto Rico and many songs are focused on the injustices of race and class in the world. Their newest album features a song that samples Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks. Lastly, Ana Tijoux’s songs carry a strong political message, mainly focusing on Chilean politics and feminism. Her song “Shock” criticizes the shock economic policies in Latin America and chants “basta la robo” which means the “the robbery stops” in terms of the corrupt politicians. In a recent interview, Ana Tijoux stated, “I think that hip-hop is the land of the people that doesn’t have a land…. You can make and I can make like a difference between this music that has been the music of our country.”

In 1999, two 13-year-olds began recording songs in a bedroom in Perth, Australia. Kevin Parker (guitar and vocals) and Dominic Simper (bass) continued to do so until 2007, when Jay Watson joined the duo as a drummer. Soon, thanks to their MySpace page, the band received a message from Modular Records asking for a demo tape. The band sent Modular Records a 20-song demo tape, and quickly found themselves involved in a multiple-label bidding war. Eventually, the band signed with the record company who showed initial interest in them. In 2008, Tame Impala officially signed with Modular Records, and in September of that same year released their first self-titled EP. The album reached number 10 on the ARIA charts and number 1 on the independent label charts. Two years later, the group released their full-length debut album, the critically successful Innerspeaker. In 2012, Tame Impala released their most successful studio album, Lonerism, and most recently in 2015 released Currents.

The true mastermind behind Tame Impala’s successful career in psychedelic rock comes from its founder, Kevin Parker. Parker records every instrument himself in the studio, micromanaging the entire process of recording an album. During live concerts, the group functions as a full band, with Dominic Simper and Jay Watson entering the mix as bass guitar and drummer respectively. Parker’s
style is most notably influenced by late 1960s and early 1970s psychedelic rock, drawing influences from artists such as The Beatles and The Flaming Lips. Like his own music, however, Parker's influences are spread across a vast array of musical genres. Like his own music, however, Parker's influences are spread across a vast array of musical genres. Parker is even quoted in an interview admitting that “The Beatles are as much of an inspiration as Britney Spears, at the end of the day, because it's all stuff that just comes in. It's just stuff that's around me that happens to enter my brain. It ends up playing a part in my understanding of music.” The result is an incredibly unique form of psychedelic rock that can drastically change from song to song.

Although Tame Impala’s songs may vary in style, Parker remains fairly consistent with some aspects of his production. Notably, Parker tends to employ effects including phasing, delay, reverb and fuzz to produce his unique sound. Further, Parker tends to employ the “wall of sound” made famous by record producer Phil Spector, whose intention was to create a dense musical aesthetic that felt full and rich. What’s more, Parker has cited his influence in Irish rock band My Bloody Valentine’s balance of the wall of sound and their “melancholy dreamy feel.” The result, says Parker, is a contrast between brutal-sounding instrumentals and Parker’s soft, soothing voice.

Parker’s voice has become notoriously distinct, and even reminds some listeners of the wildly famous co-founder of The Beatles, John Lennon. Parker contributes the striking resemblance to his production: “I think it comes down to the effects that I put on my voice. Like, I double-track it and put delay on it and the way I EQ it, all those kind of things. I think it’s a case of I’m trying to do the same thing with the vocal sound that people were trying to do 50 years ago to try to get a particular sound. I just love really thin, silvery-sounding vocals” (Vulture). Sean Lennon, the son of John, has even admitted the similarities in the two singers, although Parker has stated many times that he does not completely agree with the comparison. Regardless, a comparison to the co-founder of the most commercially successful band in the history of popular music is bound to add to a band’s popularity.

There doesn’t seem to be an end in sight for Tame Impala, with Parker stating in April of 2016 that he is currently writing new music. Judging by the exponential success of the group from album to album, Tame Impala is sure to be back in the next few years with more of its unique, exciting psychedelic rock.

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THE LIFE OF BOB MARLEY

by: Max Wimer

Born in 1945 as Robert Nesta Marley, Bob Marley spent his early years in the rural community of Nine Miles, Jamaica. He would be surrounded by many customs derived from the resident’s African ancestry. This along with the life associated with growing up in a rural area would shape the way Bob would write and sing his songs.

In the late 1950s, barely a teenager, Bob moved from his childhood home to an area in Kingston, Jamaica’s capital, known as Trench Town. During this time, and into the early 1960s, Jamaica’s music industry was on the rise and its development allowed for the formation of the music form called Ska. Ska was “a local interpretation of American soul and R&B, with an irresistible accent on the offbeat, ska exerted a widespread influence on poor Jamaican youth while offering a welcomed escape from their otherwise harsh realities” (Bob). It was during this time that Bob Marley, at the age of 14, decided to solely focus on a musical career. This led him and his childhood friend Neville Livingston, a.k.a. Bunny Wailer, to begin attending vocal classes held by Trench Town resident Joe Higgs, a successful singer who mentored many young singers. Higgs eventually introduced Bob and Bunny to Peter Tosh and the trio became known as Bob Marley and the Wailers.

Soon later Bob Marley and the Wailers met Clement Dodd, the founder of one of the largest Jamaican labels, Studio One. Their first single for the label was “Simmer Down,” a song that cautioned the ghetto youths to control their tempers, and went on to sell over 80,000 copies. One of the most prominent songs recorded under Studio One was “One Love,” the seminal song of Bob Marley. However, this relationship between Studio One and Bob and The Wailers would soon come to an end. Reggae began to come into is own, by shifting to a slower paced rock steady ska beat and including Rastafarian beliefs in the lyrics. Dodd’s inability to embrace this shift in the genre and the declining sales of “One Love” prompted Bob and the Wailers to leave Studio One.

As the Bob and The Wailers rolled into the ‘70s their stardom skyrocketed. They signed with Island Records and released their first album Catch a Fire. It was during this time that “soaring un-
employment, rationed food supplies, pervasive political violence and the IMF's stranglehold on the Jamaican economy due to various structural adjustment policies heavily influenced the keen social consciousness that came to define Bob's lyrics (Bob). Because of Catch a Fire tours in the UK and U.S. were arranged. Their U.S. gigs included an opening slot for a then relatively unknown Bruce Springsteen in New York City. The Wailers toured with Sly and the Family Stone, who were at their peak in the early '70s, but were removed soon after because their riveting performances upstaged the headline.

Following the successful tour the group promptly recorded their second album for Island Records, Burnin', featuring some of Bob's timeless hits "Get Up Stand Up" and "I Shot the Sheriff," which Eric Clapton covered. Clapton's cover greatly elevated Bob Marley's international profile; however the same year Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer left the group.

Rita Marley, Marcia Griffiths, and Judy Mowatt replaced Bunny Wailer and Peter Tosh. In 1975 Bob Marley and the Wailers went on to record a third record for Island Record, Natty Dread, which included on of his most famous songs "No Woman No Cry." The year after, Bob Marley released Rastaman Vibration, his only album to reach the Billboard Top 200, peaking at number 8. Even without that much commercial success Bob Marley was now regarded as a global reggae ambassador who had internationally popularized Rastafarian beliefs. At home he was regarded as a hero, and it was this hero who agreed to do a free concert in his home country called Smile Jamaica. The purpose of the concert was to help bring the divided country, due to political alliances, together.

Bob Marley would go on to release his two most successful albums. Exodus in 1977, which included the songs “Exodus” and “Jamming.” The album would stay on the UK charts for 56 consecutive weeks. The second album, Kaya, was released in 1978, which included “Satisfy my Soul” and “Is this Love.” The release of Kaya coincided with the One Love Peace Concert, held on April 22, 1978 at Kingston's National Stadium. The event was another effort aimed at curtailing the rampant violence stemming from the senseless political rivalries. During the concert Bob Marley summoned political party leader Edward Seaga and Prime Minister Michael Manley onstage and urged them to shake hands; clasping his left hand over theirs, he raised their arms aloft and chanted "Jah Rastafari." In recognition of his courageous attempt to bridge Jamaica's political divide, Bob Marley received the UN's Medal of Peace.

Bob Marley's legacy is an everlasting one. He is a staple figure in many cultures, crossing social, cultural, and racial boundaries. This is seen in many places such as Koh Lipe, Thailand, where Bob Marley's February 6th birthday is celebrated for three days. Also in New Zealand, his life and music are now essential components of Waitangi Day, a day celebrating the treaty signed between the country's European settlers and its indigenous Maori population. His music plays part in many protests. During Occupy Wall Street you could hear the cries of "Get Up Stand Up" reverberating through the streets of New York. A simple quote he once told Vivien Goldman, a writer at The Guardian, sums his legacy up perfectly, "Me no really say no bad things about no one, cause me ate through the streets of New York. A simple quote he once told Vivien Goldman, a writer at The Guardian, sums his legacy up perfectly, "Me no really say no bad things about no one, cause me

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found in the backmasking of certain songs. In the song "Revolution 9," it is argued that the line "Turn me on dead man" can be heard. Other songs of The Beatles that incorporate hidden messages are "I'm So Tired" and "Blackbird" in which Lennon is heard saying, "Paul is a dead man. Miss him." As a response to all the hysteria, The Beatles included a backmasked message of Lennon saying, "Turned out nice again" at the end of their single "Free as a Bird" (Macdonald).

The idea of backmasking eventually found itself in Hollywood when it was featured in horror films such as The Exorcist. In 1988, in his song "Bloodbath in Paradise," Ozzy Osbourne featured a parody of a line from the film: "Your mother sells whelks in the Hull." Along with Osbourne, The Electric Light Orchestra implemented backmasking in their music, however, at first unintentionally. In their 1974 album, Eldorado, later on ELO put a backmasked message in their song "Fire on High," as a response to these claims, which said, "the music is reversible but time is not. Turn back. Turn back. Turn back. Turn back." Others artists that have been accused of backmasking in their music include Judas Priest, The Eagles, Justin Bieber, Miley Cyrus, and Led Zeppelin (Macdonald).

One of the most famous songs in rock and roll, "Stairway to Heaven," has gained notoriety for its abundance of hidden satanic messages. In 1982, a Baptist radio DJ named Michael Mills began to uncover hidden messages in the song. This resulted in an intense backlash against the song that resulted in burned records and a coalition of parents who claimed the song was influencing dangerous behavior in the youth of America. Some of the backmasked lines in this song include, "Oh, here's to my sweet Satan," "The one whose little path would make me sad, whose power is Satan," "He will give those with him 666," and "There was a little shed where he made us suffer, sad Satan." After being accused of intentionally putting these phrases in the song to sabotage the minds of listeners, the band denied the claims and blamed the whole conspiracy on the power of suggestion (source 2).

Throughout the history of rock and roll, backmasking has been used both intentionally and unintentionally. In many cases, however, artists have been known to intentionally include backmasking only as a response to critics who claim the intentional implementation of satanic messages as a tool for brainwashing listeners. Although many religious groups have combatted this phenomenon, I personally believe the power of suggestion plays a large role in the findings of these messages. In some cases the messages may sound distinct, however, most are foggy and can also be interpreted as different, non-satanic messages. In addition to the fact that many of these messages are searched for rather than stumbled upon, all of the artists in my research victimized by claims of conspiracy have strongly denied the intentional implementation of backmasked satanic messages.

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How did Led Zeppelin’s transformation from a minor British band called The New Yardbirds into a colossal and renowned musical symbol throughout the world really happen? What separated them from so many other bands that strived for but failed to achieve the same level of greatness? Although Led Zeppelin had undeniably some of the best musical talent around, this advantage was not what ultimately brought them to the very top. It was a grueling approach the band took in many different cylinders that truly made them stand out in history so prominently. Whether they were practicing in the studio, negotiating contracts with record labels, writing lyrics, or performing live, every member of Led Zeppelin maintained an attitude that echoed with resilience and defiance throughout their entire careers. In other words, the members of Led Zeppelin did what they wanted to do at all times, never letting anyone outside of the band convince them that they were wrong and should do otherwise. Needless to say, this attitude gave their band a reckless reputation and made it difficult for them to receive approval from many, if not most, musical critics. Luckily for them, the only approval they needed was from themselves.

A big part of Led Zeppelin’s commercial success came from the way that they conducted their business. Their band manager, Peter Grant, is the one responsible for bringing what became Led Zeppelin’s ruthless style of business to light. British journalist Chris Charlesworth makes a notable comment about Grant stating that his, "commitment to the cause and readiness to physically confront anyone who sought to profit at the band’s expense or otherwise break their stride, made
him the most respected yet feared manager of his era." Many who have interacted with him on a close level would say that when Grant was displeased and wanted to get his way with someone, he would extend his huge gut right into their bodies, which would literally and figuratively shove them into doing what he wanted them to do. This bullish manner served quite fortuitously for the members of Led Zeppelin in a variety of ways. On one side, it intimidated many of the crazily obsessed fans from getting too close to the rock stars. On a more frugal side, when the band encountered issues such as bootlegging and ticket scalping at their concerts, Grant was said to have "grabbed the hapless swindlers and forced them to turn over their pockets, confiscating all the spare cash." Apparently one time he got a little more suspicious than usual and actually dragged a man into his office, pulled it apart, and ended up finding an entire trashcan filled with counterfeit ticket stubs. A close associate with Led Zeppelin and notable music journalist, Mick Wall, surmises that it was this kind of behavior that Grant demonstrated that led to a profitable result in which, "Zeppelin would become the first major rock band that actually got to keep most of the money they made."

Grant’s take it or leave it style of business was unsurprisingly matched by his band’s take it or leave it style of playing music. Jimmy Page, Robert Plant, John Paul Jones, and John Bonham all played together in over 500 concerts throughout the world, all of which were facilitated through the diligent planning of Grant, and ended up releasing a grand total of 10 albums to the general public. In Led Zeppelin, both manager and musician fought and worked endlessly to be the ones in control of their own destiny and ended up proving just that to the entire world. From the very start of their touring career in 1969, Led Zeppelin played on stage with a ferocity and chemistry that was simply impossible to match. A review in Disc commented on this ferocity stating that, “When Led Zeppelin came on and played at a good ten times the volume of everyone else, the audience very nearly freaked completely.” This intensity that they brought on stage with them, however, also carried over into their lifestyles on the road in which hard drugs were consumed and hotel rooms were destroyed on a fairly frequent basis. Unfortunately, this all or nothing lifestyle these artists led took the life of their drummer, John Bonham, who choked on his own vomit after drinking too heavily on the night of September 25th, 1980. Although doing so led to great success for Led Zeppelin, going over the top without its ups and downs as we now see. However, it is very important to understand and respect the fact that Led Zeppelin never experienced a day throughout their careers when they weren’t being doubted and ridiculed by critics. Their relationship with the press is one of the rockiest in music history and yet they stand today in history as one of the most commercially successful and devoutly followed bands of all time. The lesson goes as follows: Led Zeppelin’s passion for music and putting on stellar performances could not be disrupted by anybody. They followed their endless ambition on an unpredictable road full of obstacles where they capitalized on all of their unique individual abilities and developed an electric chemistry with one another that is today regarded as legendary. Zeppelin’s unyielding demeanor made the belief they had in themselves unbreakable in the face of adversity and criticism, which allowed them to go into a life full of uncertainty and come out a shining star.

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THE BRAIN OF THE BEACH BOYS: BRIAN WILSON

by: Zander Kotsen

The Beach Boys are known by many as one of the greatest rock and roll bands of all time. Their innovative sound and surfer style lead them to fame in the early 1960’s. The group formed in Hawthorne, California in 1961 and is made up of brothers Brian, Dennis, and Carl Wilson, their cousin Mike Love, and friend Al Jardine. Their success can largely be credited to their producer, Brian Wilson, who co-founded The Beach Boys and quickly took position as the band’s main leader. Wilson is a musician and singer as well, but his limitless imagination and skill for songwriting has lead him to become widely recognized as one of the most innovative musicians of the 20th century. He is the mastermind behind The Beach Boys’ Pet Sounds (1966), which has received praise from many as one of the best albums of all time. Wilson experienced many highs and lows across the duration of his career as his drug addiction lead him to severe mental illness and depression. However, Wilson’s love for music has never been questioned and his ingenuity in the studio has been unmatched.

Wilson’s goal was to create something new and be different from the rest to set his self apart. Wilson idolized Phil Spector, who was a famous producer of the time, and stated that he was “unable to really think as a producer until [he] got familiar with Spector’s work” (Wilson). He admired Spector’s inventiveness, hoping to create a similar style. Wilson impressed many of the session musicians that he worked with to create his melodies. These musicians became known as The Wrecking Crew, and were needed in order to match the increasingly complicated nature of the music. This put importance on the individual instruments as Wilson focused on each distinct sound, moving from the keyboards, to the drums, and then to the violins. Wilson was able to get the exact sound he wanted, whether this meant changing the reverb and echo, or utilizing different patterns and instruments to piece together the desirable sound. He had an amazing ear for music, and was able to form the arrangements in his head before putting them together.

Mike Love, and friend Al Jardine. Their success can largely be credited to their producer, Brian Wil

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Wilson was the first ever producer to use the studio as an instrument. He would use recording sessions as a creative setting, which became known as “playing the studio”. Wilson also used the bass guitar as a key component for many of his records, which wasn’t seen that often in music during his era. The vocals were merely horn parts in the views of Wilson. He narrowed in on every single pitch and put them together to get his final sound. The music had multiple layers in order to create a complete harmony. Wilson used double tracking and overdubbing in hits such as “Surfin’ U.S.A.” and “Barbara Ann” to get that orchestra-like sound.

While Wilson’s experimental music techniques resulted in success, his use of drugs lead to the opposite. In 1964, Wilson was introduced to marijuana and quickly moved on to LSD and cocaine. His acid trips added an imaginative style to many of his songs and his experiences even served as the basis for hits such as “California Girls”. As his drug use continued, Wilson fell victim to addiction, and has been dealing with the consequences to this day. Since consuming LSD, Wilson has been affected by schizoaffective disorder. He has been dealing with auditory hallucinations and intense fears for the past 50 years ever since they began at the age of 25 (1967). In an interview with Ability magazine, Wilson elaborated on his condition saying, “every few minutes the voices say something derogatory to me, which discourages me a little bit, but I have to stay strong”. This put a damper on Wilson’s career and slowed down his musical production. The disorder hindered his self-confidence to the point that he could no longer play shows or perform live. Wilson failed to reach out for any help or treatment until the age of 40. Since receiving help, Wilson has been able to deal with the symptoms more easily, but the voices are still a daily occurrence.

Through dealing with these problems, Wilson has been lead to extreme depression at times. His friends and family, however, have helped him to stay strong and persevere past his disorder. Wilson used to go through long periods of time where he would be able to do nothing. Thanks to the support his psychiatrist and wife, he has returned to playing music and even overcame his fears by reviving his career with several solo albums in the 1990's.

Wilson’s work has been extremely influential, and set a new bar for music production at the time. Wilson was the mind behind the entire operation and his work with The Beach Boys. This can be summed up with a quote by his brother Dennis who stated: “Brian Wilson is the Beach Boys. He is the band. He is all of it. Period. We’re nothing. He’s everything”. His attention to detail and obsession with perfection has resulted in some of the greatest music ever. Each piece of his has a different mood, and the listener is always surprised with a new and fresh sound. Brian Wilson’s life serves as a lesson on the dangers that come with psychedelic drugs. No one can question that he is one of the most skilled musical minds of the 20th century, but with his career inhibited at such an early stage it only makes you wonder what could have been.

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The career of Michael Jackson was incredibly interesting through the moment that he passed away. Michael Jackson had a unique career; he became a sensation at an early age and maintained this prestige into his adulthood. As anyone who watched him perform live or on video can confirm, Jackson was more than just a singer and a musician. His stage presence and talent as both a performer and entertainer set him on a pedestal that is simply unparalleled. Jackson effectively utilized music videos and MTV to bolster his career and he released numerous top hits throughout the 1980s, yet his public image and personal life made him subject to scrutiny and often took away from his prominence as a celebrity. The degree to which these aspects of his character hindered his success is up to speculation, but it can be asserted that despite some aspects of his personal life, Michael Jackson should be remembered as one of the greatest artists of all time.

The Jackson 5, formed in 1963, attained the level of success that it did in large part due to the vocals of the then five-year old Michael Jackson. The group that Berry Gordy of Motown referenced as “the last big stars to come rolling off [his] assembly line” soared to the top of music charts with their singles “ABC”, “I’ll Be There”, and “I Want You Back” as their music carried a happy feeling to the ears of listeners. Michael began his personal career at the age of 13, but continued to perform alongside his siblings as well. Among Jackson’s first top hits as a solo artist were “Got to Be There” and “Ben”, the latter became his first single to reach the number one spot on the singles chart. Michael soared to unimaginable levels of success in his solo career. Beginning with his album “Off the Wall”, he showed that he could effectively market himself as both an artist and a performer through the use of music videos. Following “Off the Wall”, he released the “Thriller” album in 1982. To say the least, this album in it’s entirety shocked the world. Seven of the ten songs on the album made the top charts, and the song Thriller received unimaginable crossover success. Thriller is the best-selling album in history, and the incorporation of music videos to the songs such as Beat It, Billie Jean, and Thriller added even more uniqueness. The album stood at number one on the charts for 37 weeks, and eventually won itself an astounding eight Grammy awards.

It is possible to consider this album the peak, and a very high one at that, of Michael Jackson’s career. He and Madonna, as few had done before them, effectively utilized video music and newly founded MTV to gain prominence and fame. However, just as any pop sensation would, Michael Jackson received increasing amounts of scrutiny as his career progressed. The ability of Michael Jackson to break through seemingly unbreakable music barriers and appeal to audiences of all races was unmatched. However, this mainstream success meant the negligence of some aesthetic African-American music values. In a music industry historically characterized by white artists’ appropriation of black music some fans received Jackson’s apparent neglect for his own heritage unfavorably. Yet how much can one truly criticize Jackson for attaining mainstream success that had long been perceived as impossible? Jackson revolutionized the music industry with his record-breaking success and innovative styles, an accomplishment that came with the price of partially neglecting African-American aesthetic values.

The success of both The Jackson 5 and Michael individually certainly did not come without hard work and continuous practice. Inside the Motown studios, Berry Gordy pushed the group to rehearse over and over as did Joseph Jackson, the father of the Jackson boys. Michael can owe a part of his success to the drive that his father gave him through repeated practice and hard work, yet his father’s involvement in his musical career may have done more harm than good. More impactful on the life and career of Michael was his father’s physical abuse during the group’s rehearsals. Michael can be seen in an interview commenting on his father’s abuse and tendencies to “tear [them] up” for missing a beat or a dance step. All of the Jacksons were terrified of their father throughout their childhood careers, but the effect of Joseph’s abuse perhaps had the greatest impact on Mi-
Michael, who would vomit in the mere presence of his father. When assessing the actions and personality of Michael later in his life, it is important to remember this traumatic part of his early childhood. Indeed, his personal life beginning in the late 80’s darkly clouds the King of Pop’s career, but fans should be careful for forming conclusions about his character. It is clear that Michael Jackson had irregular and concerning traits. Jackson first aroused serious confusion when a supposed skin disorder that caused blotches prompted him to change his entire appearance. His Neverland Ranch in California and questionable activity with young children garnered him a large amount of scrutiny from the media and fans alike. Furthermore, accusations of the molestation of a 13-year old boy and Jackson’s increasingly bizarre appearance were detrimental to his reputation as a performer. Despite the implications that these aspects of Jackson’s may suggest, one should be aware of the probable causes for this behavior that are outside of his control. Michael’s efforts to connect with young children and give them enjoyable experiences at his California ranch could be in large part due to his own irregular childhood and poor relationship with his father. Jackson was open about his tendencies to sleep in the same bed as the children who visited, and commented that he simply wanted to “give all that [he] had to give to help children all over the world”. While he may have crossed the public’s comfort boundaries in his behavior, he should not be written off and immediately judged as there are outside factors that very well may have an influence on his behavior.

In retrospect of Michael Jackson’s career, fans should think more of the records he broke and the innovation that he brought to the music industry than the controversy that surrounds his personal life. Jackson created the famous moonwalk, created the all time best-selling record, and broke through musical barriers to attain unprecedented success. Michael Jackson’s career truly may never be matched. Let it be remembered by his exceptional talent as an artist and entertainer.

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The sound of the late 1980s was dominated by highly commercialized pop hits and the over the top styling of glam metal. Glam metal, in particular, captured the trend of rock music at the time. The music was fast, loud, and featured extended and elaborate guitar solos. The members of the bands dressed in latex and the size of their hair could only be matched by the size of their egos. Their music embodied carefree masculinity, littered with descriptions of partying and often misogynistic references.

While most of these bands were coming from Los Angeles and New York, a movement was taking place in Seattle, Washington that stood in direct opposition to the aesthetics and values of glam metal. The movement is most visible from Sub Pop records, an indie label credited for capturing the “Seattle Sound.” In the late 80s Sub Pop signed the bands Green River and Mudhoney, which, along with the Melvins, were highly responsible for pioneering the grunge sound. The sound of early grunge served as a middle ground between early heavy metal and hardcore punk. The genre utilized a heavily distorted, fuzzy guitar sound and anger filled lyrics like punk, however grunge typically matched the slow, crushing tempo of heavy metal. Grunge rejected glam metal’s requirement of virtuosic guitar playing, instead preferring the idea that anyone could pick up a guitar and learn to play. Grunge guitarists also disliked long, ambling solos that existed only to demonstrate the guitarist’s ability, and they instead preferred for solos to serve the song. These early grunge bands in Seattle overlapped considerably, both by influencing each other stylistically and by having many musicians flow through multiple bands. The bands failed to gain any true success early on, with very sparsely attended concerts and very little reach beyond Seattle.

The genre didn’t achieve mainstream success until 1991, when Nirvana released their album Nevermind. This album benefitted significantly from more polished production by Butch Vig, and was able to break out and achieve major commercial success. Its lead single, “Smells Like Teen Spirit,” began appearing on MTV four to five times a day, and in January 1992 the album was able to overtake Michael Jackson’s Dangerous for the number one spot on the Billboard 200. This release brought grunge to the forefront of the music scene and knocked glam metal out of the spotlight. Suddenly, more and more grunge bands began popping up and smashing their way into the mainstream. Another Seattle band, Pearl Jam, had released their debut album Ten in 1991; however, it failed to achieve sales until 1992, when the album broke through in the wake of Nevermind’s success. 1992 also saw the release of Soundgarden’s Badmotorfinger and Alice in Chains’ Dirt, both of which were within the top 100 albums sold that year. These four bands, Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, and Alice in Chains, are often regarded as the “Big Four” grunge bands, and they are heralded for their commercial success and mastery of the genre. Soon grunge was everywhere. The genre received massive media attention and the fashion industry began to try to turn the movement’s clothing style into a major fashion trend. Many of the major figures in the scene, particularly Kurt Cobain of Nirvana, were uncomfortable with their newfound fame, and they attempted to push back against the industry and its commercialization.

The roots of grunge can be traced to a wide variety of bands, reaching back as far as the late 60s. One of the earliest influences is Black Sabbath, whose heavy, menacing influence can be seen most clearly through Alice in Chains, whose music gives the feeling of being thrown into a deep hole. One can also easily draw a line between Led Zeppelin’s Robert Plant and Soundgarden’s Chris Cornell, with Cornell clearly modernizing the swagger and vocal style of Plant. Grunge also draws on the fuzzy, simple sounds of punk bands like Black Flag and the Sex Pistols, emphasizing the idea that exceptional instrumental ability was not needed, and instead focusing on raw energy. One of the most heralded influences on grunge is Neil Young, who is often called the “Grandfather of Grunge” due to his heavily distorted guitar sound as well as his personal style.

Although there was a wide variety of sound within grunge, the bands were all united by a single aesthetic. Grunge was a genre that represented the angst of the youths at the time. This can be seen through both the dark, heavy sound, and the lyrical content. Lyrics were often focused on feelings of alienation, self-loathing, boredom, and fear of the future. This can be seen both in Pearl Jam’s “Jeremy,” a song about a bullied, neglected boy who shoots himself in front of his class, and Nirvana’s “Lithium” which tells the story of a man on the brink of suicide. The genre was also defined by the clothing style of the bands. Old flannel shirts and clothes from a thrift store immediately capture the style of grunge. Band members wore tattered jeans and had long, matted hair. Unlike punk’s style, that which represented its anti-conformist beliefs, grunge’s style had no message or statement behind it, but instead reflected a lack of interest in clothing. Ironically, many high fashion designers began attempting to manufacture this style and market it as the newest fashion trend, perfectly capturing the commercialization of grunge.

The prevalence of grunge began to recede in the mid to late 90s, with many of the bands breaking up or protesting their labels and MTV. However, the symbolic death of grunge came with the suicide of Kurt Cobain. Cobain was overwhelmed by his band’s commercial success and fame, and began to struggle with depression and heroin use. On April 8, 1994, he ultimately committed suicide in his home, an event that marked the beginning of the end for grunge. Within the next three years, the other three bands in the Big Four came to an end as well, with Pearl Jam losing all touring momentum, Alice in Chains disbanding, and Soundgarden disbanding. The genre began to fade out, and was eventually replaced by the more marketable sounds of post-grunge and Brit-pop.

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In 1966, Sergio Leone released what may have been the greatest film ever produced in the Western genre, The Good, the Bad and the Ugly. At the time of its release, the film was poorly received by critics. Many criticized its depiction of violence, and critics looked down upon the genre of the so-called Spaghetti Western, taking its camp and deliberate pace for overwrought sincerity and tedium. In spite of this lack of critical acclaim, the film was a huge financial success, making $25.1 million in the United States alone, on a budget of just $1.2 million. In the following years, critical opinion of the film has reversed almost universally, with many rating it among the best ever made, and certainly the best of the Spaghetti Westerns. The film’s early commercial success, along with its subsequent critical revival, could be credited to any number of factors, including the directing of Sergio Leone or the acting of Clint Eastwood. One of the most prominent factors in the new, positive appreciation for the film, however, is the score composed by Maestro Ennio Morricone.

When Leone first approached Morricone to make music for a film of his, it was for the first in the Dollars Trilogy, A Fistful of Dollars. Their collaboration would eventually culminate in The Good, the Bad and the Ugly. The two had known each other very briefly in grade school, though neither knew it until they had met in person to speak about the score. At the time, Morricone had only just begun his career in music, and was very much involved in the avant-garde and experimental fields of classical music. Even though he was largely untested as a composer and arranger, Leone placed a great deal of trust in the Maestro. In a show of confidence nigh unheard-of elsewhere in the film world, Leone allowed Morricone to compose the score before production had even begun on the film. Morricone did so. While production budgets severely limited his access to a full orchestra, Morricone made due by tapping into all kinds of extraordinary and unusual sounds for the score, including gunshots, whips, Jew’s harp, electric guitars, and animal sounds. With these atypical instruments and arrangements, Morricone added both ironic meta-commentary and psychological depth to the film, as the music was closely tied both to the individual characters and to the world itself. In an interview with The Guardian, Morricone explained, “I come from a background of experimental music which mingled real sounds together with musical sounds, so I used real sounds partly to give a kind of nostalgia that the film had to convey. I also used these realistic sounds in a psychological way. With The Good, the Bad and the Ugly, I used animal sounds…so the sound of the animal became the main theme of the movie. I don’t know how I had this idea. It’s just according to your experiences, and following the musical avant-garde.” With the completed score in hand, Leone quickly realized the power at his disposal, and in editing often prioritized fitting in entire compositions over concerns with pacing. These decisions paid off, as many of these sequences are now considered among the best in cinematic history.

Alongside the success of the film, Morricone’s soundtrack fared well. It was released in 1968, more than a year after the film’s United States debut, on Capitol Records. The full-score album peaked at #4 on the Billboard Top 100 and #10 on the R&B chart, as well as hitting #1 on the Adult Contemporary chart. It spent 14 weeks in the Adult Contemporary top 10, and remained in the Billboard Top 200 for over a year in total. In August 1968, the album was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America. Hugo Montenegro, an American conductor, released a 7” cover version of the main theme from the film contemporaneously, which itself achieved great commercial success. His version peaked at #2 on the Billboard 100 and spent 22 weeks on the chart, alongside three weeks at the top of the Easy Listening chart. This version was certified gold as well, in January of 1969.

Since the release of the film and the soundtrack, Morricone's score has only risen in esteem, both in the film and music worlds. While Morricone's work was not nominated for an Academy Award for that particular film, he has been nominated several times since, finally winning in 2015 for his work on Quentin Tarantino’s The Hateful Eight, making him the oldest recipient of a competitive Oscar at age 87. Tarantino himself has called Morricone his favorite composer, and there are many who would agree. Since 1983, Metallica have used “The Ecstasy of Gold,” a particularly famous song from the Ugly soundtrack, to introduce their live shows. The band also played on a tribute album released in February 2007 called We All Love Ennio Morricone. Other high profile artists appeared on that compilation, including Celine Dion, Herbie Hancock, Quincy Jones, Yo-Yo Ma, Bruce Springsteen, Roger Waters, and more. Metallica's cover of “The Ecstasy of Gold” was nominated for a Grammy for Best Rock Instrumental Performance. Morricone's score was also inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2009, and he received an honorary Oscar in 2007 for his “magnificent and multifaceted contributions to the art of film music.” Morricone himself has gone on to become perhaps the most respected composer for film still working today, and certainly the most prolific. He has composed for over 500 films, only 30 of which were westerns, and in fact he disdains being labeled as a “western composer,” even going so far as to reject the term “Spaghetti Western” itself, claiming it pejorative and mocking. The Maestro continues to make his mark on the film world of today, but, even if he were to stop creating, his place in film and music history would be as safe as that of Bach, a composer with whom he is frequently compared. And, despite Morricone’s own modest rejection of such a comparison, it is an accurate one. He is an artist for the ages.

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In today's music industry, exposure through media like TV shows and commercials has become a key way for artists to make a living. This exposure can bring in both new fans and much needed revenue. What was previously seen as selling out is now just viewed as making a living.

For many artists, being paid to use their songs in a TV show or commercial is a lucrative opportunity. In the past, the licensing of music in commercials was not seen as a way to make a living, but now it is considered a viable option. This is especially true for mid-level bands because selling song rights to a TV show, film, or commercial is one of the few ways they can make money.

In today's TV landscape, many music supervisors favor independent artists not only because they're cheaper but also because they see themselves as 'tastemakers.' Alicen Schneider, Vice President of Music Creative Services for NBC Universal, said that about 75% of the music NBC uses is from independent acts (3). This is in contrast to older artists, who were afraid of "selling out." Commercial use of music has become an integral part of the music business in an era when profits for musicians have fallen away, writes Josh Sunburn in Time (2).

The licensing representative also acts as a liaison between the music supervisor and the artist, reaching out to the publisher of the song to figure out fees. ASCAP outlines how "fees depend on a number of factors, including the music budget for the program, whether the song is a well-known standard or current hit as opposed to a new song...the timing of the use, the song's importance to the series episode and the particular scene in which it is performed, the number of times it is used in the program and the manner of the use" (7). Fees can vary from $2,000 for background music to $15,000 for songs used in promotional materials (3, 8).

Licensing for a commercial can be even more lucrative, with companies paying anywhere from $10,000 to $1 million for a 30-second ad, depending on how well-known the music is, with typical licensing falling between $75,000 and $200,000 (8, 3). Songs commissioned specifically for commercials generally cost around $30,000, meaning if a brand utilizes a lesser-known song with the right sound, they can save both time and money (2). In agreeing to do a commercial, artists usually sign a one-year contract for a national campaign, with options to extend the contract. These contracts are not necessarily exclusive, which is why the same songs will pop up over and over again, trying to get you to buy different things.

Though Drake's VW commercial showed the possibility of licensed music, Apple advertisements demonstrated to artists that it was cool to sell out. Early iPod ads featured artists like U2 and Eminem, before moving on to less well known acts (3). Jet's "Are You Gonna Be My Girl" and Feist's "1, 2, 3, 4" are both examples of how iPod commercials created hits, with the latter jumping to 28 on the Billboard Hot 100 after its commercial debut (9). Apple "took music that came with its own inherent narrative and set of associations, and aligned them indelibly with the iPod," allowing artists to see the positives of reaching a wide audience through a commercial (10).

Songs are often licensed for films as well, but because music and film have always had a close relationship, starting with "Rock Around the Clock" appearing in Blackboard Jungle, the negative connotations of the medium aren't there. Nevertheless, the prices are more than television but comparable to advertising, with the range of compensation between $15,000 and $60,000, with most getting from $20,000 to $45,000 (11).

In today's music industry, exposure through media like TV shows and commercials has become a key way for artists to make a living. This exposure can bring in both new fans and much needed revenue. What was previously seen as selling out is now just viewed as making a living.
About a month ago Rolling Stone released a list entitled the “100 Greatest Drummers of all Time”. The list initially excited me, as drummers are underrated and often overlooked in their musical ability. I was eager to see the talents of drummers celebrated in arguably the most well-known music publication in the world. However, I was disappointed by the exclusive list Rolling Stone created. Only five drummers out of 100 were female and no women were ranked in the top 50. I had really hoped that with their power and influence, Rolling Stone would create a list that made me feel validated for being a woman who plays the drums, instead making me feel more of an oddity than I had before.

But what was I really expecting? Rolling Stone has continually excluded women from their accolades and appreciation. This list reminded me of their “25 Most Underrated Guitarists” from 2003, in which Carrie Brownstein of Sleater-Kinney was the only woman featured in the names published. Surely a list of “underrated guitarists” is the perfect place to represent women in music, who are always underrepresented. These lists clearly bring up important systemic issues of gender in music that need to be addressed.

In an angry, agitated response to the Rolling Stone article, a fellow female drummer and I made a list entitled “100 Great Female Drummers” which we submitted to Wesleyan’s feminist publication Girls Hit Harder.

Sheila E had the highest ranking of any woman on Rolling Stone’s “100 Greatest Drummers of all Time” at #58.
FEMMAG. This list was made in no particular order and serves as a platform from which to celebrate incredibly talented female and non-binary drummers. Our hope was that the list in its entirety would allow people to see that female drummers are less of a novelty than the media presents them to be with talents equal to that of their male peers. It was fairly easy for us to come up with 100 female drummers from our own knowledge, but when we asked other people to give us names to add to our list most just shrugged and struggled to name even one female drummer. This reaffirmed what we had found out through the Rolling Stone article: not many people really know much or care enough about women who drum.

However, there are individuals going to great lengths to help female drummers obtain the recognition they deserve. One of them is Mindy Abovitz, the editor-in-chief of Tom Tom Magazine, a quarterly released publication catered specifically towards women who play the drums. In an interview with ID Magazine, Abovitz explains the passion behind her work and the necessity of more female drummers in music. “You lead your band into songs. You’re creating independence. Your legs are spread open. You’re sitting behind your band, but you’re supporting them.” The notion of spreading ones legs being antithetical to being “ladylike” is perhaps one the most striking physical aspects of being a woman who plays the drums. This coupled with the fact that drums are the loudest and the most glaring instrument in a band also explains to some extent why drummers and even the drums as an instrument are gendered male by default. In an interview with Tom Tom Magazine, drummer Leah Maupin of the band Tacocat, explains the ingrained sexism inflicted on female drummers. “When people learn that Tacocat is three girls and a dude they have said, ‘Oh let me guess, that guy’s the drummer,’” clearly shows how people innocently but ignorantly assume that the person playing the loudest instrument in a band is male. This of course is the product of the fact that girls are socialized from a young age to not want to disturb others and to essentially to please. This means that by playing the drums, girls defy gender stereotypes, a process that is scary for many girls, especially if they cannot see any women doing it.

In this positive vein it is important to point out that the number of female drummers is increasing steadily. The revival of underground queer punk has propelled female and non-binary drummers into the spotlight of niche music scenes, like Liv Bruce of “PWR BTTM” and Ursula Holliday of “Skinny Girl Diet”. However, like I said the people who intentionally search out for this specific type of music only knows these drummers. It seems the best way for the number of female drummers to increase has to be to give them more representation in mainstream music and media outlets. This is why lists like that of Rolling Stone’s, rank him amongst the greatest artists of all time, across all genres. He has amassed 11 platinum albums (7 of which were released posthumously) and has sold over 75 million copies of his albums. Eminem, another highly successful and prolific artist, had this to say about the deceased musician: “He was just so good at evoking emotions through songs and I picked up so much from that... It was true genius.” His influence stretched beyond his music, his perceived image, and his fan base. Tupac also starred in several films in his lifetime, working alongside personalities like Janet Jackson, Omar Epps and Regina King. On Tupac, Jackson mused, “I feel very fortunate to have seen another side of Tupac, someone who was very caring and loving, a contrast to his public image. He will be missed by many.”

However, overcoming the fear of being seen as obnoxious, outspoken and at times displeasing is something truly special and empowering for young girls. Abovitz is not exaggerating when she says, “there’s so much about being a drummer that teaches you how to be a strong person.” After overcoming the initial fear of being heard as annoying or loud to others, I can personally say that drumming makes me feel not only strong physically but also emotionally, as the process of hitting drums loudly and forcefully is cathartic in it’s own right.

In this positive vein it is important to point out that the number of female drummers is increasing steadily. The revival of underground queer punk has propelled female and non-binary drummers into the spotlight of niche music scenes, like Liv Bruce of “PWR BTTM” and Ursula Holliday of “Skinny Girl Diet”. However, like I said the people who intentionally search out for this specific type of music only knows these drummers. It seems the best way for the number of female drummers to increase has to be to give them more representation in mainstream music and media outlets. This is why lists like that of Rolling Stone’s, have huge impacts on young female music fans. Once young girls see a better representation of women who play the drums, more will want to be able to yield the power to make noise and hit back harder.

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WHAT HAPPENED TO 2PAC?

by: John Fought

Tupac Amaru Shakur, who sometimes performed and released music as 2pac or Makaveli, is undoubtedly one of the most influential and successful rappers to date. Various magazines, including Rolling Stone, rank him amongst the greatest artists of all time, across all genres. He has amassed 11 platinum albums (7 of which were released posthumously) and has sold over 75 million copies of his albums. Eminem, another highly successful and prolific artist, had this to say about the deceased musician: “He was just so good at evoking emotions through songs and I picked up so much from that... It was true genius.” His influence stretched beyond his music, his perceived image, and his fan base. Tupac also starred in several films in his lifetime, working alongside personalities like Janet Jackson, Omar Epps and Regina King. On Tupac, Jackson mused, “I feel very fortunate to have seen another side of Tupac, someone who was very caring and loving, a contrast to his public image. He will be missed by many.”

In September 1996, much to the distress of his many fans, Tupac was fatally wounded in a drive-by shooting. This tragedy ended the life and career of Tupac. For some, the most unfortunate facet of Tupac’s untimely death is the loss of the untapped potential he had. Still young, Tupac had already displayed the makings of a legend, and the work ethic of a musical powerhouse. More than this, his lyrical content was potent beyond measure.

Naturally, Tupac’s fans were devastated at his death, with some clinging to conspiracy theo-
ries. Every lyric he ever wrote was poured over by his fans, with some standing out to the suspiciously inclined. On “Ain't Hard 2 Find,” Tupac rapped, “I heard rumors I died murdered in cold blood, dramatized / Pictures of me in my final states—you know mama cried. / But that was fiction, some coward got the story twisted.” Another line that conspiracy theorists have flocked to, found in Richie Rich’s “Niggas Done Changed,” is: “I've been shot and murdered, can tell you how it happened word for word.” These ‘predictions’ on the part of Tupac about his own death have convinced some fans that he faked his demise.

In line with this thought, other fans are convinced that Tupac has fled to Cuba, where his aunt lives. Some of these same fans expected Tupac to emerge from hiding 7 years after his death, as the number 7 appears often in his music. This belief in resurrection is backed by his choice of a stage name, Makaveli. He chose this name in honor of the Italian author of The Prince, Machiavelli, who advocated for faking one’s death as a war tactic. To add fuel to the (feeble) flames, Makaveli is proposed to be an anagram for “am alive, k.”

All of these theories are supported by apparent “inaccuracies surrounding his death which Tupac’s fans were quick to pick up on.” For one, his mother is reported to have said this of his deathbed: “In the end, he chose to leave quietly.” This is in stark contrast with the violent way by which he died. On top of this, there is a lot of controversy surrounding his body. Death Row icon Suge Knight, who was with Tupac when he was shot, apparently paid for a cremation the day after his death. All records of the cremator cease after this cremation; he seems to have disappeared from the face of the earth. Tupac's ashes were reportedly smoked by some of his associates, though this has recently come into question as well. “E.D.I Mean, who is an Outlawz member, confirmed the ashes weren’t actually Tupac's. So whose ashes did they smoke and why was there the confusion?” Some followers were quick to flock to the old adage ‘no body, no crime.’ Suge Knight has often been seen as a conspirator in Tupac's death. Notorious for his aggressive demeanor, Knight has been thought to have assisted in a number of high-profile rapper deaths, including Eazy-E’s. This, his being the other passenger in the car (and surviving), as well as his role in the cremation of the body have all led to speculation that Knight had a role to play in Tupac’s untimely demise.

These theories, for all their merits and faults, point at one obvious truth: Tupac was loved and missed by many. A fan base devoted to the young actor and musician was unable to let go of their idol. As such, Tupac joins the ranks of other iconic musicians whose deaths remain a source of controversy (Elvis being the quintessential example). A champion of his craft, a visionary beyond his years, and an unapologetic force majeure, Tupac’s life and work rank him amongst the greatest artists of his time. An inspiration for an entire generation of musicians to follow, Tupac Shakur does indeed live on: in the hearts (and ears) of those who continue to cherish his musical genius.

Bibliography


James Brown is one of the most legendary figures in the history of rock and R&B. He is credited with single-handedly pioneering the genre of funk and for paving the way for bands like Sly and the Family Stone and Parliament Funkadelic [3]. However, not much recognition has been given to his band members, who were crucial to his success. In this article, we look at the experiences trombonist Fred Wesley and drummer Clyde Stubblefield had while working for Brown.

Among rap and hip hop artists and producers, Clyde Stubblefield is one of the most respected names. However, most casual listeners don’t know anything about him. Rolling Stone Magazine ranked him and fellow James Brown drummer John “Jabo” Starks in sixth place on their “Top 100 Greatest Drummers of All Time” list [6]. His beats have been sampled more than any other drummer in the world. In particular, his drum break at the end of “Funky Drummer, Pt. 2” has been used so frequently—literally hundreds of times—that “Funky Drummer” has become Stubblefield’s nickname [10].

Stubblefield auditioned for Brown’s band at a concert in Macon, Georgia in 1965 and was
hired on the spot. He would work for the band until 1970. During that time he provided the rhythm for many famous songs like “Cold Sweat,” “Say It Loud (I’m Black and I’m Proud),” and the previously mentioned “Funky Drummer.” [8] When he was hired, there were actually several other drummers already in the band. One of these drummers was Jabo Starks, who explained in a 2015 interview with NPR that Brown liked to hire several musicians for the same instrument:

“The saying was, when Clayton Fillyau was the drummer with James, he had just one drummer, one guitar player, one bass player. They was about to not play; they were rebelling against James for something ... so he had to agree with them. And they said he made a statement after then: ‘I’ll never be caught without two of everything.’ So I guess that’s where it started.” [5]

Two years after Stubblefield joined, trombonist Fred Wesley joined as well. Wesley was already an incredibly accomplished jazz musician who had played for bands like Ike & Tina Turner and Hank Ballard & The Midnighters. He served in the U.S. Army for a brief period of time and not long after his military duties were finished he joined Brown’s band in 1967. You can hear his horn playing on songs like “Mother Popcorn” and “Licking Stick” [1].

Both Stubblefield and Wesley have harsh comments about James Brown’s style of leadership. Brown would often fine his musicians if they missed a note, or played in a style that he just didn’t like. Stubblefield comments in a different NPR interview that “[s]ometimes you don’t have to make a mistake … You just do a little something different and he’d call that a fine, he’d fine you” [9]. Another issue of contention was the lack of recognition Brown would give the other performers. The only name that was listed on most of the records was Brown’s, which was something that frustrated Stubblefield: “[H]e only talked about himself. He may call your name on a song or something, but that’s it.” [10] Not only did Stubblefield miss out on public recognition, he missed out on compensation from direct album sales and compensation from the use of samples. Instead, that money went straight to Brown. Stubblefield expressed his frustrations about the situation in a 1983 interview with Isthmus Magazine, which is located in Madison, Wisconsin, where he currently lives:

“I made James to a certain extent but you won’t see anyone’s name but his on any of his albums. He’d rather give the doorman a royalty on a record than any of his musicians.... I don’t think that in the James Brown organization the musicians were treated fairly. A couple years later, James Brown called me up asked me to go to Europe with him. It done me good to turn him down.” [7]

Wesley also had problems with Brown’s style of leadership. In an interview with The Irish Times, he was asked: “Which was easier, the military or working with Brown?” To this question, Wesley replied, “the military.” [2] After reading more and more stories about Brown, it is honestly hard to tell whether he is joking or not. In 2014, Wesley discussed with NPR the topic of James Brown’s legacy after the documentary film Mr. Dynamite: The Rise of James Brown was released (eight years after his death). In this interview, Wesley describes Brown as being self-centered, saying, “He’s the most boring person in the world, because all he talks about is himself.” He goes on to say even harsher things about Brown, commenting that “[y]ou can appreciate him, you can admire him. I don’t see how you can love him, because he’s a mean person. He’s very mean.” [5] While those words might seem harsh, when you consider some of the anecdotes from the film, they do seem accurate. For example, in one scene of the documentary, Melvin Parker (another one of Brown’s drummers) tells the camera that he once had to pull a gun on Brown because he was physically attacking Macco Parker, Melvin’s brother.

Since working with James Brown, both Clyde Stubblefield and Fred Wesley have continued making music. After quitting Brown’s band in 1975, Wesley joined Parliament Funkadelic and performed with them for a few years. After that, he worked for a variety of groups including the Count Basie Orchestra. He also served as a studio session performer for groups like Earth, Wind & Fire and Barry White. Currently, his time is dedicated to his job as Professor of Jazz Studies at the University of North Carolina [1]. Clyde Stubblefield continues to make music to this day. Among other acts, he is the leader of the Clyde Stubblefield Band, which plays concerts in his home of Madison, Wisconsin. He has been playing for two years without his right thumb after it had to be amputated because of a cooking accident [11]. When asked about the heavy sampling of “Funky Drummer,” he remarked that he doesn’t actually like the famously sampled beat. “[T]he whole thing about ‘Funky Drummer’ is that I think that’s the worst drum part in the world,” he laughingly remarked during an 1991 interview with Isthmus Magazine [4]. In 2000, Stubblefield was stuck with ninety thousand dollars in medical bills acquired through his treatment of bladder cancer. A little known piece of information is that the recently deceased musician Prince paid eighty thousand dollars of that bill (the remaining sum after local musicians raised ten thousand dollars for him) because he was one of Prince’s musical heroes.

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Heavy metal is one of the most actively changing and expanding genres of music on the market, and the ideals and support surrounding the music and its artists haven’t always been the same. Metal music was commercially ignored early on, and a lot of people labeled the genre as too loud and too dark. The genre has continued to expand despite these negative views, and has divided into countless sub-genres as time moves forward. Along with the expansion of these different sub-genres is a heavy metal subculture and that many fans identify strongly with. I aim to explore the significance of this subculture and its impact on how the followers are viewed by society, as well as a basic outlook on how heavy metal has changed from its early origins to modern day.

The genre of heavy metal has its origins in hard rock from the late 1960’s from artists like Jimi Hendrix for his fast and explosive guitar playing. In 1968, Steppenwolf’s song “Born to be wild” popularized the term heavy metal with the line “heavy metal thunder” in one of the verses. British bands of the 1970’s such as Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, and Judas Priest experienced a lot of success as heavy metal bands and paved the way for this newly developing genre. Drawing on heavy blues and hard rock and roll influences while lyrically expressing feelings of alienation and anger became the common theme upon which numerous other metal bands would expand upon later. The heavy, dark, electric guitar and the complicated, bass heavy drumbeats became the iconic sound of the genre (2). The youth, usually adolescent males, took to this musical style immediately and the genre has continued to expand despite these negative views, and has divided into countless sub-genres as time moves forward. Along with the expansion of these different sub-genres is a heavy metal subculture and that many fans identify strongly with. I aim to explore the significance of this subculture and its impact on how the followers are viewed by society, as well as a basic outlook on how heavy metal has changed from its early origins to modern day.

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Lauryn Hill: The True Story

by: Sadie Sprague-Lott

Lauryn Hill is one of the most well known female R&B artists to date. Her career, although not a very extensive one in the number of albums, has produced a lot of respect from fans and in the music industry. Drama has followed Lauryn Hill throughout her career, even with many efforts from her to stay away from the spotlight of media attention. This has often made her fight even harder to keep her reputation of a strong singer-songwriter without support from many others needed.

Much of her influence comes from her younger years and from her parents style of music. One of the most intriguing things about her music is the diverse sounds that come through. Her life growing up in New Jersey in a household where her parents introduced her to Malcolm McLaren, Kraftwerk, and other artists expanded her horizons. By the time she was a senior in high school, she had the ability to be in her first Hollywood production, Sister Act 2. She had a lead role that included a lot of singing in a gospel choir at her school, which was trying to rebuild. Although this was not Lauryn Hill’s big break, it gave her an opportunity to experience the trials that were headed towards her in her next bit of fame.

During the mid ‘90s, when Lauryn Hill was in her first group the Fugees, rap was getting hit with a very large criticism about its violent lyrics and nature. Gangster rap played a role and many people didn’t see art as something that was diverse enough anymore. The group started in 1990 and included Lauryn Hill, Wyclef Jean, and Pras. Their first album, titled Blunted on Reality, was released in 1992. It got moderate success, reaching #62 on the pop charts in the US, but the band was not discouraged as this was their first album together. Their next album, called, The Score and released in 1996, was a great success. The Score was an extremely political album that questioned many of the policies regarding blacks and politicians at the time. One article describes it as this, “The Score contains grisly portraits of life in the ghetto. It’s a theatre of pandemonium, pain and pride shot with colour, dialogue, sound effects and some of the finest lyrics committed to tape” (Jones). They are not afraid to take risks in their outspoken lyrics and truly explain the lives of blacks in this decade. An example of these lyrics is “Conflicts with night sticks, Illegal sales districts/ Hand-picked lunatics, keep poli-TRICK-clans rich/ Heretics push narcotics amidst its risks and frisks/ Cool cliches throw bricks but seldom hit targets/ Private-DIC sell hits, like porno-flicks do chicks/ The 666 cut W.I.C. like Newt Gingrich sucks dick” rapped by Lauryn Hill in “How Many Mics.” There are a number of covers on the album that add an edged sound to songs from people like Bob Marley. The album won the Grammy for Best Rap Album in 1997 along with winning the R&B Vocal Performance by a Group Grammy for “Killing Me Softly.”

This was a true kickoff to Lauryn Hill’s success but the band broke up after controversy with the group that many claim is from a secret relationship with Wyclef Jean. Lauryn Hill claims that it was from the lack of acknowledgement and credit that she got from the group and from the press about the efforts she put into the album. These two responses to Lauryn Hill’s first album explain a lot of the reasons for her next one. She attempted to write, produce, and sing most of the songs herself in an effort to prove that she could do so. The album was titled The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill and in explaining her album title Lauryn Hill said “The title of the album was meant to discuss those life lessons, those things that you don’t get in any textbook, things that we go through that force us to mature. Hopefully we learn. Some people get stuck. They say that what doesn’t kill us makes us stronger, and these are some really powerful lessons that changed the course and direction of my life” (Witty). It is a 14 song album that has a message before and after each song; some of these songs are about her past relationship and she even goes into as much depth as talking about the decision to keep her first kid at the age of 21.

This was her first solo album and it featured artists including Mary J. Blige, Carlos Santana, and John Legend. This album encompasses a diverse sound, and “in the music Lauryn writes and produces, she fuses a fat organic sound out of elements of classic reggae and soul, with the big-bottomed beat of rap and the roughness of blues and gospel” (Witter). This gave her the opportunity to showcase these abilities in a way that many other black female artists never had the opportunity to. This album was extremely successful, selling 12 million copies in the world and 8 million in the United States. It was on the Billboard Album R&B charts for six weeks, and in two years she earned 25 million dollars total from the album. “During the ceremony, Hill broke another record by becoming the first woman to win five times in one night, taking home the awards for Album of the Year, Best R&B Album, Best R&B Song, Best Female R&B Vocal Performance, and Best New Artist. During an acceptance speech, she said, ‘This is crazy. This is hip-hop!’ Hill had brought forth a new, mainstream acceptance of the genre” (Andrea). She set a new precedent for what it meant to be a female in the music industry at the time.

Her final album to date was called MTV Unplugged No. 2.0 and is pretty unconventional in its making compared to other albums. Lauryn Hill, after taking a hiatus from the music industry in an attempt to try and get out of the spotlight, decided to do live recordings for MTV in 2001. They were mostly freestyled and the album ended up being highly criticized for its rough and raw sound. It got mixed reviews from fans and, over all, was not a high note for Lauryn Hill’s last album to date. Overall, however, Lauryn Hill has opened many doors for black women in the music industry. Her amazing talent, with so many varieties of sound and ability to talk about so many different issues, has lead her to be one of the most memorable and most relatable women in her genre.

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During the late '50s and early '60s, hits on the pop chart in the United State began to change from rock and roll, which was driven by the tempo and instrumental compositions like Jerry Lee Lewis’s “Whole Lotta Shakin’ Goin’ On” (1957), to more lyrically concentrated, folk songs, like Jean Ritchie’s “Lord Randall” (1958). It was also during this time that The Beatles came to the United States from England, starting the first British Invasion in the history of music. This bit of information is only mentioned in this article to highlight the fact that there is an influential property in American pop music that translates into European adaptations. In this piece, I will be highlighting these American influences in the music being produced soon after in Italy.

It was in the '60s that Bob Dylan finally started making a name for himself after arriving in New York. Dylan is known for his conscious-streaming lyrics about what could be interpreted as relating to current events. He used abstract metaphors within his lyrics so that his listeners could interpret the songs in their own way rather than the song having only one opinion for a global concept. One song in particular, “Blowin’ in the Wind” (1963), which was put on the charts by the group Peter, Paul and Mary, caught the attention of an Italian artist. Influenced by Dylan’s song, Francesco Guccini would produce “Canzone del bambino nel vento (Auschwitz)” in 1967. In a similar vein, Guccini’s song is categorized as folk. He uses a acoustic guitar while there is an accompaniment of flutes and violins, giving a Scottish feel to its character. While Dylan’s song could be seen as a commentary on what was happening during the Vietnam War, Guccini makes the subject of his song very clear—Auschwitz. The most apparent commonality between these two songs is the use of the wind. To Dylan, the wind holds the key to all of the problems that he is posing. Guccini, on the other hand, creates a wind that is continuously taking things (like the smoke and the ash) until it finally rests in the last two stanzas. Guccini creates this song in a singer-songwriter fashion, like Dylan, by making the lyrics stand on their own so that the audience reflects on the horrors of the past that were still affecting Italy at this time.

While artists like Guccini took inspiration from American artists, other popular songs in Italy at the time were covers. An example of this is Dik Dik’s “Sognando la California” (1966) covering The Mamas and the Papas’ “California Dreamin’” (1965) from a few months before. This kind of thing is obviously not uncommon. For instance, The Beatles covered Chuck Berry’s “Roll Over Beethoven” and it was a hit. The Mamas and The Papas, like Bob Dylan, are a part of the folk genre. A song like “California Dreamin’” being covered for the Italian audience highlights that Italian bands like Dik Dik, and unlike Guccini, were living in the moment/the future. During this time in the '60s, Italy had just exited a period of the economic boom that arose after World War II. Fiats were being built along with new roads to drive them on, home life had improved with newer appliances like the refrigerator, and Italy had finally switched from the Euro to the Lira. In the case of “Sognando la California,” the winter day that the protagonist in the song is trying to ignore is the grey past while California is supposed to represent a happier place where people actually want to be.

Just as American music and culture influenced bands in the UK, Italy was also listening to the songs and creating new music based on it. Even though there was a kind of language barrier separating the two cultures, music is universal. We may not see any reciprocal influences on American music by Italian artists, but the '60s were a pivotal point in Italian music thanks to certain American artists.

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Despite his increasingly gaunt and frail appearance, Freddie Mercury denied allegations of having AIDS from his early diagnosis in 1987 up until the day before his death in November of 1991 (Bret, 1999). In the early 90's AIDS was a taboo that existed on the periphery of society. Freddie's death brought the tragedy of AIDS to millions of fans. It could be argued that Mercury could have brought more awareness to the disease if he came out earlier with his struggle. Despite his extravagant, outgoing lifestyle, Freddie Mercury was a very secluded individual who granted very few interviews during his lifetime. “Both Freddie and I were extremely shy,” says Mercury’s sister, “so when I see him on stage, it wasn’t like watching the real Freddie. To me, it was watching my brother acting the part” (Das, 2000). Even Mercury himself admitted, “I’m so powerful on stage that I seem to have created a monster. When I’m performing I’m an extrovert, yet inside I’m a completely different man” (Myers, 1991). By denying allegations of AIDS, Freddie Mercury continued to play his part as a strong, extroverted entertainer despite his waning health.

Queen’s “The Show Must Go On,” released on their 1991 album Innuendo, hinted towards Mercury’s deteriorating condition. However, Mercury still had not gone public with his battle against AIDS. During recording, his bandmates were concerned if he was even able to hit his signature operatic vocals (O’Casey, 2012). Queen’s Brian May recalled that Mercury was barely able to walk when the band recorded the track. “I said, ‘Fred, I don’t know if this is going to be possible to sing,’” recalls May, “and he went, ‘I’ll fucking do it, darling’—vodka down—and went in and killed it, completely lacerated that vocal!” (Rolling Stone). The lyrics embodied Mercury’s tenacity and courage which kept him in the music studio up until the very end of his life: “The show must go on/My makeup may be flaking/But my smile stays on.” The track was a fitting theme for the real life tragedy that was unfolding. Mercury was preparing himself, his band, and his listeners for his final goodbye.

These are the Days of our Lives

The music video for “These are the Days of our Lives,” which also appeared on Innuendo, made it painfully obvious that Mercury was dying. Those present at the filming said that even the touch of his clothes brought him pain (Gilmore, 2014). The black and white recording of the video helped hide his frail, emaciated pallor. Behind-the-scenes colored footage, released twenty years later, revealed the excessive amount of make-up that was applied to Mercury to mask how dire his health actually was (Sherwin, 2011).

This video was Mercury’s final goodbye to his fans. In the behind-the-scenes footage, Mercury readjusts his makeup to match the lighting. He reviews the video monitor playbacks to check his composposure. In the closing scene, Mercury looks skywards and stretches out his arms as he sings the final verse: “Those were the days of our lives, yeah/The bad things in life were so few/Those days are all gone now but one thing’s still true/When I look and I find…” He fixes his eyes back on the camera, addressing his fans and loved ones, he whispers, “I still love you.” This was the last known video footage of Mercury before he died in November of 1991.

Made in Heaven

Queen’s last album, Made in Heaven, was posthumously released in 1995 after the remaining bandmates finished the instrumental parts to Mercury’s final vocal recordings. The album revolved around the themes of life and death. It gave insight into Mercury’s mindset as he came closer to death. Queen’s Roger Taylor recalls, “the sicker Freddie got, the more he seemed to need to record to give himself something to do…a reason to get up” (O’Casey, 2012).

The album was Mercury’s confessional. In his song “Mother Love,” Mercury expresses his vulnerability: “All I want is comfort and care/But my heart is heavy and my hope is gone/I don’t want pity, just a safe place to hide/I long for peace before I die.” These spine-tingling lyrics show his longing to be cared for and to not be forgotten. At this point, Mercury could only sing one verse at a time, with three attempts at each. After each verse, he would take a swig of vodka to quell his pain (Moreton, 2013). Queen’s Brian May remembers Mercury telling him, “keep writing me stuff. I know I don’t have very long…just keeping writing me words” (O’Casey, 2012). Mercury knew that he would be dead by the time the album was released, but he wanted it to be his lasting legacy for his fans. Exhausted from the efforts of recording “Mother Love,” Mercury headed back to London to rest. Mercury said to the band, “I’re not feeling that great…I’ll finish it when I come back, next time” (Moreton, 2013). Of course, Mercury never made it back to the studio and “Mother Love” became his last vocal recording. Other recordings were pieced together by his bandmates to complete Made in Heaven.

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The impact of his death on AIDS awareness

The day before his death, Mercury released a public statement calling on all his friends, fans, and family to raise awareness about AIDS. An AIDS benefit concert was held at London’s Wembley stadium in his honor a year later. Performers, such as Def Leppard, Robert Plant, Guns N’Roses, Elton John, David Bowie, George Michael, Seal, and Metallica, paid their respect to Mercury. Major sponsors of the concert donated all proceeds to gay health advocacy groups and AIDS research. Advertisements for local AIDS centers were even run during commercial breaks (Watrous, 1992). The concert was a cathartic experience for Mercury’s fans and friends. It allowed them to work out their grief by celebrating Mercury’s life, and it helped normalize the more taboo aspects of his life for the rest of society.

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A VIEW FROM THE SIX YOU’VE SEEN BEFORE

by: Cole Harris

When Drake first announced that his follow up to Nothing Was The Same was going to be titled Views From the Six, I was intrigued. With a title making a reference to his home city of Toronto, it opened up the possibilities of a concept album about the city and his interactions there. And that was what I was hoping for.

But then If You’re Reading This came out. Then a few months later, What A Time To Be Alive. Sprinkle in quite a few loose tracks and features that either were released or leaked, and you have 40+ songs that are just under a year old. So when I saw Views included 20 songs, I was pretty surprised. What shocked me more was the release date, April 29th.

Nevertheless, I just assumed that Drake would come through like he has always done. Except this time, he fell just a bit short. Part of that can be attributed to overwhelming hype, which I definitely felt victim too. But at the same time, you see that most of the subject matter has not changed for him. When I listen to Views, it just seems like he’s missing something from most of tracks on the
album. You get that feeling on the opening track “Keep The Family Close.” The production here sets Drake up for this to be the opening to a triumphant king returning home to take his throne at the top of the music world. But what you get is Drake going back to his old ways; obsessing over ex-girlfriends he can’t get over. This continues throughout the album, and about halfway through you just wish you could reach out and tell him to just get over it.

Naming the album in reference to his hometown city, you were bound to get some reflection of the experiences he spent there, which comes to life in “Weston Road Flows” one of his stronger tracks. This was the type of songs that I had hoped for when the album was initially announced. It gives us a peek into his youth that doesn’t involve relationships gone wrong; with numerous references to places only true Torontonians will get without using Google.

There’s one line, in “Grammys” that really made me go back through his older work. He says at one point, “Most people with a deal couldn’t make a greatest hits.” So I wonder, what tracks here would you take off of Views to put in his greatest hits? I would say two, maybe three songs tops. “Hotline Bling” and “One Dance” would be the my first two picks, based off of those two being his biggest pop charters, but after that, it is tough to find another song. The problem with many of these songs is that you can find better songs of him reflect on past flames on Take Care, and So Far Gone, and those braggadocious songs with better word play on Nothing Was The Same or If You’re Reading This. There’s a lack of instant classics that you can pick off of here, no great songs waiting to be released as singles, I’m sure “Too Good” will follow “One Dance” and “Hotline” and chart well, but once again you’re just drawn back to feeling that this album is just missing something that you can’t put your finger on.

The production, the majority handled by his longtime partner, 40, is the highlight of the album. While there are some songs that sound like they could be on Take Care, there’s a nice refreshing wave of influences. “With You”, “Controlla”, “One Dance” and “Too Good” all provide a breeze of Caribbean influence, drawing on the sounds of reggae and dancehall, providing a nice up-tempo shift from the opening and closing of the album. It’s a wonderful change of pace, breaking the mold of the sound you have heard drake rap and sing over for five full-length projects. In a sit-down interview with Apple Music’s Zane Lowe, Drake mentions how he wanted this album to be “ based on the changing seasons of the city, winter to summer… and back again.” Which is easily seen here with that run of up-tempo songs, slowly moving back down, capped off with the appropriately titled, “Summers Over Interlude”.

With nearly all the buzz and attention in the rap world being on Drake for the past 4 years, it seemed like he couldn’t do anything wrong. But after so many homeruns in a row, you felt that he was bound for a bit of a step back, and that’s essentially what we got here. While he gave a taste of an interesting new sound, the rest of the album is just a repackaging of similar reflection on his exes, except now he’s a richer and more popular than the last time.

Bibliography


All photos below come from the Views digital booklet, accessed via hypebeast.com
Much like the beatniks of the 1950s, many musicians of the ‘60s and ‘70s were revolutionaries of their art form. They not only questioned previous rules and expectations, they created their own. Without the creative risks and bounds that these visionaries took, we would not have the forms of music and literature that are often taken for granted today. Many of the musicians who had such a profound impact on the world, such as Bob Dylan, The Beatles, and Patti Smith, were vocal about the influence that writers such as Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and William Burroughs had on them. By inspiring some of the most popular musicians of the time, these poets’ message and influence reached the ears of not just lovers of novel and verse, but music fans across the world.

Bob Dylan could arguably be called one of the most innovative singer-songwriters of all time. He once said that he “came out of the wilderness, and just naturally fell in with the Beat scene … [He] got in at the tail end of that and it was magic.” (Chastain). It was Dylan who first popularized using poetic lyrics in songs, much of which can be attributed to the effect the Beats had on him. Imre Saluszinsky, the author of The Genius of Dylan for The Australian Weekend Review, said that, “the Dylan of the early and mid-’60s [was] a Beat poet.” Before he left Minneapolis for New York, Dylan was interested in Beat writing and read William Burroughs’s Naked Lunch. In 1959 Dylan read Mexico City Blues, and according to Ginsberg, Bob said it “blew his mind” (Wilentz). Dylan used his “chains and loops of surreal, stream-of-consciousness imagery, street-talk idiom, and hostility to ‘straight’ social-conditioning” (Chastain). Dylan’s desire to be independent of politics and to avoid being a puppet of the establishment or the face of some ideology is part of what attracted Allen Ginsberg to him (Wilentz). It was not just Ginsberg who had a profound impact on the singer’s life however. Dylan remarked that “It was Jack Kerouac, Ginsberg, Corso, Ferlinghetti … I got in at the tail end of that and it was magic… it had just as big an impact on me as Elvis Presley.” (Wilentz). The relationships went past that of just idolization. Ginsberg and Dylan would occasionally spend time together, once even visiting the grave of fellow Beat poet Jack Kerouac (Wilentz). Their friendship was one that spanned decades, and in 1997 in New Brunswick, Canada, Dylan dedicated a performance of “Desolation Row” to Ginsberg, (one of the writer’s favorite songs), the evening after his death.

Patti Smith, one of the most influential artists of the 1970’s punk rock movement, has been extremely vocal about the influence the Beats had on her life and music. She first met Allen Ginsberg in 1969 at the age of 22 by a chance encounter. She said of the meeting, “I was in this automat really hungry and I didn’t have quite enough change, and I heard this voice offering to help. I turned around and it was Allen Ginsberg. Of course, he didn’t know me – I was just a girl that worked in the book-store, who lived at the Chelsea Hotel – but I knew who Allen Ginsberg was. I couldn’t even speak, I was so shocked.” (Didcock). They ended up meeting again, and Smith eventually befriended not just Ginsberg but William Burroughs, Gregory Corso, and Jim Carroll. Patti Smith is known to read poetry on stage at her shows, reciting Ginsberg, or Walt Whitman, one of Ginsberg’s favorite poets (Hendrick). Before Allen Ginsberg died on April 5, 1997, of liver cancer, Patti would lay with him in his hospice room. She even honored the late poet by reading at his funeral. Although all the Beat poets were fans of Jazz, Patti remembers the last record Allen chose to listen to being Big Mama Thornton’s See See Rider, as he was a fan of the blues. After his death, Patti Smith and Philip Glass did a tribute concert to Allen Ginsberg, where they sang, read poetry, and paid tribute (Didcock).

From their name to their sound, The Beatles were heavily influenced by the Beats. In a documentary made about The Beatles, John Lennon said he named the band as he did in part because of the Beat Generation (Nikolopoulos). They had previously called themselves The Beatles, to honor Buddy Holly and The Crickets, but then changed the spelling to suggest Beat music (Mullins). Lennon said, “It was Beat and beetles, and when you said it people thought of crawly things, and when you read it, it was Beat music.”(Nikolopoulos). John Lennon had gone to the Liverpool College of Art,
where many of his professors, especially one Adrian Henri, were largely inspired by the Beats (Nikolopoulos). Allen Ginsberg first met Lennon when he invited the singer to his birthday party, and he soon got to know other members of the band. In Marianne Faithfull’s autobiography, she describes an interaction between the groups:

Then Allen Ginsberg came in … He went over to the chair Dylan was sitting in and plonked himself down on the armrest … John Lennon broke the silence snarling: “Why don’t you sit a bit closer then, dearie?”

The insinuation — that Allen had a crush on Dylan — was intended to demolish Allen, but since it wasn’t far from the truth anyway, Allen took it very lightly. The joke was on them, really. He burst out laughing, fell off the arm and onto Lennon’s lap. Allen looked up at him and said, “Have you ever read William Blake, young man” And Lennon in his Liverpudlian deadpan said, “Never heard of the man.” Cynthia, who wasn’t going to let him get away with this even in jest, chided him: “Oh, John, stop lying.” That broke the ice. (Mullins).

The band also looked to Jack Kerouac for influence. The author Steve Turner writes how “[John Lennon’s] fellow student Bill Harry specifically remembers Lennon reading ‘On the Road’ and the short story ‘The Time of the Geek,’ which was published in an anthology called ‘Protest’ in 1960. ‘He loved the ideas of open roads and travelling,’ says Harry. ‘We were always talking about this Beat Generation thing.’” (Nikolopoulos). It would seem the fondness The Beatles had for the Beats was reciprocated. The Beat poet Gregory Corso wrote a letter in defense of John Lennon and Yoko Ono when the Nixon administration wanted to deport them (Nikolopoulos). William S. Burroughs, who appeared on the cover of Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band, said of meeting Paul McCartney, “He was very pleasant and very prepossessing. Nice-looking young man, hardworking” (Nikolopoulos). These were friendships that would span decades.

The Beatniks rebelled against the cheerful—they were realists who often explored ideas of loss and despair in a time when these subjects were taboo. The artists they inspired, from Dylan to Smith to The Beatles, followed this example of limited constraint when it came to subject matter for their art. No longer were they bound to purely happy topics. This was not their parents’ generation—words could now express feelings of sorrow, corruption, and even sensuality (Chastain). Old rules and barriers no longer applied for these artists—the Beats had shattered the old and opened the path for a bright, musical new generation of artists.

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