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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

With immense love and gratitude, I humbly introduce the 14th edition of The B-Side print magazine, as well as my last magazine as Editor-in-Chief. I am so happy about the growth, direction, and community at B-Side. I am even more excited to see the magazine develop to even greater heights with Zara as Editor-in-Chief. Working with her has been a blessing, and with her talent and knowledge, B-Side will find itself in a more beautiful place.

The leadership this semester has allowed me to work with some of the most dedicated people and it is so sweet to share this space with them. Reading Karen's delightful marketing recap emails, seeing Kira every time early and first at exec, and one of my most favorite memories, joining Savannah at her production social and then watching silly little movies. The community at B-side is something I am forever grateful for and will continue to cherish.

The team this semester is one of the most ambitious, excited, and committed groups of people I've ever worked with and I am so grateful for them. In the past, admittedly at times I've felt exhausted, overworked, and drained trying to maintain the club and serve as a leader. There are countless hours of unpaid labor I and many others pour in, and for myself, it becomes more time consuming than either of my two actual jobs. Yet, the piloting force was always the joy and passion exerted and influenced into me by the community members at B-Side. I would be exhausted into emotionless trances by UC Berkeley, but seeing people's faces on Tuesday would ignite a joy in me, kinda like The Grinch. Cal can easily make you feel alienated, jaded, and wanting to disconnect, especially as a first gen low-income student, but having a community you care for and connect with is incredibly important.

My time at B-Side wasn't always perfect, and it would be incorrect to fully glamorize the experience, but despite contention with the introduction of the mission statement, or disheartened attempts with organizing, I am glad we were able to move past it to the extent we could, and grateful for the members with the same drive who are able to commit to tackling social inequities within their content. Art can be fun, tiring, empowering, powerful, privileged, harmful, a variety of things. I am grateful for any and all attempts of B-Side's content in being able to heal, help, and reduce social harms.

This magazine is the cultivation of countless hours of hard work and determination from the brilliant minds of growing artists. The content of this magazine aims to highlight underrepresented voices, hidden histories, and narratives largely absent from mainstream journalism, as is The B-Side's mission statement.

We recognize our attempts at de-colonization and anti-capitalism come from a position informed by privilege, especially at UC Berkeley. We recognize the imperfect and contradicting nature of the attempt at producing equitable journalism through an elite university. We recognize not every nuance will always be fully expressed. We recognize all of our staff, including myself, are in an ongoing process of learning and unlearning. We recognize our staff members hold their own individual privileges and contribute to marginalization as well. The B-Side staff and content is not defined through perfect social activism, however - it is defined through its rigid attempt and through the critical emphasis applied upon social justice in our content. Social justice should not be an afterthought within journalism, it should be the piloting force behind your content and work, and The B-Side defines itself and operates within that understanding, aims to produce helpful and productive content,

I hope you enjoy reading and learning from the wonderful work in this magazine.

With love,  
Sunny Sangha (they/them)  
Editor-in-Chief



# NEW JEANS

## AND KOREA'S OBSESSION WITH UNDERAGE FEMALE IDOLS

Written by Kerry Wong  
Designed by Jordan Masterson

*"Got me looking for attention, (Ayy) Got me looking for attention (Ayy)." (Lyrics from NewJeans' "Attention")* In 2022, NewJeans took the world by storm with their debut, jumping to the top of the charts as one of the top Korean pop groups immediately following their first single, "Attention." Their first EP was a smash hit containing four songs: "Attention," "Hype Boy," "Cookie", and "Hurt." Each song was a star single in its own right, amassing over 202 million total views in under a year of their debut. With following singles like "Ditto" and "OMG" finding the same success, NewJeans has become one of the fastest-growing Korean pop or K-pop girl groups. Each of their songs is viral on TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube, and really just any social media platform that comes to mind. Their funky fresh Y2K-inspired aesthetic has quickly been popularized, and their fanbase is skyrocketing in size. It's no surprise that NewJeans is so immensely popular; this group of five is young, pretty, and talented with extremely catchy songs. Even by just scrolling through my For You Page on TikTok, I've managed to memorize the chorus and dance for "Hype Boy" and "OMG." However, at the same time, their mass popularity among men brings up the concerns about their age. NewJeans' eldest member Minji was born in 2004, making her 18 at the time of her debut. On the other end, their youngest member Hyein was born in 2008, making her 14 years old at debut. Now, there's nothing wrong with talented kids. The issues arise, however, when there are 50-year-old men paying heinous amounts of money to shake their hands at meet and greets.



Taking a look into K-pop history, NewJeans is not the only example of underage female idols. BoA, hailed as the "Queen of K-pop," debuted when she was only 13. (Even younger than NewJeans' youngest member!) HyunA, known for her hit "Bubble Pop!" and her feature in PSY's infamous "Gangnam Style" music video, came into the spotlight at 14 years old as a part of Wonder Girls. Wonyoung, the youngest member or maknae of IZ\*ONE, competed on a survival show and joined the group at age 14. All of these girls have extremely successful careers, at some point being on the top of the Korean music charts. This increasingly common trend brings me to my question: What's up with K-pop's obsession with underage girls?

The problem is even more apparent as idol group survival shows become more popular among K-pop fans. In these shows, trainees – contestants from different training agencies and record labels with intentions of becoming K-pop idols – are sent to compete against one another to create a final, "optimal" group through rounds of elimination. In recent years, arguably, the most popular show has been *Produce 101*. *Produce 101* originally featured 101 female trainees and whittled them down to 11 members of I.O.I. As the show mainly featured trainees, most of the girls were fairly young, with the youngest being 15 years old. Furthermore, when comparing this season of *Produce 101* with its second season of all-male trainees, the ages of these contestants were generally lower than those of their male counterparts in season two. In 2022, a new survival show called *My Teenage Girl* premiered with contestants between the ages of ten years old to twenty-three years old. Almost a quarter of the contestants were 13 years old or younger. It's mind-boggling to think that agencies would

consider putting a ten-year-old in the same K-pop group as a 23-year-old. Even in the show, the girls are separated by age groups, with the youngest girls being labeled as "1st Grade". These types of survival shows featuring young trainees and idols are popular, evoking concerns about whether or not the contestants' ages play a factor in their popularity.

*"Cause I know what you like, boy. You're my chemical hype boy." (Lyrics from NewJeans' "Hype Boy")* In the past year, NewJeans has definitely had the hype. And the question remains: What is up with K-pop's obsession with young female idols? There is a myriad of suspicious behaviors surrounding NewJeans. First, their CEO Min Heejin has an alleged history of putting younger idols in uncomfortable situations, especially in consideration of inappropriate, mature concepts. As they have a CEO with a questionable history, fans have been wary about NewJeans' concepts. For example, in NewJeans' hit song "Cookie," listeners have been skeptical of the lyrics. *"Take it, don't break it, I wanna see you taste it. Sugar, got sugar, bet you want some." (Lyrics from NewJeans' "Cookie")* When the girls are singing about their "cookie," realistically, what would it mean? Their team adamantly stands by their song and lyric choices, claiming that the song is not inappropriate and has no innuendos. Instead, they claim that "cookie" refers to NewJeans' unique and fresh style of music. But be for real. *"I wanna see you taste it." (Lyrics from NewJeans' "Cookie")* What do they want you to taste? For a group with underage girls, these songs are definitely not age-appropriate. With uncomfortable song lyrics, it becomes even more dubious when considering the activities of K-pop idols. Oftentimes, K-pop idols need to do fan signs and meet-and-greets with fans. On Twitter and various other social media platforms, there are countless videos of older male fans attending these fan sign events. When thinking about what K-pop idols are subjected to and exposed to, how could one even think about including underage girls? At the same time, it also brings up concerns about how the company can protect these girls from inappropriate behaviors and unwanted advances. In various YouTube videos, older "Bunnies", the official fan club name for NewJeans fans, have been shown

making unsavory comments. Pixid has been a very popular YouTube channel in Korea and screenshots from one video have been circulating around Twitter and TikTok. In one of their videos about the Boomer generation, all of the older men say that they are Bunnies or NewJeans fans. One of the men even goes as far as to say that age is not a factor in considering the talent of NewJeans, claiming that NewJeans is the new top K-pop girl group. It's concerning, to say the least, that a whole panel of Boomers, approximately aged around 60 years old, said that they recognized NewJeans, were fans, and then disregarded concerns about their age so nonchalantly.

With NewJeans gaining immense popularity right after their debut, concerns around their age are extremely prominent, highlighting the issues surrounding K-pop's gross infatuation with underage idols. In Korea, there are laws mandating curfews and performances of underage idols. Yet, even with these restrictions in place, companies are still deciding to debut underage idols, especially with the rising prominence of younger and younger female contestants in survival shows. The K-pop industry has been eager to welcome underage girls into the spotlight, and NewJeans is only the newest example.





# Pop-ocalypse

## Resisting pop's influence amidst corporate pressure

written by Preslee Vanlandingham  
designed by Lucia Agnew

It's been a long time since pop songs haven't dominated the Billboard Hot 100. Pop, rap, and the occasional nouveau country hit dominate wide-reaching platforms and since the 2000s, there has been a focus on an upbeat, electronic sound. With this trend, countless artists have moved away from their initial sound to a more commercialized version. As soon as artists sign with a major label or gain popularity from releasing a pop song, they convert into artists of this genre. Selling out isn't a new concept, but with the recent presence of social media's instantaneous fame effect paired with the age-old pursuit of monetary gain over creative divergence, a new dynamic between artists and their producers has emerged. Is the popularity of current trends a disservice to artists' vision of their work or simply a change of the times? Is there a way to resist it?

In the year I was born, Maroon 5 released their debut album *Songs About Jane* (2002). A blend of alternative and indie rock with an acoustic focus was foundational in this vulnerable representation of two people joining together and then unraveling. The album landed Maroon 5 on the map yet it was just shy of making Billboard Top 5. Their first number #1 hit was "Make Me Wonder," which noticeably shifted from soft rock to watered-down pop rock. In order to replicate this success, their songs have morphed more and more into the pop genre. With *Songs About Jane* (2002) and two subsequent albums, Maroon 5 was signed with A&M Octone Records and moved to Interscope Records in partnership with Adam Levine's label 222 Records. They re-released their third album, before separating from A&M Octone, to include "Moves Like Jagger" which was an instant pop hit. No hate for the song, but where did the angry heartbreak go that poured out from that first album? Where are those sharp, reverberating notes from Levine? How did we go from: "I was so high, I did not recognize / the fire burning in her eyes / the chaos that controlled my mind" to "girls like you run / around with guys like me"? The simplification, not only musically but also lyrically, is an effort to make their music more palatable to "all" audiences. This reversion somehow has made them more of an easily recognizable name which isn't always a positive thing. Even John Mayer, a guitar connoisseur, dipped his toes in this rapidly crowding pool with singles like "New Light."

Harry Styles, despite being classified as The King of Pop, has gradually moved away from the soft rock in his debut album *Harry Styles* (2017) to the full-on electronic heartbeats of *Harry's House* (2022). After leaving a pop boy band, receiving a soft rock album from Styles was unexpected. However, its commercial success fell short. His unofficial songs such as "Medicine" veer way over to rock, differing from the heavily synthesized sound of his most recent album. This may imply that his true interests lie in rock, but what he officially puts out there must be confined to catchy number-one hits. Do Styles' interests lean more towards

rock rather than his imposed crowning as the King of Pop? It's no coincidence that he became significantly more popular when he began making pop again. Given that he's with the same label that One Direction had, signing a multi-million dollar three-album deal with Columbia Records, it can be inferred that the label suggested a sound that encouraged a better return on investment that has worked so well in the past.

Interestingly, there's also been a shift in hip-hop, with many rappers leaning towards a more poppy sound. The blending of these genres seems to be a surefire way of moving up the charts. Drake's fusion of hip-hop and pop (from practically day one) has consistently kept him in circulation for decades. Wiz Khalifa's breakthrough album *Rolling Papers* (2011) has a description on Apple Music saying it "parlays party-rap traditions into modern pop songwriting and production, in ways that helped crack open the conversation for what pop and hip-hop hybrids could be." There's barely a trace of this fusion in his seven previous albums. Now, a few of his most famous songs are "See You Again" featuring Charlie Puth, and Maroon 5's "Payphone." Doja Cat's first album *Amala* (2018) is classified as R&B/Soul while *Planet Her* (2021) is simply Pop.

Nicki Minaj is another great example of an artist traversing these two genres (think "Starships" vs "Chun-Li"). In 2022, Minaj's "Super Freaky Girl" was moved out of the rap category into the pop category at the Grammys. Minaj proposed that it was an intentional move to ensure that she lost as she asked "Now what do you think is gonna happen when they start voting on these pop categories? And it's a bunch of people, white or wherever they're from, or older, and they have to decide between Nicki Minaj and Harry Styles, or Nicki Minaj and Adele?" This poses an interesting question as to who dominates the most dominant genre in music at the moment. Is mainstream music genuinely a product of actual listeners? Or is it a commercial ploy from major record labels to validate this sound, cornering deviating artists into conforming out of fear that they'll be unsuccessful otherwise?

The root of this shift may be a result of record label constrictions. Either these labels exert control over the product (let's not forget that musicians receive around twelve percent of the music industry's revenue) or artists detect these trends and gear their sound towards what they predict will be successful. In some cases it may be both, but the proportionality is important to investigate. The relationship between an artist and their producer(s) is often confidential (NDA's galore) but some logical conclusions can be made. A label is only going to invest in an artist if they see profit down the line. If pop is what grants artists exposure and more listeners, especially on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, then producers and record labels are going to steer them in that direction. The push for social media popularity has heightened with labels wanting artists to make viral TikToks in order to gather attention before their music is released. As a result, many artists have recoiled at the blunt consumerism and encouragement to make a catchy six-second sound. Kimberley Anne, also known as LANTA, a queer woman of color, started off with an acoustic sound but when she signed with Polydor Records, she recounts that "the label said they wanted me to be a big dance artist like Ellie Goulding or Jess Glynne, they had it locked in their head." After three years, she alternated genres so much that she lost her "creative compass." With so much obscurity surrounding an artist's relationship with their label, Anne shares in a rare occurrence of unfiltered honesty that "it doesn't feel very balanced in the industry, it feels like a lot of people who hold the keys to you going forward, it doesn't feel like a collaboration. Sometimes it feels like a dictation." She left her label and now produces her latest songs alongside her wife, with the sentiment that "I would rather sell 5000 copies of a song I love than five million of a song I hate."



Major labels routinely differ from the artists' original vision for their music which puts them in a position where they must make unfortunate compromises in order to have a career at all. This results in an almost cookie-cutter method of producing art that homogenizes what we listen to.

We rarely see genres on the Billboard charts outside of the classic trinity of pop, rap, and country which are usually overlapping. There's rarely soul, reggae, indie, or folk on the Hot 100. Popular songs in other countries don't usually make it on the US charts, yet US songs dominate global pop charts. If these charts are based on sales, airplay, and streaming, then the question is: how much of this pop sound is being pushed by the music industry versus how much is genuine interest from artists and consumers? Both reasons are motivated by the assumed wide-scale interest in pop music over other genres. The ratio of whether the artist or the label is pushing for a change in sound varies case by case, but given that labels are businesses first and foremost, it's likely that they are often the ones advocating for their signed artists to move in this direction. The pressure from the label goes hand in hand with consumer interest but since labels are making pop more accessible across platforms, obviously it is going to be more commercially successful. If there was less promotion of this genre by the labels it's debatable whether the same amount of consumer attention would remain.

Pop may be a product of music's natural evolution over time. However, there are too many cases across a variety of artists that point to something detrimental on a larger scale. The demographic of the majority of pop artists, paired with how artists transition into this sound after beginning in a different genre, indicate that there are influences at odds with the artists and methods of keeping this genre relevant. Our instant-gratification media addiction has bled into the way we listen to music. Faster tempos, four-chord harmony, predictable crescendos, and typical romantic lyrics characterize pop music. Gone are the elongated intros and highlighted instrumentals; those are quick to lose attention. Similar to film studios who latch onto stories that have proved to attract general audiences time and time again, pop has become a Marvel movie. It is considered a safer bet because of its predominance on charts and radio stations. There's nothing wrong with having an easygoing, upbeat song but when it's diluting artists' intended work, it seems that we're moving toward monotony that discourages experimental sounds. The most influential genres have been a result of experimentation. Mimicry is helpful in learning your craft, but experimentation generates originality and individuality. Music is meant to push boundaries and stretch toward new trailblazing sounds. With this particular form of art being so heavily controlled by corporate interests, the disparity between the mindsets of the artist and the record label executive is invariably at odds. Business-minded people see divergence as nonsensical because it's an uncertain variable amongst predictable elements of success, whereas artists view innovation as essential to the evolution of their expression. When there are too many boundaries set in place, creativity is suffocated and a watered-down, homogenous product is the result. I'm curious whether we will reach a point in pop music where mainstream audiences will no longer blindly accept what's being given to them. I hope there will be more transparency behind the music industry and from artists themselves on how producers and trends change their sound.

I also propose that the very thing that popularized pop music is able to deconstruct it. On nearly every social media platform that features short video formats, there is other music besides pop being chosen as background music, such as old melodies, slow songs, 90s punk rock, and indie. Perhaps this reveals that the general population isn't choosing pop over other genres. With streaming platforms providing direct access to consumers and eliminating the confines of radio play, there may be a loosening of the hold that labels have over artists in terms of what's being determined as popular. New artists are being signed through untraditional avenues, creating new pathways into the music industry that are less dictated by outdated restraints. With a substantial independent following, artists can be involved in partnerships that value creative democracy in pursuing new sounds. Once artists are in a legal agreement, they can leverage their social media following as evidence that the work they want to do is being received positively. This can actively help resist a label's executive control by disproving the notion that the only successful genre is pop, preventing interference with an artist's genuine vision.

I hope that the determination of what's popular will be a result of individual interest rather than marketing tactics from powerful companies. I hope that the evolution of what will top the charts will be a result of a newfound creative agency.





# "Everything we do is music": 20th Century Experimentalism and The Music of Sound

Written By: Anna Linn    Designed By: Layne Werle

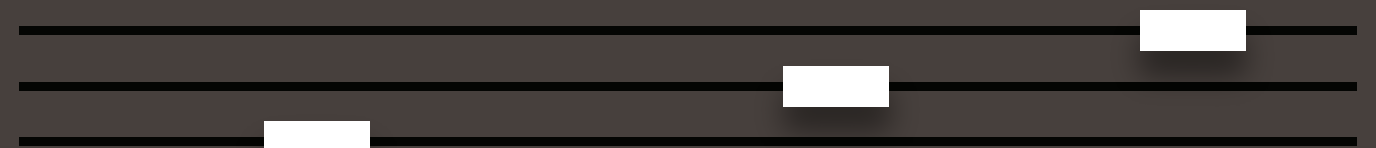
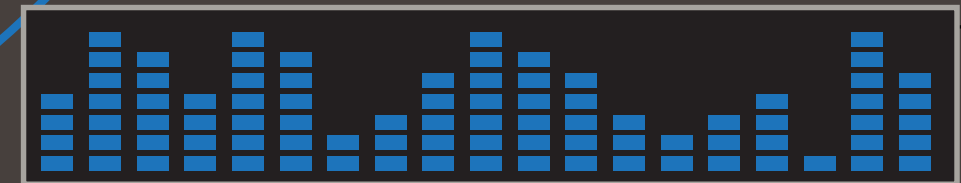
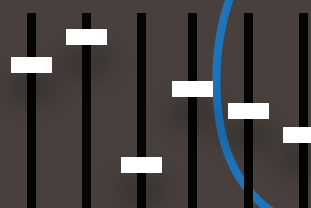
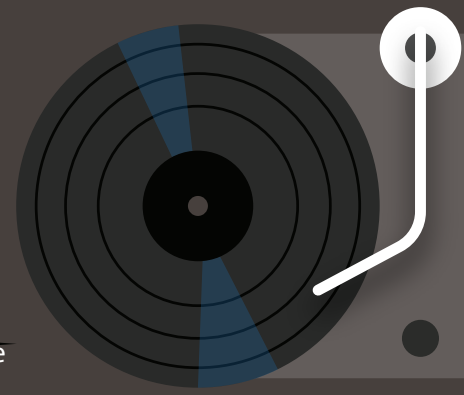
Before Berkeley, I had dreams of being a composition major. I ambitiously applied to the University of Michigan for a joint degree in composition and engineering, building an entire portfolio of piano pieces in a matter of months just for the chance of an audition. When I opened their decision email, I was thrilled to see my effort had paid off: I was invited back, and what initially felt like an impulsive decision seemed more and more possible. As such, I was eager to present my pieces and ambitions to the faculty, but I was most excited to see what I would be doing as a student. Along with my interview, I was invited to listen in on a composition seminar where current students were presenting their recent works and receiving feedback. If the resident composers saw potential in my work, this could be me in a few years. As I sat down for the seminar, I wondered what kinds of pieces I would get to see in the making. Instead of the sweeping orchestra movements or jazz experimentalism I was expecting, I heard something very different. Students presented erratic string ensemble fragments, a solo percussion composition with visuals just as abrasive as the audio, and even a performance of vocalists pronouncing the word "skin" using an impressive range of mouth noises. The other interviewees gushed their praise, asking insightful questions about each composer's creative process and artistic decisions, but I was at a loss for words. To my ears, these were just noises jumbled together; the pieces felt like a semblance of music that left me unsettled, lost, and unsatisfied. I had left the comfort of pop progressions and entered the jungle of philosophical music academia. My skepticism throughout the interview was evident. I didn't proceed with the application process; if that was the kind of composition I'd be expected to write, I wasn't sure I wanted to. However, the whole experience sparked my curiosity, and what struck me most was that the music didn't seem to have a goal. It wasn't trying to evoke any emotion, it wasn't even intended for self-expression, yet it connected composer to listener with a shared experience. I was undeniably intrigued, and in my own search for an explanation, I found music where I'd never heard it before.

By its most basic definition, experimental music is any kind of music that abandons conventions of composition, performance, and production in favor of indeterminacy. Composers of this style borrow from every corner of music culture to create unprecedented listening experiences, and experimental music has become one of the most dynamic and difficult-to-define subsets of modern music. These artists are linked by the fact that in the pursuit of creating a unique experience out of listening, they don't just subvert convention, they destroy it. Their works are often described as "landscapes of sound." Most of all, they invite controversy, challenging the definition of music within art.

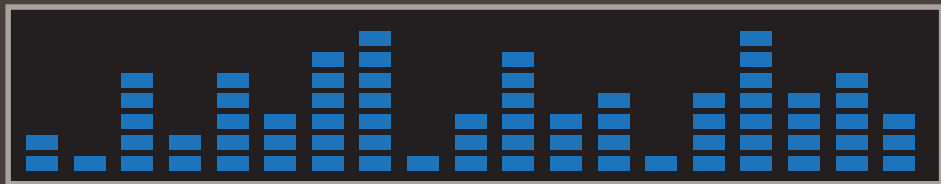
One of the most well-known and controversial pieces of experimental music uses silence as its template. John Cage's "4'33," in which a performer sits at a piano for four minutes and 33 seconds without making a single musical sound, is a piece conducted by the audience, as the complete lack of scripted music allows the natural sounds of the performance space to go from inadvertent to intentional. "4'33" premiered in 1952 and threw the music world into an uproar. Audiences took it to be an avant-garde mockery, a provocation that wasn't even real music. Critics at the time even picked apart the integrity of Cagean silence, commenting how the lack of instruction for silence caused the audience to be ironically noisy: coughing, talking, and stirring those around them as they walked out. In an effort to fill the uncomfortable and unfamiliar silence that Cage presented, it seems that many artists and music lovers at the time missed what was to be heard; after all, Cage did create his work with intention. Through the supposed "silence" of this particular performance, maybe the patter of rain could be heard, accented by the rasp of the wooden beams and muffled by a chorus of disenchanted murmurs; a chance orchestration to be heard once and never again. Cage reframed the sounds that we tend to overlook and redefined silence. Instead of the absence of sound, silence is simply "the giving up of intention," and there is a comfort in existing with sound simply as it is without seeking to extract a deeper meaning. No matter what, sounds we hear are bound to awaken our emotions and set our minds theorizing. Thus, Cage pursued music as "an affirmation of life — not an attempt to bring order out of chaos nor to suggest improvements in creation, but simply a way of waking up to the very life we're living."

As he unveiled this theory, parameters inevitably made themselves known. To everyday listeners, music is made to be enjoyed. It's a way to get in touch with ourselves emotionally, to celebrate togetherness, or even to escape reality. As a genre, experimental music comes closest to this vulnerable lifeblood of art. Experimental music, similar or dissimilar to Cage's, is rarely a pleasurable experience, and it's rarely the artist's expression of their emotions. Cage stomped over the fine line between sound and music, and by proposing that sound can exist as simply an affirmation of life before we imbue any kind of meaning on it, he shook the foundation of music as a marker of humanity. In one piece, "4'33" encapsulated both the glimpses of wisdom and notorious controversy that distinguished emerging experimental music in the 20th century.

Cage's intense philosophy attracted ambitious composers and fervent sound theorists alike, who continued to solidify the guiding concepts of experimental music. Inspired by Cage's work during his time at UC Berkeley, pioneering minimalist composer La Monte Young wrote a series of text scores, entitled *Compositions 1960*, to explore the principle of indeterminacy. Each one follows brief, urging instructions to execute an action, ranging from releasing a butterfly in the room to building a fire in front of the audience; the rest of the composition, like "4'33", is left up to chance. All performances are subject to chance, but such pieces embrace randomness like no other, creating a degree of improvisation that is only replicable in nature. The most popular of these compositions, which only instructs that a B3 and F#4 be "held for a long time", turns patient listening into an art. Audience members slowly become attuned to the overtones of the interval and layers of sound, which differ depending on the combination of instruments used in the performance. Despite the pitches being constant, the timbre seems to evolve; at one moment, it's a fly buzzing around a room; at the next, the rich thrum of a ship engine. Whether the exercise seems mind-numbing or riveting, this early example of drone music induces intense concentration and reveals what mystery and complexity exists within just one sound.





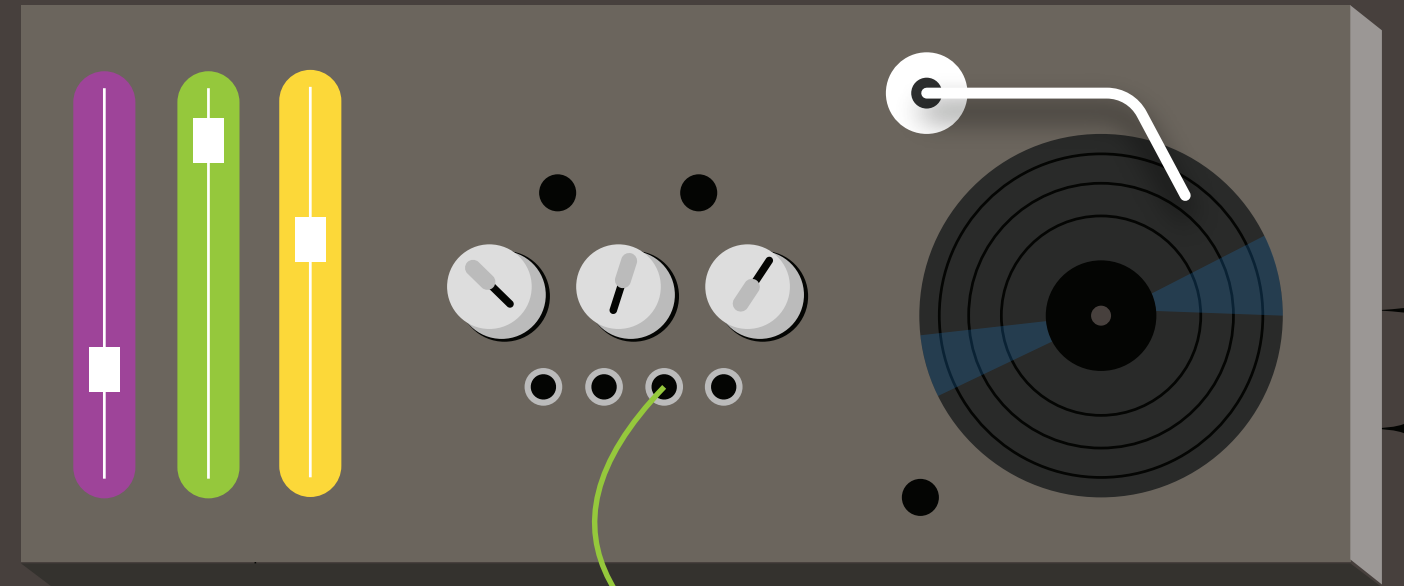


Experimental composers of the 20th century also questioned how music marks the passage of time. Morton Feldman was a member of the New York School of composers, and as a close friend of Cage's, was encouraged to explore indeterminacy in his music. Using traditional orchestral instrumentation, Feldman created several exceptionally long pieces devoid of traditional rhythm and harmony, one such being his *Piano and String Quartet* (1985). Without a constant rhythm, the unintrusive piano arpeggios and dissonant strings put listeners in a trance, stripping away a sense of time passing even as each gradual shift in sound brings the 80-minute piece closer to its conclusion. Music often serves as an external reminder of the strictness of time, but Feldman proposes that music can exist outside of meter, challenging the concept of time as we know it.

What sets these composers apart from other artists at the time is that each was a kind of sound philosopher in his own right. Deeply entrenched in music academia, Cage, Young, Feldman, and numerous others mixed music theory and sound to build knowledge about the sonic world around us, and their experimental works are active studies into the nature of existence. While other genres have sprung from their musings, such as drone, ambient, and electroacoustic that are enjoyed by many, experimental music is rooted in a purpose separate from the rest of the music world. It arguably encourages elitism in academia, as composers are able to pick and choose what sounds they want to highlight without considering the effort and history that goes into establishing music cultures around the world. Thus, the abstraction of music is often inaccessible to working musicians, those who listen to music for pleasure or to connect with their community, and especially to those without the opportunity to pursue higher education in music.

To most listeners, including myself, experimental works are headache-inducing to decipher. When I first listened to Feldman's *Piano and String Quartet*, with every arpeggio, I anxiously anticipated a scripted change: a chord transition, a melody, or harmonic expansion so the music could adopt a pattern I already understood. The more I tried to predict what would happen next, the more it resisted, stopping me from enjoying each sound simply for what it was. Every time we listen to music, we treat it with our expectations for how that music is supposed to behave; "good" music might remind me of a song my parents played in the car growing up while "bad" music disobeys rules of form by repeating a chorus more than three times. As such, our understanding and acceptance of music is as much about conditioning as it is about what is naturally pleasing to the human ear. One of the biggest obstacles to discovering new ways of listening to sound and music is familiarity, which has shaped our listening habits since childhood. The more often these sonic expectations are fulfilled, the stronger they become. It's possible that along with being difficult to define as music, we are caught off guard by the unpredictability of experimentalism. For instance, Western music theory is built on the diatonic scale, consisting of seven notes, while much traditional East Asian music centers around the five-note pentatonic scale. As a result, music from China and Mongolia emphasizes melodic complexity over harmony, and its notes are not tuned to the equal temperament system, meaning that they don't map directly onto the notes in our scale. Since the ratios between successive notes are not the same, this produces intervals that we might label as "exotic" because our ears are unused to hearing them. This doesn't mean that these forms of music aren't emotional, evocative, or well-orchestrated; they're simply unfamiliar. It's unsurprising that La Monte Young turned to classical music from India and Japan to push past the limitations of Western sound. Releasing our predetermined expectations for music is necessary to begin appreciating, or even tolerating, experimentalism.

For all my exploration into unfamiliar musical territory, I'd still prefer to hear Chopin over Young's hour-long perfect fifth. Unlike Cage, the average person craves meaning behind everything that we perceive; every time we encounter the world around us, we have an emotional reaction in order to reconcile the internal with the external. When it comes to sound, music is our way of expressing our emotions so that they can be understood by others, making connection the essence of music. As experimental musicians focus on creating sounds that challenge our shared music culture, their music seems to disregard the human expression that makes people fall in love with music. But that doesn't mean that there's nothing to be said for experimentalism. Whether or not it is truly music, experimental composers challenge our listening habits, understanding that by de-contextualizing and defamiliarizing sounds, we are forced to acknowledge the magnitude of music's influence on our lives and become more attuned to the sonic world around us. For the average musician, experimental music can help us break out of our creative comfort zone. If you take away one thing from these sound philosophers, it should be that sound can exist without intention. In order to listen, first you have to stop trying to imbue meaning into everything you hear. Instead, allow the sound to guide you to its own conclusion. Appreciating a sound for what it is makes it so that we don't have to go looking for music because it is all around us. It's in the birds chirping, the traffic, or the scratch of a pen on paper. It might not be a nocturne, but it's still a shared experience.



The more I consciously seek to change my listening habits, the more music I can hear all around me. Walking down lower Sproul after a late class, I can hear the sound of conversations, traffic on Telegraph, and someone playing a run from "The Weekend" on the open piano. Just for a moment, they come together and make up their own little symphony. I keep walking, but I pull out my phone and press record.

Cage once said, "Wherever we are, what we hear is mostly noise. When we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating"



# THE ROCKSTAR MIRROR

Written by Kristiana Duran  
Designed by Elise Rodriguez

We are all familiar with the rockstar stereotype. It is arguably one of the most culturally relevant images of our time. Iconic band members such as Jim Morrison, Kurt Cobain, and Liam Gallagher are infamous for their outrageous behavior, abuse of drugs, and, of course, their extreme talent. But why do we love them so much? Why are they so popular within the music industry and the general public?

The rockstar is a reflection of our society. These men thrive in an industry that is made by and for white men. About 68% of jobs and positions of power within the music industry belong to men, and of that 68%, [insert statistics here] are white men. These huge discrepancies have created a work culture that overall favors male musicians and have created an environment for ideas of toxic masculinity to thrive. The music industry has created a space for men to act recklessly, abusively, and assertively. This patriarchal environment encourages them rather than keeping them accountable. Women, however, are held to a different standard within the industry. The men who meet the sought out combination of poor life choices and extreme artistic talent are venerated as "rockstars", as the torchbearers of the legacy of true rock'n'roll. On the other hand, most women are given a strict mold to which they must appropriately adhere to in order to achieve legendary status. In the 2016 Billboard Woman Of The Year Award, Madonna shared: "If you are a girl, you have to play the game. You are allowed to be pretty, and cute, and sexy, but don't act too smart, don't have an opinion that is out of the status quo at least. You are allowed to be objectified by men, and dress like a slut, but don't own your sluttiness, and do not share your own sexual fantasies to the world. Be what men want you to be, but more importantly, be what women feel comfortable with you being."

Between 2013 and 2020, women only accounted for 2% of Grammy nominations for the producer of the year category, and only 7.6% of the nominees for album of the year were by female artists. A University of Southern California study found that of the 600 most popular songs released between 2012 and 2017, only 22 percent were performed by female artists. We see that women are not popularly related to within the music industry because we live in a society dominated by the male narrative. The same creative freedom men have to express their true, wild selves is not granted to women. It is hard to realize that the beloved rockstar stereotype is just another part of systematic sexism within the music industry propelled by a toxic male culture that craves and supports this. Why would the music industry change what sells?

And yet, one of the most beautiful things about the music industry - about art - is that it creates a platform for people to be authentic, even if they are not good examples of behavior. This freedom of authenticity becomes another driving force of the rockstar phenomena. If anything, the fact that they are not good examples is the ultimate protest: it is a platform for people to be anti-what society tells you to be.

The creation of the rockstar is something we are all guilty of: their very behavior is a reflection of our shadow selves. Author Shakti Gawain explains the idea of shadow selves, made up of all the qualities and aspects of ourselves that we have come to disown and reject. Whether this is because society, our parents, our friends, or our own selves do not approve, we repress versions of ourselves and instead shape ourselves into the version that all those we are surrounded with will approve of. It is a survival method, and society shapes us into what it expects us to become. We are struck with a certain curiosity and awe when we

see musicians, singers, guitarists, and drummers such as these. We fall in love with the tortured romantic because it is something that is inside all of us. Music is empathy and it allows us to feel unexplainably understood. When we see these musicians who are doing everything wrong, they make us feel better for our own imperfections.

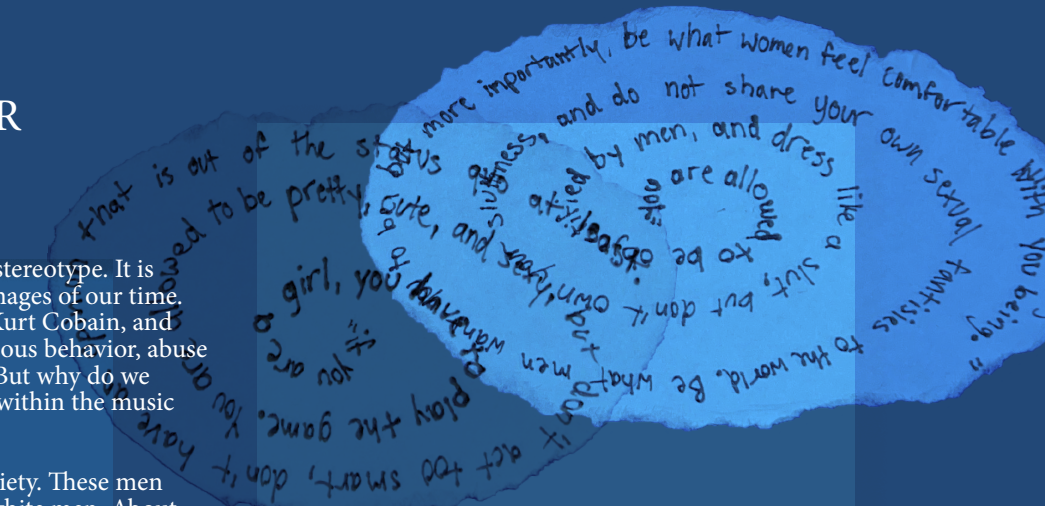
There is an authenticity to this behavior, a genuineness that is not pretending. It's like the opposite of what people hate about politics: people hate politics because they see these people, these politicians and businessmen, who are trying to appear as if they are perfect. They are trying to say the perfect thing and do the perfect thing and appeal to the most people. Doesn't it rarely feel genuine? The existence of these people in society show the imbalance in our own selves, a common experience from one individual to the next. And so, through these individuals we can indulge in our shadow selves. It is our constant desire to always attain perfection and fight against the worst parts of ourselves. We admire that rockstars can express the qualities we work our entire lives to suppress.

Ironically, the person that appeals to the most people is usually the one that conforms the least to an idea of perfection. Because they appeal to a part of people that wants only pure authenticity. A part that does not want to be lied to. These men are saying and doing the things we fight so hard against, and look good while doing it. We respect them for it, envy them even.

And so the popularity of these men become a direct reflection of the modern society that we live in, a reflection of the kind of people idolized within our societal context. They become entertainment, gods mythologized within pop culture.

I think that art reflects an imperfection in all of us and so a level of careful awareness is needed when we consume certain art. It is important to view art as a reflection of a culture, and view individuals involved in that in the context of this. Art is interpreted through the societal context at the time of consuming it, while its origins are found in inspiration of the social context at the time of it being made.

Culture is a broad word because it is like a never ending circle: the artists and the art and the people all determine one another ever-changingly. It is never my intention to discount the masterpiece work of these rockstars. I am guilty of loving them. Nor is it my intention to condone their negative behavior. But a part of looking at art, truly appreciating it, is to understand the social and historical context in which it was made. To understand the artists, who they were, where they came from, why they did the things that they did. To understand your own self. To interact with art in this way is to actively participate with it, to connect on some spiritual level with all the people who made it and all the people who appreciate it.





# THE SOUL OF A WOMAN WAS CREATED BELOW

The Gendered Politics of 1970s 'Cock Rock,' a Personal Essay

Written by Lily Ramus  
Designed by Heather Highland

The first 'real' song that I learned on guitar was "Black Dog" by Led Zeppelin. In hindsight, it was an interesting choice from my guitar teacher; the guitar riff is deceptively complex and the way it interacts with the drums is unexpected, giving the song a jolty, almost disjointed feel until the two parts snap back together at the down beat. I loved it. Musically it was exactly what I wanted to learn, the reason that I wanted to play guitar.

It was rock n' roll: the guitar was hard and dirty, the drums punchy and driving, and Robert Plant's yells, howls, and moans made the whole thing irresistible to me. It was the first of many Led Zeppelin songs I would learn and Jimmy Page remains a big influence on my playing today. However, lyrically "Black Dog" trapezes into sexist and misogynistic territory as Plant sings about a failed relationship with a woman he perceives as a golddigger.

In the first verse, Plant explicitly describes her sexual appeal to him and how as he watches her "honey drip" he "can't keep away." The second verse contains an allusion to the title of the song and compares Plant's lover to a Black Dog or Hellhound, a mythical creature that follows people who are close to their deaths. In the third verse, Plant accuses his lover of taking advantage of him financially and turns to sexist remarks, claiming, "A big-legged woman ain't got no soul," the adjective big-legged acting as slang for both a plus-sized woman and a sexually active woman and connoting that such women have a lower worth than someone who is thin and virginal. Interestingly, in the fourth verse however, Plant expresses a desire and a "need" to find a steady relationship and the woman of his dreams. Little did I know when I started playing it that the song would become the perfect allegory for my experience with rock music.

As I approach nearly a decade of playing the guitar and imminent

graduation with a degree in music, I would like to analyze my relationship with 1970s 'cock rock' and the music of Led Zeppelin. In my research for this article, I came across two conflicting texts by female authors and Led Zeppelin/cock rock fans that I will use as framing devices for my experience. The first is "Rethinking Issues of Gender and Sexuality in Led Zeppelin: A Woman's View of Pleasure and Power in Hard Rock," published in *American Music* in 1999 by musicologist Susan Fast, and the second is "Cock Rock: Men Always Seem to End Up on Top," published anonymously in 1970 in underground feminist publication *Rat*. Through the close reading and analysis of these two works, I have constructed my own narrative regarding Led Zeppelin as a band that I admire and want to emulate yet that embody and perpetuate stereotypes which have negatively impacted my experience playing rock music and the electric guitar.

In their 1978 article, "Rock and Sexuality," Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie coined the term "cock rock," describing the genre as "music making in which performance is an explicit, crude, and often aggressive expression of male sexuality—it's the style of rock presentation that links a rock and roller like Elvis Presley to rock stars like Mick Jagger, Roger Daltrey, and Robert Plant." In his book *Sound Effects*, Frith goes on to link Led Zeppelin with this style specifically writing, "the approach is most obvious in the singing style that derives from Led Zeppelin's Robert Plant, [and] in the guitar hero style that derives from Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page." "Rock and Sexuality" was the first text in a long lineage of academic discourse to characterize rock music, and especially heavier styles such as hard rock and heavy metal, as inherently masculinist genres in which the primary goal is to emphasize male sexuality (usually that of white heterosexual men).

In "Rethinking Issues of Gender and Sexuality in Led Zeppelin: A Woman's View of Pleasure and Power in Hard Rock," Fast asserts that claims of rock as an inherently masculinist genre—made by primarily male scholars—distort and erase female experiences of the music and perpetuate harmful stereotypes regarding who is 'allowed' to make, listen to, and participate in rock music culture. She also questions whether claims that the genre and Led Zeppelin's music are misogynistic are valid, acknowledging that based on previous discourse, such as the sources and rhetoric cited above, the answer is overwhelmingly 'yes.' Fast suggests that part of the problem lies in the fact that the fans, journalists, and academics who are engaging with discourse surrounding rock and Led Zeppelin are primarily male or have little personal stake in the music they are discussing, leading to issues of representation and questions of "who speaks for whom, why, how, and when." She proposes that a potential solution is to turn to our own gendered experiences with the music and offers an analysis of cock rock and the music of Led Zeppelin from personal perspectives. However, a crucial part of Fast's argument I do not wish to let go unacknowledged lies in the disclaimer she makes on page 257:

"It is not so much that those who write about the performance of masculinity in Zeppelin or hard rock music are wrong, as it is a question of the proportion to which this aspect of the music receives attention...I want to stress that I do not wish to apologize for or erase from the equation the critically important issues that have been raised concerning sexist or misogynistic behavior in hard rock and metal."





This article abides by this statement as well as acknowledging, in relation to the stress of personal experience in this argument, that its author is a white queer woman and in addressing hegemonic structures I do not wish, nor attempt to, speak universally.

One of the arguments Fast makes in favor of rethinking the gendered ways rock music is characterized, entails the female gaze and sex as a form of power. Fast explains how Beatlemania was interpreted as the young white woman's sexual revolution, writing that "adulation of the male star was a way to express sexual yearnings that would normally be pressed into the service of popularity or simply repressed" and that idolizing such stars "was an empowering act." Largely due to its overwhelmingly male demographic, the effects and impact of the female gaze on rock culture have been drastically under accounted for in previous discourse. However, Fast's research and my own personal experience points to the conclusion that women who enjoy cock rock and heavier styles of rock music are not turned off by expressions of the performer's masculinity and, on the contrary, relate to them as a means of expressing their own sexual desires.

One way Fast engages with this idea is through Pamela Des Barres, a famous 1970s groupie who had an affair with Jimmy Page and was a close friend to Robert Plant. While Des Barres' "was clearly coveted as a prize by male rock stars," in engaging in coitus with such musicians, she "enacted her own version of sexual fantasy."

Fast then turns to analyze her own personal experience with Led Zeppelin's music, writing:

"I came to identify with Robert Plant partly because I was in awe of his abilities as a singer but partly because I was sexually attracted to him...When I fantasized about knowing Plant and the rest of the band, two elements were always inextricably bound together: I was a musician of equal stature to them—as talented and commercially successful—and I was also beautiful and sexy and loved by them for that reason as well. In other words, my fantasy involved being powerful and attractive, and respected for both characteristics."

When I first read this passage it struck a deep chord in me because it was so analogous to my own experience with Jimmy Page and, surprisingly, a perspective I had never seen acknowledged. Power and sexual attraction are two qualities which are embodied by cock rock and Fast's personal experience, as well as my own, appropriate those traits for oneself via the music and participation in the scene.

To aid in her research and collect more personal experiences, Fast conducted a survey, asking a variety of questions to Led Zeppelin fans, including some of which related to expressions of gender and sexuality in the band's music. While most female respondents acknowledged that they were attracted to the band members, they also often deliberately pointed out that they liked the band for other reasons as well, or that questions of gender and sexuality could not be separated from the rest of the experience of the band and their music. One such response from a female fan is as follows:

"Sure, Zep had a hard, driving beat, but that's the nature of rock music. And yes, they sang a lot of 'my woman is evil' songs, but that is the nature of the blues. Zeppelin's music is raw power, much like (to me) Mozart's music—it hits you on an elemental, primal level—and it doesn't matter what your gender or sexual persuasion is."

Many female respondents also readily admitted a bodily and or sexual response to the band's image and music:

"Yes [I do think that I relate to the music in a specific way because of gender] come on what's not to love? Every little girl then and now squeals to Robert's sexy sex sounds. I swear that man has a hard on at every concert. Orgasmic. And Jimmy's foreplay strumming accelerating into ecstasy. Yes! Very basic, animalistic sounds—hormonal, you know."

"[People] assume that chicks would be offended by how blatantly Percy [Plant's nickname] & Pagey seemed to strut their obviously lustful—yet—nonchalant

attitude towards everything. They don't get the fact that is what attracts chicks to the music."

These responses reveal that the band's machismo image and hard-hitting—at times crude—music are not frightening or dissuading qualities to female fans, and overwhelmingly the responses of Fast's survey demonstrated that women like Led Zeppelin for the same reasons that men like Led Zeppelin. Furthermore, female fans' sexual attraction to the band members and their image reveals a point that surprisingly continues to go unacknowledged in most rock music studies: women and the female gaze were a motivation behind cock rock performers' displays of masculinity, despite not encompassing a large part of the audience.

This all leads back to the question of why rock music has been so unproblematically interpreted as phallic, which Fast proposes is because "interpretations are based on a selective understanding of an artist's career,... it is mostly men doing the interpreting, and, perhaps most important, that it is undoubtedly a prospect threatening to men and many women that male rock stars' power and sexuality could be understood, appropriated, or even controlled by women. It is much easier always to begin from the premise that the music and images are sexist and macho because not only is it a comforting notion that this kind of semiotic stability might exist, but it simultaneously locks out the dangerous possibility of woman as sexual and powerful."

I agree but my personal response to Fast's article is nuanced. On one hand, I haven't read much literature on rock music discourse from female authors who are also avid fans of the music, and Fast's personal experience, as well as the survey responses she got from female Led Zeppelin fans, mimic some of my own experiences and where my interest in and love for the music stems from. However, my personal experiences as both a musician who plays this music and a fan who consumes it, have led to my own understanding of rock as not only masculinist, but as a sexist and misogynistic institution, one that is paralleled more closely by the story told in "Cock Rock: Men Always Seem to End Up on Top."

In this article, the author outlines her own early experiences with rock music and how it "became the thing that helped fill the loneliness and empty spaces in [her] life." However, she confesses that after "a whole lot of going to the Fillmore and listening to records and reading *Rolling Stone*," it was hard not to notice that "all the names on the albums, all the people doing sound and lights, all the voices on the radio, even the D.J.'s between the songs," were men. She realized that women were not only a minority but were barred from active participation in rock music, citing that many musicians would address the audience as if it were all male, assuming that only men were "smart enough to understand the intricacies of the music." She acknowledges that while there were exceptions like the all-female psychedelic rock group Ace of Cups, she remembers "how they were laughed and hooted at with a general 'take them off the stage and fuck them' attitude" and "how they were given the spot between the up-and-coming group and the big-name group—sort of for comic relief." She writes that "a guy once told my sister when she picked up his electric guitar that women were meant to play only folk guitar, like Joan Baez or Judy Collins," and that it blew her mind the first time she saw a woman play electric guitar. To close, she laments the death of Janis Joplin and the unfair role women are expected to fill in rock culture, writing:

"Women are required at rock events to pay homage to the rock world—a world made up of thousands of men, usually found in groups of four and fives. Homage paid by offering sexual accessibility, orgiastic applause, group worship, gang bangs at Altamont. The whole rock scene (as opposed to rock music) depends on our being there."

Women have always been and will always be crucial to rock music. Regardless of where on the spectrum your personal conceptions of rock and masculinity fall, women are an essential part of the scene, even if they have not been granted the



same opportunities to participate as musicians. Many psychology studies have shown that (with the exception of a few niche genres such as free jazz, atonal classical music, and extreme heavy metal) most men begin playing instruments to attract women. Furthermore, in genres and styles such as cock rock where performance depends on exaggerated expressions of male sexuality, the presence of women, whether as muses, backstage, or in the audience, is essential, and, to agree with Fast, the fact that this is not more heavily acknowledged in both academic and journalistic writing on rock music subcultures is both derogatory and a severe oversight.

I began playing the guitar when I was thirteen, with a sole interest both musically and aesthetically in rock music. Immediately I was confronted with questions of representation. In the pictures of guitar idols on posters and magazines and lists of '100 Greatest Guitarists,' where was I? Despite being clad in jeans and a band t-shirt, when I went to buy my first guitar the man at the music store took me into the room of acoustics and told me I better start there (because god forbid a woman would want to play the electric guitar). A year or two later, I sat at the dinner table with my father, a medical doctor, who proclaimed there must be some biological reason that women could not play the guitar as well as men. Maybe their hands were too small, or perhaps they did not have enough finger strength. When I started my first band with a few other women from my grade, our peers and parents alike immediately coined us a 'girl band,' the adjective 'girl' somehow carrying more weight than the noun which it described. It was the last time I would play in a group composed solely of women, not wanting a stupid adjective and stereotype to define me and my music. In a world like that, I found myself in Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix. In George Harrison, Carlos Santana, and Eddie Van Halen. Because in a world where there was no I, where else could I look but to the gods? Legs spread, pelvis thrust forward, and guitar slung low, the graven image of the guitar god imprinted in my brain, an emblem of power, confidence, and respect.

So I studied them. I learned to look and dress and play like them. Today I stand on stage with my legs spread, pelvis jutting forward, and guitar slung low, my neck thrown back and face contorted into orgasmic expressions. But nearly a decade later, as the lead guitarist of my current band, I find myself facing the same setbacks. My partner has long curly hair and a defined male body, a Robert Plant and David Lee Roth lovechild. When we go out, people ask *him* if he is in a band, automatically casting the assumption that I am the muse, the girlfriend, the groupie. Men approach me after shows and tell me, 'Wow! I didn't expect much when you got up there, but you're actually really good!,' proceeding to hit on me or ask for my number or whether I have an OnlyFans because even when I am acknowledged, it is for the sake of filling a fantasy—what other role have women ever been given in rock music? My experience exists in both of the texts discussed in this paper and in many ways I love rock music for the same reasons I resent it—its hardness, grittiness, sleaze, and overt masculinity. The author of the *Rat* article quotes Stokely Carmichael, who once said "that all through his childhood he went to movies to see westerns and cheered wildly for the cowboys, until one day he realized that being Black, he was really an Indian, and all those years he had been rooting for his own destruction," admitting that "listening to rock songs became an experience a lot like that." It does feel like that sometimes, but rock music has become such a large part of who I am today that I can no longer separate myself from it. Living in a patriarchal world, I understand my draw to this music as a means of taking back power. I have appropriated it for myself and my community, playing lead guitar in a queer cock rock band fronted by a trans person of color. I refuse to accept that it is impossible for a woman to stand amongst the gods, but believe that the hegemony must abandon the 'boys' club' mentality that has excluded us for the past fifty years. When I play "Black Dog" on guitar today, it is emblematic of all of these things, my identity as a woman forcing me to confront the gendered politics of rock music and carve out my own place in it.





Dear Dadu',

I hope everything is good on the other side. Painless. Everything is A-Ok here (not really).

After you left, my hands never left the guitar. My brain thinks singing the songs that remind me of you will help me retain your memory - even if (in my head) you'd only come back to say that I was really bad at playing the guitar. Compared to you, I definitely am.

I'd still want to hear you say that.

I feel like a bad granddaughter. I never asked the questions that I thought I had all my life to ask you- what was it like living during the partition era? (I actually did ask you this and you said that Muslims and Hindus did begin to hate each other. There were people getting murdered two doors away from you). But most of all, I'd want to hear about the longest love affair of your life - music.

I Facetimed my mom today and asked her about you (*will writing about him make me remember more?*)

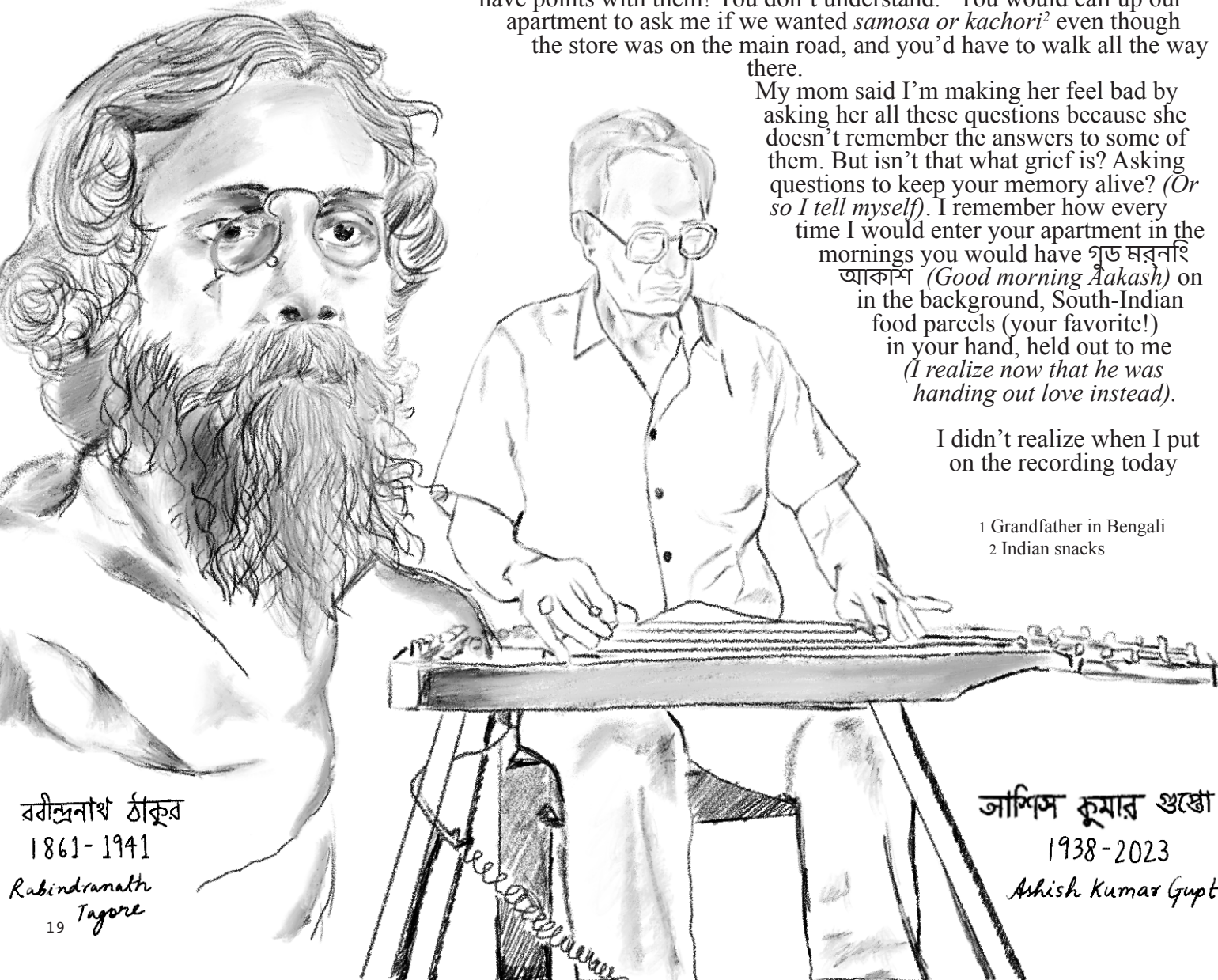
I used to think you had your own band, but you were in multiple! A freelance Hawaiian guitar player, picking and choosing who deserved to work with your talent. And what a talent it was. Today, I listened to a recording of you playing the guitar at a wedding we went to when I was 11; each pluck of the string moved within me as if you were playing my heartstrings- and how appropriate that one of your favorite songs to play was "আমার হৃদয় তোমার আপন হাতের" which literally translated is *rock me (my heart) in your arms gently*.

You had a love for রবীন্দ্রসংগীত (Rabindra Sangeet- songs written and composed by Rabindranath Tagore) that could only be rivaled by your dedication to your family. My mom went to the grocery store without you for the first time and remembered how you'd always bicker with her to pay for everything because "I have points with them! You don't understand." You would call up our apartment to ask me if we wanted *samosa or kachori*<sup>2</sup> even though the store was on the main road, and you'd have to walk all the way there.

My mom said I'm making her feel bad by asking her all these questions because she doesn't remember the answers to some of them. But isn't that what grief is? Asking questions to keep your memory alive? (*Or so I tell myself*). I remember how every time I would enter your apartment in the mornings you would have গুড মর্নিং আকাশ (*Good morning Aakash*) on in the background, South-Indian food parcels (your favorite!) in your hand, held out to me (*I realize now that he was handing out love instead*).

I didn't realize when I put on the recording today

1 Grandfather in Bengali  
2 Indian snacks



রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর  
1861-1941  
Rabindranath  
Tagore

জাশিস কুমার গুপ্তা  
1938-2023  
Ashish Kumar Gupta

that your voice was a part of it. It was the first time I'd heard your voice since you passed. It still sounds the same, as if the next time I show up back home, you'd be sitting on your spot on the couch, waiting for me to get home (*but he's not*). I've watched the recording no less than 25 times now, trying to transcribe what you said in an effort to inscribe the way you speak into the walls of my memory.

I have reproduced it here:

“আমার একটা খুব মনরে কাছরে গান.  
*Actually, আমার গুর, late Sunil Gangopadhyay, তঁর style ছিলো slow and sentimental, and guitar-তা মনহে... it's made for that type of music only, especially Hawaiian guitar I mean to say. তো এই গান তা film মৌসম থেকে - "দলি দুঁদতা হৈ" (Dil Dhundta hai).*

ইটা আমরা যখন শুর শুর তে স্টেজে বাজাতেশুর করি, *Banaras being a backward city*, এই অর্কস্ট্রেশনে ব্যাপার তা ছিলোনা. ওই একলা একলা *guitar* বাজাতাম, গমপুর তারা তে *tabla* এলো, তারপর একটা *harmonium*, তারপর *accordion*. অনকে পরে *keyboard* এসছে. *I have tried to copy some of the orchestration portion on guitar- হয়তো complete হতে পারেনো. 150, 200 instruments দয়ি orchestration তেরি হয়, but I have tried to make out the orchestration as much as possible on the guitar. Thanks.*

Translation:

[A song very close to my heart. Actually, my late teacher Sunil Gangopadhyay- his style was slow and sentimental, and the guitar, I think, it's made for that type of music only, especially Hawaiian guitar I mean to say. So, this song is Dil Dhundta hai, from the film "Mausam (1975)."

In the beginning, when we first started performing this song, Banaras (Varanasi) being a backward city, orchestration wasn't even a thing. So, I played my guitar alone; on Gompu's (his younger brother) insistence, I got a tabla player, then the harmonium and the accordion followed. I have tried to copy some of the orchestration portions on guitar- maybe it's not very complete. Orchestra arrangements are usually created with 150, or 200 instruments. But I have tried to make out the orchestration as much as possible on the guitar. Thanks.]

As you spoke about your guru (teacher), your voice became softer, and wistful for a time when he was still there (you said 'slow and sentimental' with a knowing smile on your face, shaking your head in remembrance). Your English was confident and measured, ever the eloquent speaker, able to weave in and out of a language that wasn't your own. I will miss your almost perfect pitch, watching *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa*<sup>3</sup> as you immediately sang the *Hindustani*<sup>4</sup> notes of a song we heard only a few minutes ago. I would always ask you if you knew the song (they'd almost always be from 80s Bollywood films). You always did.

My aunt said there's something to be said about your smile- it was like the sun rising after a rainy day, disarming every person you met. But there's also something to be said about your kindness (I would talk about it here if I could but then I don't think this letter would ever end). It suffices to say that you looked out for those less fortunate than you, especially when it came to children's education.

From the way you took care of *Dida*<sup>5</sup> to the way you never ceased to provide for us, to the way you raised your children, you were limitless (I have the best mom in the whole world).

So here's to you (forevermore).

Love,  
Anoushka

3 Indian reality music TV show  
4 Northern Indian Classical music  
5 Grandmother in Bengali





# Let me in, let me out

## The politics of the mosh pit

Written by Liv Bjorgum  
Designed by Simone Pereira

Plenty of people will willingly take an elbow to the gut on a Sunday night, faces slick with others' sweat and toes crushed underfoot, in order to feel closer to the music they love. In a mosh pit, a cooperative space that erupts spontaneously yet predictably at concerts, bodies careen into each other. Their choreography, once unconventional, is now commonplace at shows. The physical contact crucial to the development of a pit seems to defy social norms of politeness, respect, and boundaries. Mosh pits are collective spaces, but they do not preclude agency. Trust underpins the chaos of the pit. Thus, being in one requires adherence to its unspoken code of conduct. Have mosh pits become normalizing and exclusionary forces themselves?

While mosh pits are often understood as places where structure and social norms fall away, their very own code of conduct and norms have been established. Even WikiHow can instruct an interested person on mosh pit etiquette—a word that screams manners and formality—in no fewer than fourteen steps. Moshing has created structure in its very denial of structure, exemplifying how difficult it is to exist outside the social order when its action necessitates heavily participating in society.

Responsibility and care towards others accompanies the privilege of participating in a mosh pit. One must remain vigilant of others and their needs alongside one's own. Personal liberty in the mosh pit is accompanied by care for others. This dynamic characterizes the behavior of participants in an ideal mosh pit. The individual can have fun

on their own, but they still accept a responsibility when they enter the space. Some people may need help exiting the pit, getting up from a fall, or getting away from someone inside the pit.

How does identity live in and on a body, and how does identity thus impact one's actions in a pit? As a teenage girl attending concerts in high school, I often did not see myself reflected in mosh pits even though young women overwhelmingly made up the shows' audiences. I had grown up enamored with riot grrrl culture, but there were no mentions of "girls to the front!" To be fair, I mostly went to indie pop and indie rock concerts, not punk shows. Most of the other people at these shows had grown up in a world in which moshing had always existed. I knew little of its history, just that the locus of energy that emerged during shows both excited and terrified me. Age, ability, race, sex, gender, all of the things that impact one's lived experience in one's own body continue into the pit, or outside of the pit, alongside oneself.

One's identity, and the identities one believes others possess, affect the ways that one interacts with others in a mosh pit. In a mosh pit, people make split-second judgments based on what little they know of another person—often based on what little they can see of them. Despite, or in fact driving, some of the freedom many feel while moshing, pits are not wholly freewheeling or self-righteous places. In an ideal pit, one remains vigilant of others who may need help in all the various meanings of the word. However, our socialized understanding of who would need such help continues to factor into behavior in mosh pits. Asking for, receiving, and providing help all have their own nuances.

I have heard "are you okay?" more times when I am enjoying myself in a pit than when I have cried in public. The inquirer has always been a man. It takes far more effort to be heard in a mosh pit than in day-to-day life. Men have apologized to me for bumping into me *in a mosh pit* in a way that rarely happens on a crowded city street. Being apologized to makes me feel like I should not be in the pit—like my presence must be by mistake. At the same time, considering the ugly history of assault within mosh pits, should I really decry this version of so-called helping behavior? When I *have* needed help at a show, I have been the one to ask, sometimes simply through silent, intense eye contact as I struggle under the unevenly-distributed weight of a crowd surfer or when I have fallen down in the melee. Hearing those three words makes me turn the mirror on myself. *Do I look like I'm not okay*, I wonder. After I get into the rhythm, I do not often think of what others think of me. The expression on my face, the sound of my voice, and the shape of my body all get tangled up in everyone else's. *What does not being okay look like in a mosh pit? How do I look different from the rest of these people?* I fall into most of the categories of the people I commonly see occupying the mosh pit, save for my sex. If only one quality obviously differentiated me, I could only imagine how other people felt.

Mosh pits are by no means comfortable places, but they take away from the music if one has to question one's personal safety. Of course mosh pits involve risk, in the same way warning signs are posted around swimming pools, ice rinks, and skate parks. Mosh pits can be seen as an iteration of collective effervescence, a Durkheimian concept that describes the energetic result of shared action. I see mosh pits as embodied communication. They can be centers of catharsis amplified in their collectivity and offer productive channels for aggressive feelings that lack other opportunities to be safely expressed. But they can also contain terrifying realities, where the collective action of many turns violent against a few. Some argue that moshing condones violent behavior or reflects



the continued domination of some groups over others that is seen in our society. Mosh pits can now be found at shows of most genres, sometimes leaving the credo of moshing that emerged alongside it within the punk scene behind. Take the chaotic and deadly stampede at Astroworld in 2021 or the sexual assaults that took place in the mosh pits at the *Lord-of-the-Flies*-esque Woodstock '99. Both of these incidents emphasize the need for a shared understanding of acceptable behavior in the pit. Separated by two decades, both involved the concentrated aggression of mosh pits without the respect for others' lives, bodies, and experiences. Even so, why is the mosh pit only seen as a microcosm of the real world when things get nasty? Each argument for mosh pits has its correlate against.

Many regard the mosh pit as the pinnacle of participation in a live music setting, yet it is also a performance. The mosh pit becomes another spectacle in the music venue. Being in a mosh pit often means situating oneself at the front of a crowd in a space that creates its own arena, complete with an invisible barricade and front-row viewers.

While professional concert videographers and photographers document the performance (music and mosh included), concert-goers in the crowd record shows with their phones and point-and-shoot cameras. The lenses of many cameras onstage and in the press areas often angle toward the crowd, with some video cameras even being passed to the audience to record themselves. Some documenters' on-stage position gives them similar visual status to the musical act. Meanwhile, those scattered throughout the crowd and on the same level as those engaging in the acts they record are like moles. One never knows what will happen to footage that might catch a frame of oneself, much less who the people recording it are. The constant threat of and near-constant act of documenting a concert encroaches on the anonymity and liberation of being in either a mosh pit or a crowd. Alongside this reality comes a new level of self-consciousness and awareness for anyone attending a performance, regardless of identity.

Today, the mosh pit exists partially as an arena for performing fandom. Inhabiting mosh pits has become a way to assert my fandom and to take up physical space at a show akin to the space a band's music takes up in my life. At a Junior Varsity and Jean Dawson show in Oakland on the eve of my nineteenth birthday, I felt drawn into the pit for the chance to be closer to the artists and fellow fans. This was my sixth time seeing Junior Varsity. A narrow demographic usually dominated their audiences: mostly people in their late teens and twenties, mostly men. In the pit, I was not even conscious of my screaming along to the lyrics until my voice grew raw. I felt like I was unleashing a part of myself that loved the music fiercely and felt fiercely. I wanted to immerse myself in the live experience fully. When the lead singer of the band hopped into the pit, a circle enveloped him. He moved within it, at one point making direct eye contact with me as we both screamed the lyrics. *I felt seen.*

When Jean Dawson took the stage, he asked the crowd if they were ready, warning that "once it starts, it doesn't stop." I had talked to a few of the guys around me in between sets and affirmed that we had each others' backs. It made me feel safer to know the people around me if only for a moment.

After the show, sweaty and blissfully energized, I met Greg Aram and Zach Michel from Junior Varsity. Aram said, "you were amazing out there, like, you're insane." I was starstruck as I told them that I had been sixteen when I first heard their music. My participation in the pit gained me recognition by one of my favorite bands. Although I had

been present at so many of their other shows, even standing at the barricade six months prior, I had never been seen as a genuine or hardcore fan in this way. It felt gratifying, but I wondered about all the time I had spent being a quieter but no less passionate concertgoer. Each time I saw them live felt like being a freer version of myself. I have felt that I always want to be who I am at Junior Varsity shows, and that feeling came with or without the recognition I received.

Four months later, at a Dune Rats show at Bottom of the Hill, my friends and I were among the youngest in the crowd. The small club had no barricade against the stage. Dune Rats have attracted roaring festival crowds in Australia for almost a decade, but on a Sunday night in San Francisco, the crowd stands at a distance from the stage, many people milling around drinking beer or standing at tables.

After the openers played, a man standing in front of my friends and I shook our hands to introduce himself. He asked why we had not moshed. I told him I was saving my energy for Dune Rats, and he said he would hold me to it. Later, as Dune Rats took the stage, I would run into him in the pit and he would check in with me. (I have grown accustomed to a flash of a double thumbs-up to signal that I am doing quite fine, thank you very much.)

"I can tell you have rage inside of you, Liv," he said to me in between songs. "You have to let it out." I felt goaded by him, egged on by a random man to go harder. As much as I would like my experience of a concert to be entirely self-guided or fulfilling on its own merit, I felt that I had someone to prove myself to—and, admittedly, having this mission outside of the music added fuel to my fire. It was a thought I felt guilty about having, though. I had been listening to Dune Rats since the beginning of high school, yet he told me that he had never heard the band's songs before tonight. I imagined that his confidence in the pit painted him as a more enthusiastic, authentic fan.

While I initially reprimanded myself for privileging a hypothetical observer's judgments of my authenticity over my own experience, I have come to understand that the comparisons I made were partially a product of the self-consciousness I felt in mosh pits. Although moshing tends to get more attention than other forms of participation at shows, at many shows the vast majority of concert attendees exist outside of the pit. Finally becoming comfortable entering mosh pits gave me the freedom within myself to choose whether or not I really wanted to be in them.

We need to be more intentional about mosh pits. The first step towards intentionality is recognition: recognition of the impact of identity on participation in a mosh pit; recognition of fans who choose not to participate; and recognition of the mosh pit we want to strive towards. Mutual recognition of these concepts means we can more evenly distribute the weight of participation for some people. Then, the decisions fans make can be based on their own feelings about engaging with others, with live music, and with themselves, within the limitless possibility of the mosh pit.



# HAVE YOU SEEN GARY?

Written by Stanley Quiros  
Designed by Heather Highland

It's a different thing, to lose a peer. Over these past couple years I have lost aunts, grandparents, older neighbors. These are not lesser deaths, but they are in some ways expected. This year, upon coming home for winter break, I received a text message from a friend I met in high school marching band. He asked if I had been in contact with another of our former band mates; I replied that I had not had the chance. "He was supposed to tell you about Gary."

It's also difficult to grapple with your own mortality. At 21, I have now heard of old school friends that are married and/or have children, but this was a new deal. Not just someone I knew, but someone who I had gone to school with, who was *supposed* to be around when I came home. Who I had made laugh waiting on that grassy hill in the parking lot, waiting to get picked up after band practice. I have often used music to deal with the process of grieving. While David Bowie's *Blackstar* (2016) reminds me of all those I've lost, especially in "I Can't Give Everything Away," I found myself tearing up to music not nearly as direct in courting death.

On my way to class one day I was listening to one of my favorite bands, Dry Cleaning. I had waited to hear their newest record, *Stumpwork* (2022), and was listening through when one of the album's singles, "Gary Ashby," came on. Gary. In this song—track three on the record—a family's pet tortoise escapes during lockdown at the dawn of the COVID-19 pandemic. I could not help feeling a pang of guilt, possibly unjustified, but maybe not. Dry Cleaning has been praised for creating music representative of the detached, emotional numbness that our generation has been taught to wear as a mask, protecting us from climate change, democratic backsliding, and other existential crises. I had taken refuge in their music, finding a band that I could feel community with in the face of political and environmental issues that are important to me. Humor can soften the insanity of a cruel world, and it helps to have a crowd to laugh in that world's face. As soon as Florence Shaw questioned,

"Have you seen Gary?"

I felt that I had abandoned someone who could have used my company.

"It was a bad surprise."

It was. I did not believe my friend who had relayed the news, but the invitation to the service confirmed. I could not imagine how friends closer to him would feel. His parents.

"Are you stuck on your back... without me?"

I had not talked or communicated with Gary since graduating high school. It is hard to understand what someone can be going through when you cannot be there. Since being in college I have missed life at home. Like anyone leaving home, there are times when I have felt how soldiers pulled into long wars must feel. Time does not stay still. Some things definitely change, and others definitely stay the same. I received the news of my paternal grandmother's passing on my way to a statistics lecture in early spring of 2020, and I will never forget getting my father's text message under the passageway of the building whose directory still proudly states the numbers of rooms to a building called Barrows, wherever that is. Gary was never my closest friend, but I could not help feeling like I had let him down. Unlike Gary the titular tortoise, the fear of my friend being stuck on his back was a reality. How long can someone struggle without anyone coming to turn them back over?

I could not be at the service. There was, however, a resurgence in activity in all of the old high school group chats, and much consoling. Once again I was comforted by Dry Cleaning, because I was at a loss for words. I had too much feeling, and no way of expressing my feelings to anyone in a way that was mine, that was not a mumble or something a me in a more confident mode would find meager, weak, and uncreative.

A suicide anthem is an inherently controversial affair. Paul Westerburg likely had little experience in the perspective he was penning when he wrote "The Ledge" for the Replacements, but it captures a feeling of detachment and hyper awareness, freedom and attention. I had never looked at the printed lyrics, and I had danced late at night to the twinkling twilight guitars.

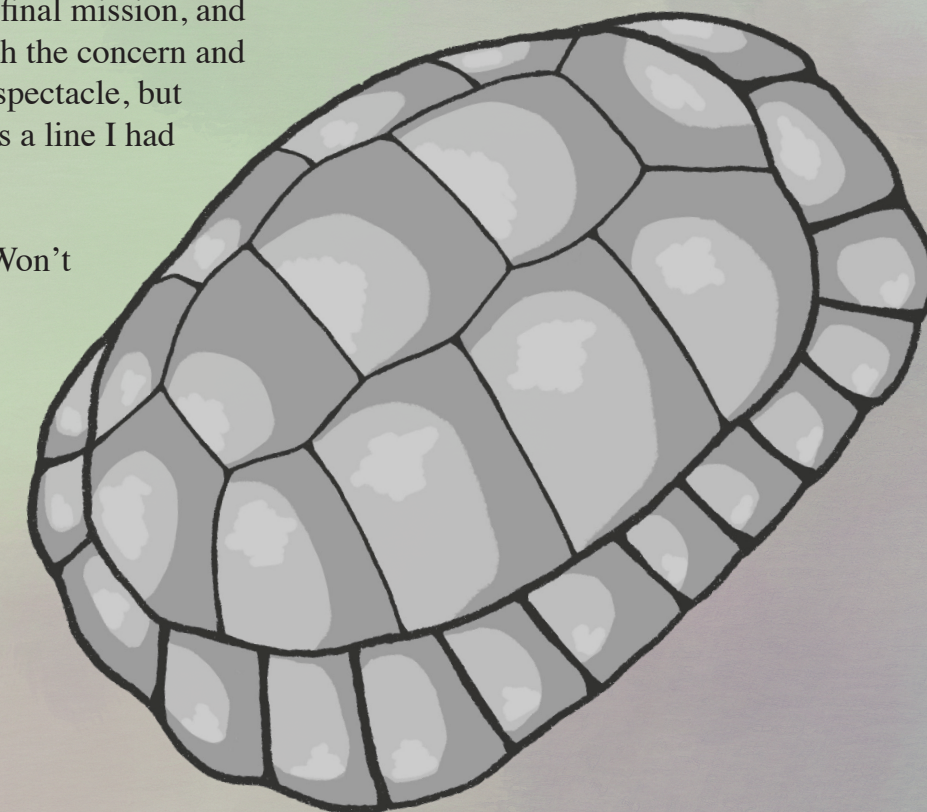
"Watch me fly and die, watch me fall."

Obvious. The freedom of having one's final mission, and doing it on one's own terms, paired with the concern and attention of even strangers. This is the spectacle, but what stood out to me in my reading was a line I had never heard accurately:

"All the love sent up high to pledge / Won't reach the ledge."

I know that I cannot realistically blame myself.

But I could not help feeling that something was very wrong.







## The Grounding Songs



Written by Natalia Gormani | Designed by Martha Tibballs

When I first moved to Berkeley, I endured immense changes and underwent drastic personal growth. At the time, it felt all-encompassing: there was no escaping the sly and furtive manner in which time creeps up on you and it was debilitating. But, I had Joni Mitchell. My feelings of loneliness were somewhat assuaged by Mitchell's voice referencing People's Park in "Court and Spark." It made me think: she was once here. This woman whom I have admired all my life also noticed the beauty, glory, and complete disorder of this city. It made everything feel less lonely. I am just one of the thousands who have experienced what Berkeley and its community have to offer and finally, with that revelation, my mind could settle.

Since then, there have been small but significant moments during my life here that are largely associated with music. During my first year, while getting ready to go out one night, I played a random mix of songs—an obscure playlist with songs I had never heard of before, curated by someone I had never met before—and stumbled upon the track "Berkeley" by Lil B. It found me while I was alone, adorning my face with mascara and my cheeks with blush, ready to lose myself on a night out in the city I have since grown accustomed to. The song itself is fine; I didn't fall in love with the words, the melody, or the flow, but I admired the moment of synchronicity. There's a line in the first verse of the song: "I look to the left and look to the right / Walking Telegraph on Friday night." It is not necessarily a poetic line and it's fairly straightforward, but as I took the curlers out of

my hair I felt a sense of pride and relatability that was indescribable. I was about to do that same exact thing: walk Telegraph on a Friday night. It's not special, nor is it particularly exciting, but the song found me at the right time which made me feel like I was in the right place. I was growing



and unfolding my personhood at the correct geographical point on a map, at the right school, in the right city.

When I first got admitted into UC Berkeley, I played "Novacane" by Frank Ocean, and the lyric "brain like Berkeley" stuck out to me for the first time. This, I know and understand, is not an isolated experience. I've been at parties here where the only intelligible words from a large crowd of people are those lyrics, sung with pride and drunken happiness that makes you feel connected to the strangers you attend the same institution as. This is just another example and experience that has tied me not only to Berkeley but to its people and students alike.

After these experiences, I scoured the internet to find more songs that could potentially satiate an intense need to feel connected to Berkeley. It was not necessarily the styles of music that brought me this feeling



of closeness to Berkeley, as almost every song I listened to was of a different genre or sonically diverse from the next, but similar emotions derived from relating to specific songs. I wanted desperately to connect to Berkeley musically through artists I had long admired. When I found out that Liz Harris, also known as Grouper, attended UC Berkeley and graduated in 2002 with a B.A. in Art Practice, I once again had an overextended feeling of connection to the music I have grown to love and the artists who have helped evolve facets of my personality. I listen to Grouper when I'm going through the wringer of life and there is no end in sight. "Heavy Water/I'd Rather Be Sleeping" tucks me into bed, cradles my head, and moves pieces of hair out of my face so I can rest comfortably. It is a song that sucks me into my darkest and lightest memories simultaneously. And I'm reminded that although the connection between Liz Harris and I is very, very slim, it's still comforting. It reminds me that I'm here too and maybe I can also make the same art that lulls you comfortably to sleep, not out of boredom but pure comfort and connection.

As I combed through articles about Berkeley and its musical history, I stumbled upon The Berkeley Folk Music Festival which was held annually from 1958 to 1970 on campus. Thanks to Dr. Michael J. Kramer, an exhibit curator and assistant professor in the Department of History at SUNY Brockport, a digital repository of images dating from the fifties through the seventies is available to view which details the events of the

Berkeley Folk Music Festival. Image to image, something unraveled within me, and once more, this connection that I have devoted so much time to, was secured and affixed inside of my brain. On a rainy day in Berkeley, I play Bob Dylan or Joan Baez, two musicians who exhibited their talents at the Berkeley Folk Music Festival and escape into my own sadness or romanticism that at times can be too much to bear (for goodness sake, I am a Libra moon!). I looked at countless images of my heroes playing at the Hearst Greek Theatre as if it was the most random, odd, and perfect historical occurrence in the world when in reality, Berkeley's standing as an institution was destined to attract these artists and musicians to the stage of the Greek.

I've been to a few concerts, comedy shows, and performances at the Greek. I can distinctly remember the feeling of slipping down the steep patch of grass at the top of the amphitheater, too far away from the stage to make out the faces of those on stage. I can also remember my ears ringing and my limbs hurting from standing so close to the stage, with nowhere to sit. However, the joy and excitement assuaged all of my noticeable discomforts. I stumbled upon an image of the Greek Theatre packed with students, young people, and enjoyers of music at the 1963 Jubilee Concert. I placed myself into the shoes of these individuals, traveling back in time, and tried to remember all of the senses that seemed to spike up when at the Greek. At the center of it the image, on the big, wide stage of the amphitheater, is an unknown performer,



with just a guitar and a microphone. The photo is taken from the top of the theater, near the grassy area, and attendees are sitting, standing, and leaning on any part of the theater's infrastructure they can find a semblance of comfort in. Although I think there are great advantages in documenting special moments, such as a concert by one of your favorite musicians, with your phone camera, I must acknowledge the feeling of freedom evoked within me when staring at the image of these people in 1963 wherein they are all simultaneously connected to what is happening on stage in front of them and the people next to them, without the distraction of a smartphone. In the photo, there are no outstretched arms trying to find the perfect angle, blocking the viewer behind them. Instead, there are all of these faces, looking straight toward the performer, listening intently.

When considering my own experiences trying to find connections to Berkeley during a period of vast personal expansion, loneliness, and bewilderment, I called upon some of my dear friends who have impacted me during my time at UC Berkeley and inquired about how they might have been affected musically, one way or another, by this city and institution. UC Berkeley student Angelica Smith, studying Anthropology and Slavic Literature, recounted a day to me when she visited Rasputin Music on Telegraph, a record store that opened in the early seventies, and found a specialty pressing of Madonna's "Lucky Star" on vinyl. After finding this record, Angelica was inspired to pay homage to one of her favorite singers by using the name DJ name Lucky Star on air for UC Berkeley radio station KALX. For Angelica, KALX has been a central force in her development at Berkeley; it is how she stays connected to

the community at large and how she has met countless people who have had a positive impact on her life. It is no coincidence that music and Berkeley, together, have the ability to create a feeling of belonging within this large institution.

When I think of the bigger picture, it is clear and perhaps obvious that Berkeley has had such an important role in shaping the musical minds of both the past and today. But the ways that certain songs have found me and my peers, often have an intense meaning behind them. The songs, albums, old demos, and obscure playlists we as students have played to feel less lonely and more connected to this place are crucial not just to survive this period of life, but also to make us feel more connected to one another through music. Music is a powerful, beautiful, important, and unbreakable thing that binds our memories together, compiling a collage of moments to look back on and reminisce about.

Sometimes, when I am particularly fueled by love or adoration for a specific song, I imagine driving my future children to school and playing a song from during this period of my burgeoning adulthood. I am transported back to walking through Berkeley on a rainy day. I am grateful for the past, present, and future all at once.

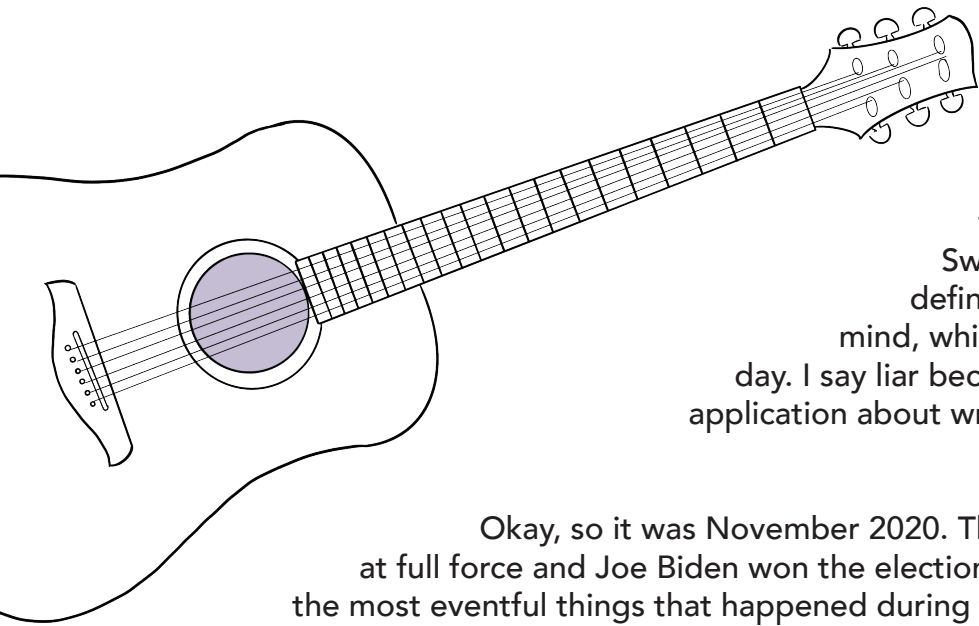


# The Time I "Lied" on My College Application

## About Being a Songwriter

Written by Adrien Ceja &

Designed by Simone Pereira

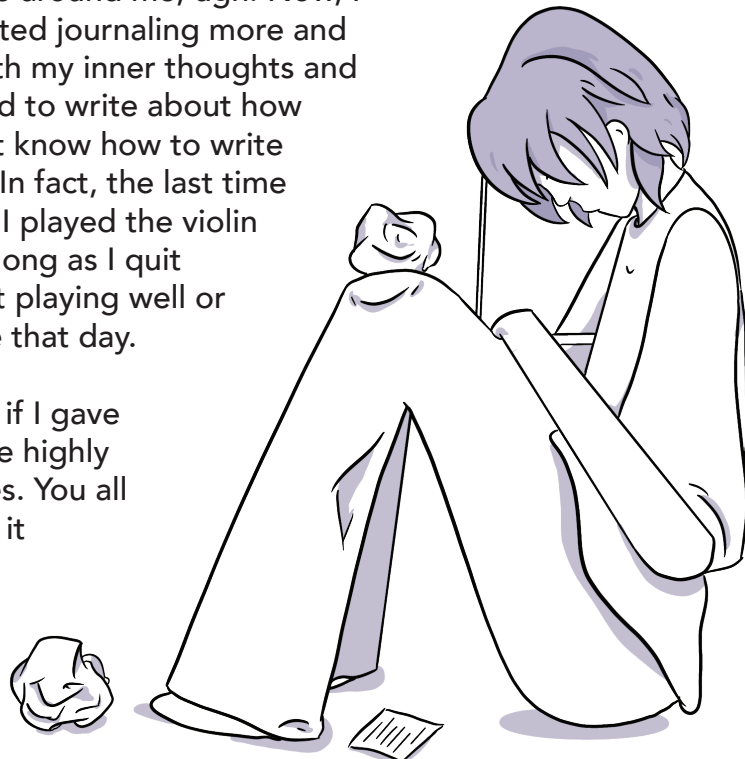


17 year-old me was many things: eldest sibling by chance, Taylor Swift enthusiast by choice, a teenager by definition, and liar by the means of my own mind, which I still do not fully understand to this day. I say liar because technically I did lie on my college application about writing/making music, but not really, but also kind of.

Okay, so it was November 2020. The pandemic was plaguing the world at full force and Joe Biden won the election or whatever, but those were not the most eventful things that happened during that time period. I was a senior in high school applying for colleges and that meant tedious applications. UC applications were due at the end of the month, and I had not started writing the personal insight questions (PIQS) yet. So I took a look at the list of questions and chose the four that I was going to answer. One of the questions was: "What is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?" In my head that was an easy question to answer so I started to brainstorm on what talent I should write about. I have many so narrowing it down was a harrowing task. And then I settled on one: writing.

Okay, so I was going to write one of my PIQs on how I am good at writing. It was literally so meta like I really do set the standard for everyone around me, ugh. Now, I could have written about how over quarantine I started journaling more and how that resulted in me being more comfortable with my inner thoughts and feelings. Well, that did not happen. Instead I decided to write about how one of my greatest talents was songwriting. I do not know how to write a song and have never written one in my entire life. In fact, the last time I picked up an instrument was in fourth grade when I played the violin for the school orchestra. However, that did not last long as I quit because my orchestra instructor yelled at me for not playing well or something. I have prayed on her downfall ever since that day.

Now, I think it would be beneficial to all of us if I gave you direct quotes from my 350-word response to the highly exaggerated PIQ that I submitted to several colleges. You all are getting a behind-the-scenes look so do not take it



for granted. Now starting with the first sentence: "Writing songs is an ability I never knew I possessed, until my freshman year." I am literally so iconic for "lying" without hesitation. I acted like I was Olivia Rodrigo when I was 14 or something, knowing damn well the only song related activity I was doing at that age was listening to *reputation* (2017) by Taylor Swift. Also the way I stated, "until my freshman year," like I was not in middle school pondering the existence of future artistic skills. My voice was cracking while wearing a minions t-shirt.

"The first I wrote was based on the play *Macbeth*, and though subconsciously I think this was an ode to the person who revealed to me potential songwriting skills, it went deeper." That sentence is so bad and I do not know what I mean by that. That sentence is on its own and the paragraph right after it has no connection to it whatsoever. I think I had to edit out the rest of the paragraph for the word limit, but I do not think the lack of that sentence would have meant college rejection. The most puzzling part of this sentence is "an ode to the person who revealed to me potential songwriting skills" because I do not know who this "person" is. Is it my English teacher? My Drama teacher? A guy I had a crush on? It could be any of them and I have no idea which one. I would also like to clarify that this sentence is true, other than the 'song' aspect which we have clarified already, but 17-year old me really went off with this one-sentence anecdote to be honest.

I then ramble about combatting masculinity or something (boring!). The following sentences that I am going to state are actually insane like why did I think this was good. You have been warned and will not be the same after reading these clusters of words. "It is as if my entire body was unanimously voting to confirm the Supreme Court nominee that was showing my emotions. And it worked. The vote was certified, And one January night I let it all out through two materials. Paper and pencil. I wrote as if the stroke of midnight would be my final death cry."

The first sentence of that chunk? "Voting to confirm the Supreme Court nominee that was showing my emotions" is really a sentence I came up with, typed on my chromebook, and submitted on the UC application website. I think I wrote that to connect this PIQ with my other PIQ about loving politics. The last words being "my final death cry" is so melodramatic like Lorde was scared and almost jobless because of that sentence (she told me herself.)

Another straight up lie was me saying "I would not have discovered the chance to utilize my storytelling in other ways besides songwriting." I do not need to elaborate because that sentence I think speaks for itself. However, the last paragraph I could honestly write forever about. "Currently, I am in the process of recording my first song. Afterwards, I hope to begin the process of putting it on various music platforms. I have abused my storytelling skills through tradition, but will now value it through opportunity."

There is so much to process there, but I am going to first discuss the fact that I was "in the process of recording my first song". Okay the reason why I wrote this is also the main reason why I say I write songs when I technically do not. Over quarantine I picked up the hobby of writing poems, but in the structure of songs. I would write them with verses, a pre-chorus, bridge, etc. So

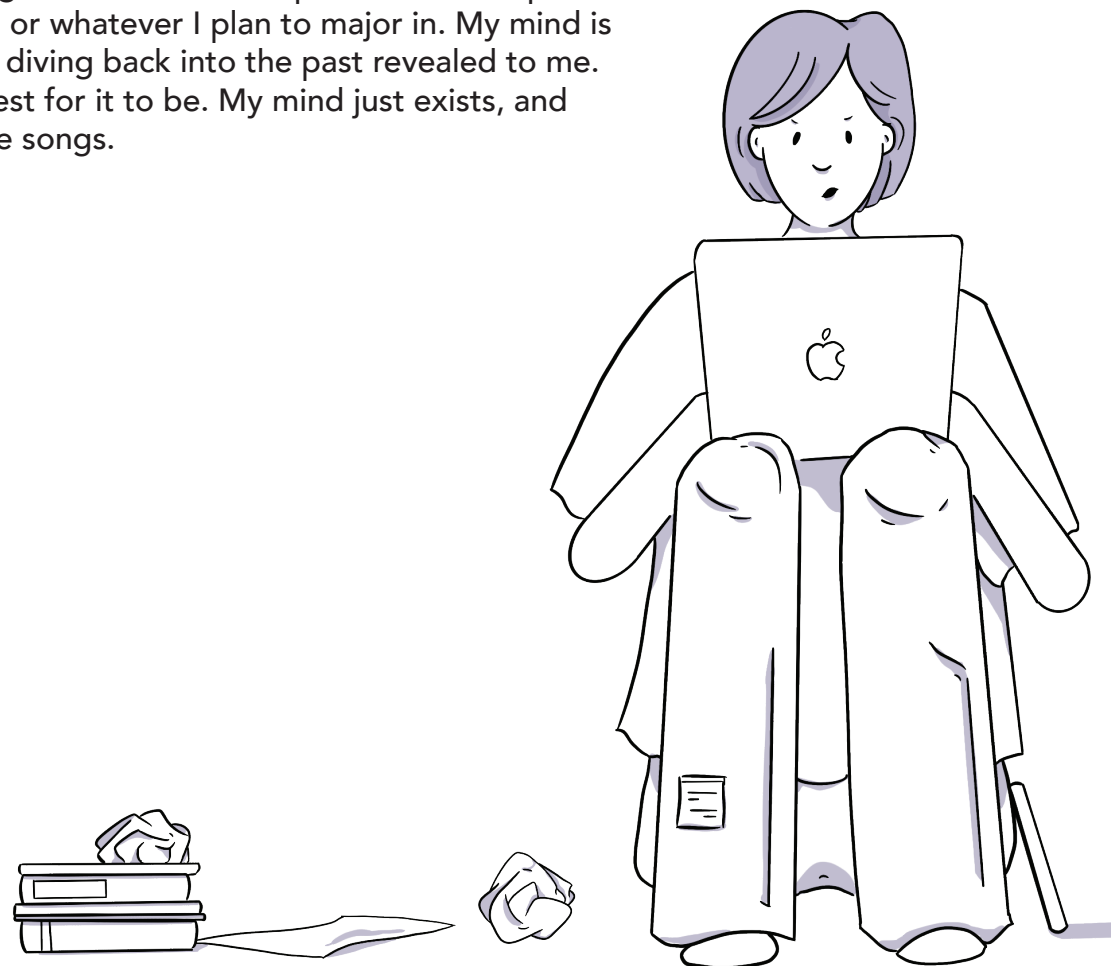


when I say I write songs, that is what I mean. I write lyrics, which is a part of a song. Did I come up with a melody to sing along those lyrics to? Sometimes. Was there instrumentation set to those lyrics? Obviously no, if you remember the violin incident of 2012 that I told you about. Also I can't sing well, which adds a lot of depth to this whole thing I think.

I want to state something for the protection of my future self, just in case my haters decide to leak this to the press (the job market). I had every intent of learning how to write a song and "putting it on various music platforms." I know I lie a lot, as demonstrated by this entire article so far, but that part was true. I did want to learn how to write songs because I think writing and making music is genuinely one of the coolest skills one could have. Did I end up acquiring that skill? No. You should have assumed that before reading the question if you didn't.

Now, why did I end up going through with this exaggerated truth? Simply, I wanted to get into the best college possible. There was, and honestly still is, a lot of pressure to be the best I can possibly be. American academic culture, my parents, and myself all contributed to this feeling of aiming for something that cannot be seen. I did not think I was going to stand out that much on my other PIQs. I wrote about being the eldest of six siblings, my interest in politics, and being queer. I now realize that all of those aspects of myself are interesting on their own, but my 17 year-old mind did not comprehend that. I did not feel that I was a strong applicant compared to the other applications I had seen online. So, to counter that feeling of not being enough, I took the advice given to me by my teachers and the internet, and exaggerated. Whether that exaggeration was too much is up for interpretation.

I think the funniest part of this whole situation is that my "lying" worked. I got into most of the UCs I applied to with that PIQ (fuck you Irvine and UCLA). I attend the university (Berkeley) that I sent that response to. It is so wild looking back at that response because I just realized that I am so good at exaggerating the truth. I should pursue a career path in this instead of law or english or whatever I plan to major in. My mind is just top tier and that is what diving back into the past revealed to me. I don't even need to be honest for it to be. My mind just exists, and lies about being able to write songs.



# The EXCELLENCE of JACKIE SHANE

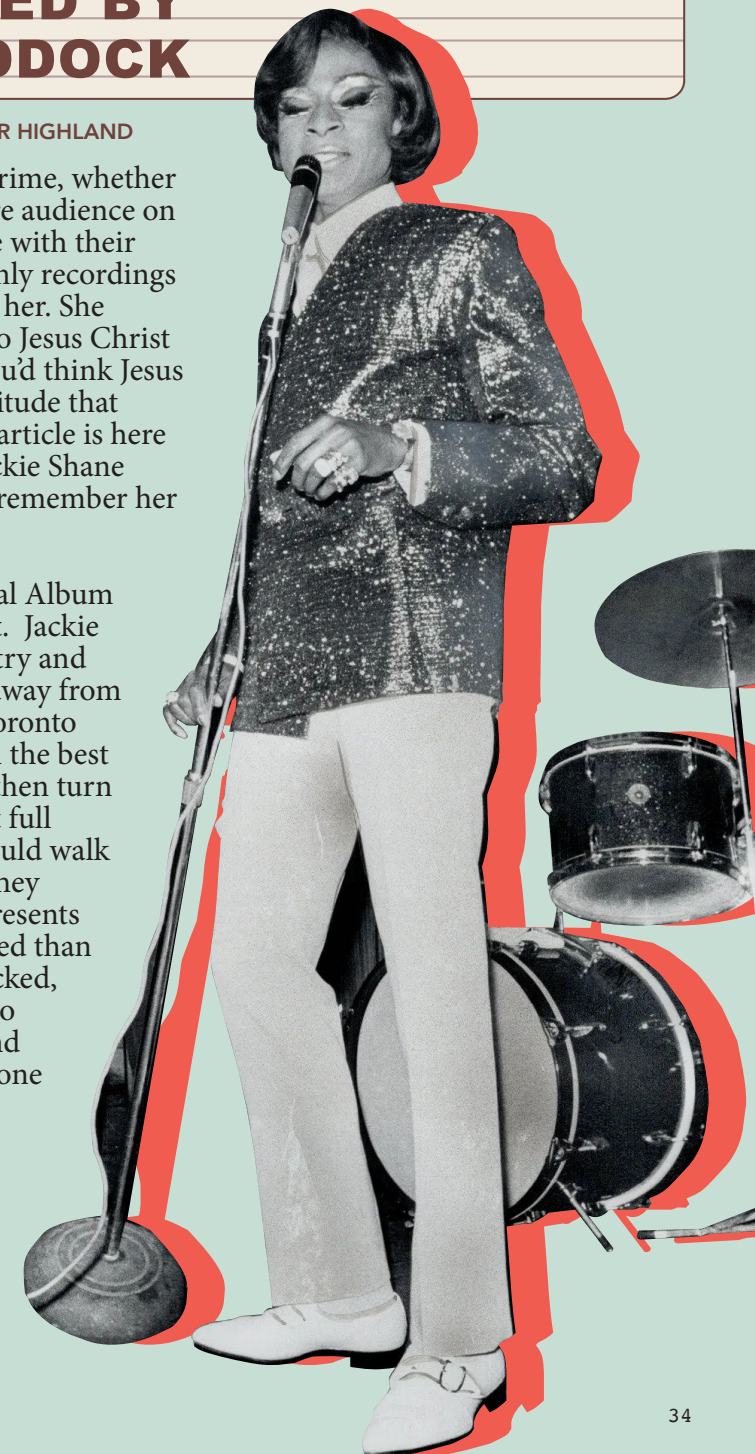
PRESENTED BY  
COLE HADDOCK

DESIGNED BY HEATHER HIGHLAND

When Jackie Shane sang, everybody listened. In her prime, whether in LA, Toronto, or Nashville, Jackie Shane could hold an entire audience on the tip of her finger and make them dance, cry, laugh, or stare with their mouth falling open. In her live album recording, one of the only recordings that exists of her, Shane pauses, and lets the bass walk behind her. She advises the crowd to listen closely, cause, "This is the closest to Jesus Christ some of you will ever get. You should travel with me, baby, you'd think Jesus Christ had come down and walked this Earth again, the multitude that follows me is so great." That was in 1967—it is 2023, and this article is here to remind us that before Beyonce performed at Coachella, Jackie Shane sang at the Sapphire Tavern in Toronto. We would do best to remember her words.

Jackie Shane's album was nominated for Best Historical Album at the GRAMMYs in 2019, but that is not why she is excellent. Jackie Shane was Black, Trans, and still performed all over the country and abroad, but that is not why she is excellent. Jackie Shane ran away from home when she was a teenager, and made the whole city of Toronto love her by the time she left. Jackie Shane could sit down with the best musicians in Nashville, play their instruments for them, and then turn around and sing. Jackie Shane was never seen in anything but full glamor—face done, hair done, and outfit magnificent. She would walk out on stage, and everyone would take a collective breath as they took her in. There's a moment when a marginalized person presents themselves at something like a concert, ten times more talented than anyone else in the room, and they could still be punched, clocked, or harassed. Shane walked into all of those moments taking no shit, but giving none either. She was graceful, and talented, and she moved people. She was a singer, a performer, and a good one too. This is why Jackie Shane is excellent.

In 2017, after avoiding the press for many years, Shane was tracked down, and reluctantly gave a few interviews after her album was re-released. These are some of the only words we have of hers. A lot of people write about Jackie Shane, but not that many people have really listened to what she said. So here's her words, unedited, and for you to remember.





# QUOTES

For more info read my article at [berkeleyb-side.com/the-excellence-of-jackie-shane](http://berkeleyb-side.com/the-excellence-of-jackie-shane)

“This is how I have lived for as long as I can remember. I live with my convictions. I don’t cry and moan and kick and complain. I do what I feel I should do. Not what someone says I should do, but what Jackie knows is best for Jackie. And if you don’t know what is best for you, find out. Find out by pulling away from the crowd.”



“I don’t have any restrictions on me. I’ve never had a problem there. I am what I am. I don’t have to add or subtract anything. It’s just, “Yes ma’am, no ma’am.” You would know if you met me. I’m not like anyone else. It’s always, “Yes ma’am, no ma’am.” I can wear anything I want. It’s very natural because that’s the way I was born.”

“Sure! I would say it—give me diamonds, give me furs, give me beautiful things—but don’t give me problems. You may think it’s playful, but I’m not playing. Get up off of it. I don’t believe in Christmas, but I believe in gifts every day. A friend of mine said, “Girl, at one time, I didn’t even think you were human.” Guys respect women who are forceful. This is how it is.

I believe things because I come from a group who have gifts—African people. Look at Egypt. How did they do it? How do you lift those stones without machines? And put them exactly—you couldn’t put a straw between them—how do you do that? There are things that you’ve never seen, and probably won’t, because you weren’t born into it. Let me explain it this way. Most people are hooked, line and sinker, on the physical. You see, being an African in this country, you’ve got to do it yourself. If you’re waiting for God, you’re going to be waiting a long time. You can worship and carry on, but anything you do, you’re going to have to do it yourself.

Of course! But it’s the evil creatures that crawl around in the South. They’re ridiculous, they’re stupid. I remember, this group came from this recording company, and they wanted to record me. And we were set up at the recording studio, and they had the audacity to want me to sing on this European boy’s record, and give him the credit, and I got up and left.”

“Most people are planted in someone else’s soil, which means they’re a carbon copy,” she said. “I say to them: ‘Uproot yourself. Get into your own soil. You may be surprised who you really are.’”

“These pictures are simply pictures. They’re poses. People forget. I’m doing my thing. This is me, I present myself, and I go about my business. That’s all. There’s nothing I was trying to prove. Like everyone else, I’m just going about my life, that’s all. Now, what you want to put onto it, and add to it, that’s your thing”

“Baby, do what you want, just know what you’re doing. As long as you don’t force your will and your way on anyone else, live your life because ain’t nobody sanctified and holy.”



“[Did you have any trans role models?] I didn’t have any! I was always teaching someone else. I mean, I didn’t have anyone besides my mother to take me by the hand and say, ‘I want you to look at this.’ My grandmama and my mother, and my grandfather were the people that made me the person I am today. They didn’t make it, you know, ‘It’s going to be easy.’ They simply said, ‘You’re gonna have to know to make your way through this room of people. Which means, your brain is what you must depend on.’”

“I’ve had people tell me that when I sing, when you look at me, I can’t breathe. I tell them to go outside, because you haven’t learned to let it go, to let it take you over. I could explain to them: it’s supposed to touch you.”

“I was accepted because I was who I am. I’ve never been anyone but Ms. Shane. I’ve been Jackie all of my life. I’m a person. I’m here, just like everyone else.”

“You don’t want people in your business—not even your sister or your brother or anyone. Your business should always be yours, and you should handle it properly. I don’t allow people to tell me what to do. You can suggest, but don’t ever try to tell me what to do. I don’t care who you are.”

“I knew, I was wonderful, and had been blessed. I had never allowed anyone to make me feel insane other than that. I am a blessing.”

“Without hope, children go astray. And we don’t want that. I would call on the adults that are intelligent in life to reach out to children, to let them know that they’re not alone, and they’re not doing anything wrong. They’re simply obeying their nature.”

“What is the cause today? What can be. If the people want it. As Christ said, I didn’t come here to solve your problems, you must do that. If you want things to change, you must change them.”





# From Gay Head to Goldenrod: The First Decade of the Women's Music Movement In Song

Written by Gianna Caudillo  
Designed by Emily Conway

Commercial rock and roll has always been a boys' club. From the success of songs that glamorized abuse and the gross fetishization of women, such as the Rolling Stones' "Brown Sugar" or the Beatles' "Run For Your Life," to the male-dominated headlining bands of the 1960s and 70s, little room was left within the music industry for women to make a name for themselves, and many female artists were frustrated with the sexism they experienced. Stemming from this critique of sexism in rock and roll, as well as carrying on the civil rights movement tradition of using music as a driving social force, the Women's Music Movement began in the early 1970s with the goal to create music by women, about women, for women. With female-run independent labels such as Olivia and Redwood Records formed to put out women's music, and mail-order catalogues such as *Ladyslipper* and *Goldenrod* created to reach a broader audience, the movement only grew as the years progressed into the 1980s, making boundless steps into accessibility, diversity and cultural sensitivity. What follows is an introduction to the first decade of the Women's Music Movement, defined through the musical output of powerhouse artists and activists and the significant events that took place around these releases.

## 1972

### ***Mountain Moving Day (LP) by the Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band & the New Haven Women's Liberation Rock Band (Rounder Records)***

A hard-grooving record with even harder-hitting lyrical content that explores avenues of rock, funk and jazz through rollicking keyboard licks, wandering bass lines and melodic guitar solos. The songs themselves make no secret of their confrontational nature; songs such as "Secretary," "Abortion Song," and "Sister Witch" place women's issues such as sexual harassment, reproductive rights, and forgotten sisterhood front and center, while the song "Papa" tells men not to "lay that shit on" outright. The goal with this album was to expand public consciousness regarding misogyny in rock, and as a result, can be considered one of the very first feminist rock albums, marking the beginning of the Women's Music Movement. Beyond that, it's a genuinely fantastic, funky rock-fusion album that more than holds its own unique voice and sound amongst the most popular rock albums of 1972.

### **"Angry Atthis" (45) by Maxine Feldman (Harrison & Tyler Productions)**

Originally written in 1969, but first recorded and released in 1972, "Angry Atthis," a play on words that references one of Sappho's girlfriends, is credited as the first performance of an openly lesbian song. Dueling acoustic guitars back Feldman's warm, rich alto as she opens with the lines, "I hate not being able / To hold my lover's hand / 'Cept under some dimly lit table / Afraid of being who I am," setting the solemn tone for the rest of the song. Feldman's voice rapidly roughens as her lyrics grow increasingly furious at how the world forces lesbians to hide their relationships, branding them as dangers to society, and she closes by defiantly proclaiming that she is "No longer afraid of being / A lesbian." "Angry Atthis" follows in the bare-bones folk tradition of 1960s protest songs, its release making way for lesbian music to be made synonymous with women's music, and in the years following, a combination of lesbian-feminist folk-rock would come to emerge as the standout genre of the movement.

### **The Formation of Redwood Records**

Singer-songwriter and activist Holly Near founded the independent label Redwood Records with the goal of producing politically-conscious music from activist-artists like herself. Not only was she one of the first women to form an independent label, she would go on to produce a large majority of her solo albums on the label. Unlike Olivia, formed the year afterwards, Redwood was not formed with the sole

purpose of producing women's music, but in the years to follow, Near would contribute heavily to the output of women's music, as well as headline shows and festivals, gaining acclaim for her protest music and peace ballads. She would also go on to have a varied career, collaborating on albums with artists such as Cris Williamson, and maintaining a steady stream of solo releases into the present day.

## 1973

### ***Lavender Jane Loves Women (LP) by Alix Dobkin (Women's Wax Works)***

*Lavender Jane Loves Women* is a groundbreaking album for many reasons. In sound, it is wide-open, vulnerable folk, quavering flutes and percussive acoustic guitar backing Dobkin's earnest mezzo-soprano. In lyricism, it is a homespun, heartfelt letter to lesbian love that emphasizes the importance of independence, female empowerment, and pride in one's lesbian identity. *Lavender Jane* is considered to be the first album brought into fruition by a team of entirely female musicians, sound engineers, and vinyl manufacturers, as well as the first overtly lesbian album to be released. The record closes with the song "View from Gay Head" that proudly proclaims "It is a pleasure to be a lesbian" and "Any woman can be a lesbian," two simple, yet affirming statements that make clear the music on the album has been made by gay women for gay women, a route many of its successors would soon follow. However, at the time it was released, it was the only album that provided a multi-faceted glance at what it was to be a lesbian; domesticity, hope, puppy love, partnership, sisterhood, the importance of finding and standing up for oneself, and of ultimate pride in one's lesbian identity.

### **The Birth of Olivia Records**

In the very same year, a group of young radical lesbians known as the Furies gathered in Washington, D.C. with the hopes of creating something by women, for women, and solely supported by women's money. Two of these women, Meg Christian and Ginny Berson, interviewed singer-songwriter Cris Williamson on WGTB Georgetown Radio on the show *Sophie's Parlor* (March 6, 1973), where Williamson first pitched the idea of starting a women's record company. Just days later, five women, (Ginny Berson, Meg Christian, Judy Dlugacz, Kate Winter and Jennifer Woodul), formed the original Olivia collective, named after a 1940s pulp novelette centering on young lesbian love.

### **Sweet Honey In The Rock**

Founded by singer-songwriter and activist Bernice Johnson Reagon, the original composition of *Sweet Honey In The Rock* was as a four-part, all-female acapella group that utilized collective singing as a form of protest and expression of their history as Black women. They would go on to produce an album, *B'lieve I'll Run On.... See What The End's Gonna Be*, on Holly Near's Redwood Records in 1978.

## 1974

### ***Lady" / "If It Weren't for the Music" (45) by Meg Christian & Cris Williamson (Olivia Records)***

The first experimental release from the newly-formed Olivia Records was a single, with Meg Christian's cover of Carole King's "Lady" on the a-side, paired with Cris Williamson's original "If It Weren't for the Music" on the b-side. The single initially flopped, but after Christian went on tour in order to publicize its release, almost \$11,000 was raised to fund the production of her first album, which would soon become the first album released by Olivia.

### ***I Know You Know (LP) by Meg Christian (Olivia Records)***

A charming blend of folk and soft rock, Christian's debut album is defined by her delicately complex classical guitar riffs and measured style of singing, often harmonizing with her own lead vocals. Christian doesn't shy away from poignant lyrics, the opening track "Hello, Hooray" as fitting for the opening number of a star-making musical as it is opening Olivia's first full-length release on a note of long-awaited excitement. Christian may be best-remembered for the track "Ode to a Gym Teacher" that speaks good-humoredly on an adolescent lesbian's painfully apparent crush on her gym teacher, but she excels equally at loving, rich ballads such as "Valentine's Song." True to Olivia's mission, *I Know You Know* was entirely



produced by women, with Cris Williamson contributing drums and songwriter Margie Adam contributing both synthesizer and piano.

### **The National Women's Music Festival**

The first National Women's Music Festival was held in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois and co-headlined by Margie Adam, Cris Williamson and Meg Christian. This, along with festivals at SSU and SDSU the year prior, allowed for a more diverse range of acts due to the extended timeframe of a music festival, and gave many genres and performers a larger audience.

### **1975**

#### ***The Changer and the Changed (LP) by Cris Williamson (Olivia Records)***

Olivia's second release, *The Changer and the Changed* has the distinction of being the best-selling women's music album on an independent label of all time, selling over a quarter of a million copies, and contributed to by some of the heaviest hitters in the women's music scene at the time, including Meg Christian, Margie Adam, Ginny Berson, Holly Near, and Woody Simmons. *Changer* is a significant departure in sound from Olivia's first release, turning from Christian's homespun folk to polished soft rock that utilizes a stacked cast of musical instruments and styles, ranging anywhere from country-western to warm piano ballads. The album's lyrical content heavily emphasized community and sisterhood, songs such as "Sister" containing the lyrics, "Lean on me / I am your sister / Believe on me / I am your friend," while the opening track, "Waterfall," became a popular sing-along song with the lyrics, "You've got to spill some over / Over all / Filling up and spilling over / It's an endless waterfall." Williamson, like Christian, also included songs that were unabashedly lesbian in content, "Sweet Woman" and "Shooting Star" both containing lyrics that reference open, wholehearted lesbian love, departing drastically from the dark bars Maxine Feldman described in "Angry Atthis."

### **Goldenrod Music**

Started in Michigan as a women's music distribution company by Terry Grant, Goldenrod allowed more open access to independent women's music for women who could not afford festivals, or were afraid to be seen in lesbian company at a show. Mail-order catalogues and nondescript packaging allowed women to discover music that spoke positively about women's issues and lesbian love without the risk of outing themselves.

### **1976**

#### ***Where Would I Be Without You (LP) by Pat Parker & Judy Grahn (Olivia Records)***

Olivia's first foray into poetry, *Where Would I Be Without You* is a powerful collection of lesbian-feminist poetry that benefits as much from delivery and production as it does the words themselves. Parker and Grahn take a decisively lo-fi approach to recording their spoken word; mumbled introductions, faint studio chatter and laughter are deliberately left in, creating the ambience of a small room poetry reading. *Where Would I Be Without You* was formed through the union of a Black and white poet, celebrating an interracial relationship and bringing distinctly different points of views to the lesbian experience that could be consolidated into a single album of politically-conscious material.

#### ***Margie Adam. Songwriter. (LP) by Margie Adam (Pleiades Records)***

Although she'd worked with the likes of Meg Christian, Cris Williamson and Holly Near for years beforehand, contributing piano and vocals to their albums, Margie Adam's debut record was released on her own label, Pleiades, in 1976. A showcase for the clean sounds of her piano, supplemented with dreamy synthesizers, rich harmonies and Adam's mellow mezzo-soprano, *Margie Adam* is full of sweet, thoughtful soft rock and piano-intensive ballads. Although "Best Friend (The Unicorn Song)" best exemplifies Adam's whimsical, gentle approach to songwriting, vampy standards like "Sleazy" are equally within her wheelhouse, allowing her to show off a full lower range, both in writing and voice.

### **Ladyslipper Music**

Formed in Durham, North Carolina by Laurie Fuchs, Ladyslipper was a lesbian-feminist women's music catalogue created to make women's music more attainable for women who were unable to attend festivals, selling mail-order records by women's artists such as Sweet Honey In The Rock and Holly Near. Ladyslipper quickly expanded into the primary source of attaining women's music in North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia, publishing live show listings in their catalogues, and providing a safe, simple way for women to get their hands on music centered around lesbian experiences, without risk of hostility.

### **Michigan Womyn's Music Festival**

The first Michfest was created, staffed, headlined by and attended exclusively by women. Clothing was optional, and over 9000 women were said to have attended, with the festival making extensive ventures into accessibility, such as camping accommodations for women with physical disabilities, wheelchair access for audiences, and sign language interpreters accompanying many of the acts, with a focus on cultural sensitivity (for example, a Black sign language interpreter would interpret a Black artist's set). Deemed the "city of women," Michfest may be the best remembered of women's music festivals, providing a safe space for women to sing about heavy issues like rape and sexual harassment in the company of hundreds of other women, with lesbians being able to find large-scale community and solidarity.

### **1977**

#### ***Lesbian Concentrate (LP) by Various Artists (Olivia Records)***

A direct response to Florida Citrus Commission ambassador Anita Bryant's homophobic "Save Our Children" campaign, *Lesbian Concentrate* was the largest collaboration of prominent women's music artists to date, featuring songs and performances by Linda Tillery, Meg Christian, Teresa Trull, Cris Williamson, Judy Grahn, Gwen Avery, Mary Watkins, Pat Parker, Holly Near, the Berkeley Women's Music Collective and more. A compilation of music and poetry with overtly lesbian themes, emphasizing love, collective action and lesbian-feminist activism, *Lesbian Concentrate* was marketed as a "Lesbianthology," a portion of the proceeds being donated to the Lesbian Mothers National Defense Fund, and the inside sleeve containing a list of lesbian/feminist community organizations for each state. This album was also the first on Olivia Records to speak out overtly against homophobia and Bryan's misinformation campaign, which claimed that gay people were "corrupting America's youth," in the liner notes.

### **Olivia Records relocates from Los Angeles, California to Oakland, California**

### **Sandy Stone, Sound Engineer**

Sandy Stone was the standout sound engineer within the Olivia Collective, recording and mixing all of Olivia's output from 1974-1978. She has left a lasting mark on women's music, assisting on Cris Williamson's *The Changer and the Changed* and engineering Pat Parker and Judy Grahn's *Where Would I Be Without You* most notably. In 1977, complications began to arise regarding her work, as some lesbian-feminists believed that Stone, a transgender woman, did not have a place in the women's music business, claiming she was taking opportunities away from cisgender women. In response, Olivia stood firmly behind Stone, commenting that to define Stone primarily by her transgenderism was stigmatizing, and that the women in their technical department were thrilled to be working with her. This stance prompted the threat of a boycott of Olivia products within the two years following, and, in 1979, Stone would end up leaving the Olivia collective amidst much transphobic debate within the public, although Olivia would continue to support her. She went on to embark on a career in academia and transgender studies.

### **1978**

### **Olivia Launches "The Varied Voices of Black Women" Tour**

Black artists and activists Mary Watkins, Gwen Avery, Linda Tillery and Pat Parker headlined "The



Varied Voices of Black Women” tour, featuring a blend of music and poetry. Tillery, Watkins and Parker had all released an album on Olivia in the years preceding the tour (*Linda Tillery* (1977), *Something Moving* (1978), and *Where Would I Be Without You* (1976), respectively), and all four women had contributed to 1977’s *Lesbian Concentrate*. A celebration of Black lesbian-feminist culture and identity, the tour served as a space for lesbians of color to express themselves, a way to broaden the white lesbian-feminist community’s parameters of lesbian culture, and a call to attention for the work Black lesbian-feminists were doing in the movement.

### 1983

#### **Unexpected (LP) by Teresa Trull & Barbara Higbie (Second Wave Records)**

The second album released on the Olivia subsidiary Second Wave, producer and singer-songwriter artist Teresa Trull collaborated with pianist and singer-songwriter Barbara Higbie to create a lushly orchestrated album that starts off in ballad form, switches to 80s electro-pop midway through, and ends with a foray into funk and country-western. Trull had worked with Olivia prior, collaborating on *Lesbian Concentrate* (1977) and releasing two solo albums, *The Ways A Woman Can Be* in 1977 and *Let it Be Known* in 1980. Higbie is primarily known for her instrumental output, going on to be nominated for a GRAMMY, but her collaboration with Trull remains a dynamic force within the timeline of the women’s music movement.

### 1984

#### **HOT WIRE: The Journal of Women’s Music and Culture**

Publisher Toni Armstrong Jr founded *HOT WIRE: The Journal of Women’s Music and Culture* in 1984; it ran for 30 issues, covering music, film, events, women’s history and more. Unique to the magazine, each issue came with a soundsheet stapled to the back that served as a sampler of current women’s music and could be played on a regular turntable, expanding upon the accessibility that catalogues such as *Goldenrod* and *Ladyslipper* had begun providing in the 1970s.

It is important to note that this timeline is not comprehensive; these selections have been chosen for their significance in advancing the historical timeline along, in order to give readers unfamiliar with the movement a basic understanding of the women involved and their musical output. Women’s music is a diverse, colorful, multi-faceted movement that continued well beyond the 1980s, and contains a multitude of talented artists and musical output beyond what was mentioned in this article. In fact, many of the artists mentioned still perform today, many of them at the Freight & Salvage here in Berkeley, California. Influential women’s music artists such as Holly Near, Teresa Trull and Barbara Higbie have all performed at the Freight within the last month (as of April 2023), and artists such as Cris Williamson continue to release albums into the 21st century. When we speak of the women’s music movement, we are not speaking of dead and gone history, we are speaking of dynamic, living people who continue to contribute to women’s causes through their art and who graciously welcome newcomers with open arms. It is important to understand the history of the movement and uplift the women who were so significant in expanding lesbian visibility through their activism, but as long as there are women making music for women, about women, the women’s music movement will never have a true ‘end date.’ In all senses, women’s music persists, and this author can only hope that her readers will go forth and explore the rich body of work the movement has to offer.

# Sick Beat, Who Made That? Disrupting White Male Genius in Electronic Music

By way of its craftsmanship, electronic music differs from other genres as it allows the composer to be the sole arbiter of the work. The genre of electronic music begs exploration and individual craftsmanship as there are fewer barriers to entry in this genre than in others. Electronic music deals with technology rather than classical components of music, as it does not require extensive music composition knowledge or expensive instruments and equipment. Electronic music is more accessible to those without backgrounds in music, making it easier to break into this genre. Despite its increased accessibility, electronic music’s history depicts a different picture. For a more equal and just world to emerge, marginalized groups must be given a voice and representation is key. Therefore, when discussing the history and foundations of electronic music, which did not originate in a white, Western bubble, it is essential to recognize the contributions of LGBTQ+ and women of color artists. Given the greater accessibility of the genre which stands in opposition to hegemonic systems of oppression, it is striking that the story continues to revolve around those who have long benefited from privilege.

Electronic music is defined as a genre that encapsulates a type of musical exploration begun by mostly Western classical composers following the Second World War. The production of such music continued mostly in academic institutions within the United States, along with state-funded and academic institutions in Europe. While that is the academic definition of electronic music, it largely ignores the exploration and creativity of artists that have contributed to the popularity of the genre today. This definition points to the institutionalization and elitism of music academia which serve as a way to justify the cultural hegemony and institutional capture that Western music enjoys.

The history of electronic music has largely been told from a Western perspective, highlighting the men that have contributed to its development, but in order to decolonize the music industry we must remove the emphasis on the Western ‘male genius’. “Sisters with Transistors” is a documentary that does a commendable job of telling the story of the women that contributed to the early development of electronic music and their battle with misogyny. It features Suzanne Ciano’s work with synths that embellished pinball machines in the 1970s and 80s, as well as Eliane Radigue’s work on microphone feedback and tape loops, which influenced her later experimental successors. The film also discusses Wendy Carlos (yet there is no mention of her status as a transgender artist),

WRITTEN BY JIYA KISHORE

DESIGN BY DAVID PEREZ NYQUIST



as she is credited with the introduction of synths into American pop music. While the documentary largely focuses on white musicians, it does discuss Pauline Oliveros—a queer Tejana credited with concepts of “sonic awareness” and “deep listening,” both of which add a meditative touch to her music and encourage listeners to connect more deeply with sound. Unfortunately, the documentary does little to highlight further women of color and LGBTQ+ artists that have made strides in the field of electronic music. Here are some of them:

Electronic music does not follow a linear evolution as the genre is very complex, yet ultimately it originated from the work of people of color and queer folk. In 1956, Michiko Toyama became the first international student to join the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center (CPEMC)—the first hub dedicated to studying and creating electronic music in North America. Her style blended Japanese poetry and experimental spoken word, creating an electronic sound emulating the Japanese mouth organ. However, given the Cold War context under which CPEMC was formed—as an attempt to spearhead US cultural imperialism—Toyama had to navigate racialized ideals of composition and institutional biases, battling a field that upheld Western and white ideas of artistry.

One of Colombia’s most influential avant-garde artists was Jaqueline Nova, with her crowning achievement *Creación de la Tierra*, released in 1972. *Creación de la Tierra* mediated the political intersections of place, history, and speech via the use of chants of the indigenous U’wa peoples from Northeastern Colombia that were electronically manipulated.

Mexican composer Alida Vazquez and Argentine pioneers Graciela Castillo and Hilda Dianda were pushing the boundaries of electronic music at the same time as their counterparts in the USA and Europe. Castillo and Dianda contributed to electronic and avant-garde music’s proliferation in Latin America.

Okuda Hiroko was an employee at the electronic musical instrument company Casio, whose childhood love of reggae music pushed her to study music in college. After joining Casio, she worked on samples for backing tracks on the new keyboards. She developed a rock rhythm—the Sleng Teng bassline—which became extremely popular with Jamaican musicians once the keyboards were selling well.

Jamaican dub and sound system culture were a profound influence on the development of electronic music, mainly through its vocal effects and bass-heavy speaker rigs. Doris Darlington from Jamaica was arguably the first female DJ. In the 1950s, she would play and mix records outside her liquor store to draw crowds. Her son bought her a turntable, amplified sound system, and records, and eventually, the liquor store expanded into a bar. When her son would travel to purchase music, Doris was in charge of the show, running the creative and technical sides of the sound system and asserting herself as the first female sound system operator.

Yvonne Turner began DJing in New York during the 1970s, producing two foundational tracks for the house scene in New York: Willie Colón’s “Set Fire to Me” (Latin Jazzbo Version) and Colonel Abrams’ “Music is the Answer” (dub mix). She became one of the most influential producers in the early scenes of New York house music, most notably during the Paradise Garage sound movement.

Sharon White, a Black queer woman, began as a radio DJ in New York during the 70s and transitioned into the disco scene as a club DJ. Her deep musical knowledge and marathon sets contributed to her influence and she became the only woman to play at the celebrated Paradise Garage and first woman to play at The Saint, a gay superclub.

Michele Miruski, DJ Bexx, Wendy Hunt, Patti Firrincilli, and G Sky King are other formative artists in the early American DJ Scene.

Freedom, acceptance, and dancing—those were the tenants of the emerging house music genre, founded by queer people of color. Not only did house and techno serve as new foundations of the electronic movement, but they came with a movement of liberation, community acceptance, and embrace of queer identities. The history of house music began in Chicago at the end of the 1970s. That era was riddled with police raids constantly terrorizing queer folk in Chicago, resulting in gay clubs and bars serving as important safe spaces for the queer community (however, even these clubs were not free from the risk of police brutality). The Warehouse was a Chicago nightclub first opened in 1977 that initially was an exclusive club

largely solely frequented by Latino and Black gay men. Francis Warren Nicholls, Jr., aka Frankie Knuckles, directed the music at The Warehouse, defining Chicago’s early house music scene with loops of cult disco classics superimposing exigent and stripped-down pulses from drum machines. House music emerged as a form of protest against the larger forces striving to destroy the right for queer and Black bodies to exist. By combining the frigid futurism of synthesizer-driven Euro-disco with the orchestral, sweeping, and soulful diva vocals in 70s disco, house music was a direct response to anti-disco sentiment within the rock world at the end of the 70s, which was rooted in anti-Blackness.

Stacy “Hotwaxx” Hale is known as the Godmother of House, as she was the first female (and lesbian) DJ to play house music on air in Detroit. In Detroit, aka machine-dominated “Motor City,” disco’s symphonic elements were replaced with mechanized elements symbolic of Detroit’s futuristic, post-industrial aesthetics. Motorized drum machines and synthesizers were introduced, largely enjoyed by the Black queer community present at Detroit clubs. Influential artists such as Juan Atkins infused dance music with science fiction imagery and industrialist elements, mixing Italo-disco, funk, David Bowie, Kraftwerk, and more, developing house music into the early sounds of techno.

The biases of the past have contributed to a hegemonic view of electronic music as an invention by white men which must be confronted and challenged. Hence, it is essential to include the stories of marginalized women and queer folk when trying to rectify the history of electronic music. It’s ironic that much of the composition of white Western male composers relies on musical influence from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and diasporas, yet the composers contributing to those original influences are placed in the background, trapped behind the notion of ‘white male genius.’ It is no shock that xenophobia, racism, homophobia, and institutional prejudices contribute to the burying of such stories. The title “house music” was an abbreviation of the club The Warehouse, yet even that club became co-opted by straighter and whiter patrons, resulting in the loss of Frankie Knuckles as the house DJ. American culture has continued to gentrify electronic music and push POC and queer creators to the sidelines.

Electronic music is world-building—thus it has the power to decolonize the music industry given how many artists see electronic music as a means to emulate themselves and their stories in a more abstract sense. In electronic music, not only are you listening for how things change in sound, but you are also tuning into how the experience is changing your disposition. Venezuelan trans musician and DJ, Arca discusses how she was able to find freedom in dancefloors: the feelings she was muting internally manifested in the lights and energy present on the dance floor; the external environment mirrored, yet liberated, her internal environment. The boundaries within electronic music are blurry, allowing artists like Arca to disrupt and investigate individual and societal boundaries through electronic beats. Electronic music has shown how technology can serve as a medium for self-expression, offering the potential to redraw the limits of composition, music, and the social world. Underlying the bleep-bloops and metallic crashes, electronic music serves as a force for one to find liberation, whether through the pieces they craft, the expression within themselves translated through sound, or in the community which gathers due to their music on the dance floor.







WRITTEN BY: NADIA LASWI  
DESIGN BY: DAVID PEREZ NYQUIST

Music always spoke to Farrokh Bulsara. As a young boy from Zanzibar, he learned piano, played songs by ear, and started a school band by age 12. He was born with 4 extra teeth, which some say may have been the secret to such an incredible vocal range. Regardless, it's certain he was unique. Immigrating with his family to England, he went on to become one of the greatest artists in the history of rock. Larger-than-life performances, both simple and extravagant costumes, and an alluring but mysterious presence made him a source of intrigue internationally—an intrigue that grew with what he kept private for most of his life. The world knows him as Queen's Freddie Mercury.

A departure from the overly masculine, the long hair, nail polish and leotards of Freddie Mercury's androgynous aesthetic, although not entirely unique to him, was a valuable example of self-expression and innovation of the rock star. The music video for "I Want to Break Free" in 1984 depicted the entire band in drag, and was soon after banned from MTV. Aside from the glam rock look, his demeanor or even his choice to name the band Queen often raised questions amongst the public, but Mercury was more likely to tease interviewers than give them the answers they wanted. After avoiding interviews for nearly 5 years, Mercury told Rudi Dolezal at Musicland Studios, "I love my job, but I hate talking to people like you. Well I love it right now, because you're the last person I'm talking to [today] so... you'll probably get the best interview, darling, don't worry."

His focus was always on creating; Mercury lived to entertain. "We Will Rock You," "Crazy Little Thing Called Love," and "Don't Stop Me Now" were among Queen's many hits of the late 70s. Even as the initial rave surrounding Queen began to fizzle out, they delivered one of the most iconic performances of all time. Despite major headliners like Sting, David Bowie, Mick Jagger and U2 at the benefit Live Aid concert in July of 1985, Queen's electric performance unexpectedly stole the show. With an estimated record-breaking 50% of the entire world's population tuning into the concert from their televisions, and another 70,000 packing the venue, Freddie Mercury fully engaged the crowd, having them sing alongside him. Marching around and dominating the stage with the microphone stand and his classic white tank, the performance captivated audiences from "Bohemian Rhapsody" to "We Are the Champions," just 6 years before his passing. The concert raised an estimated £50 million for famine relief.

In 1991, the day before his death, 45 year-old Freddie Mercury announced his HIV/AIDS diagnosis. Mercury continued making music even throughout his illness, and chose to keep his diagnosis away from public light until his last moments. Stigma and harassment were sure undeserved consequences for many AIDS victims, and Mercury noted that he chose to withhold the information for the sake of the privacy and safety of his family. Mercury wanted to be a musical legend, and not be reduced to his disease or berated about his personal life. Famous figures were more likely to attract support and helped the overall grassroots movement to destigmatize AIDS, in a tragic and discriminatory time when, for instance, those who tested positive were banned from immigrating to the U.S.. Freddie Mercury, amongst others, humanized the epidemic and prompted more dedicated funding and research. Still, there

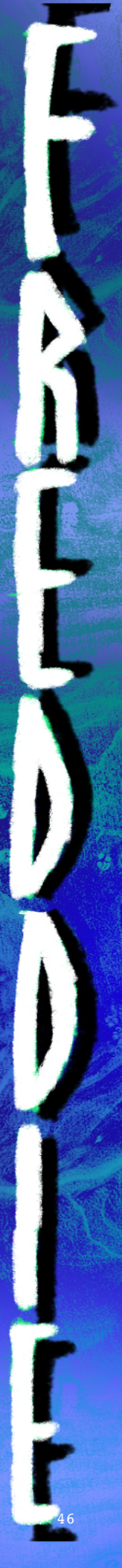
remains a stigma around queer folks in healthcare, with the FDA's ban on gay and bisexual men donating blood only being revised in 2015, and still containing restrictions today.

In the age of capitalism, the public commodifies artists and celebrities, often stripping them of their rights to privacy and demanding insight into their personal information and relationships. Feeling entitled to celebrities' lives, the media thrives on making headlines out of celebrity news, with aggressive paparazzi, leaked home addresses, and in extreme but common instances, stalking. The pull to keep the freedom of press in the U.S. often outweighs the privacy rights of celebrities, so long as the invasion of privacy was considered 'newsworthy' to the public. With entire industries profiting from their lack of privacy, there is little incentive to define 'newsworthy' with respectable boundaries for those in the public eye.

As society shifts to invasive para-social relationships with artists and pop culture icons fueled by incessant social media, being famous is increasingly dehumanizing. Consider pop-singer Taylor Swift, whose stalker broke into her house and slept in her bed after her home address was leaked by the media. Or in the case of Oliver W. Sipple, who after saving President Ford from assassination, was outed across headlines for being gay. While he had no intention of becoming a public figure, the courts ruled that he had no right to privacy of his private life once it became of public interest.

Those in the spotlight and especially queer celebrities are often grilled for their very personal experiences, subject to endless ridicule on information irrelevant to the work that made them famous. Although Freddie Mercury flashily pushed the envelope in many areas, he also valued his privacy and showed the public only what he felt comfortable showing. Mercury made it a point to live his own life as a performer, and was fair in his choices to keep his sexuality and diagnosis a secret. Like Frank Ocean, who, despite a tide-shifting coming out via Tumblr in 2012 in which he described his same-sex first love, refuses to define his sexuality in labels. When asked if he was bisexual in a GQ interview, Ocean responded "You can move onto the next question... As a writer, as a creator, I'm giving you my experiences. But just take what I give you. You ain't got to pry beyond that."

The objectification of celebrities and their overall invasion of privacy can often lead to dangerous physical and mental states for artists, and similarly, Freddie Mercury feared that the publication of his personal life would detract from his art. While it can be a risk to one's career to avoid interviews or dodge questions, celebrities should be able to live free of harassment. Mercury was an artist with boundaries, and he reminds consumers that it is possible to appreciate artists' talent without them owing anyone information they don't wish to share. Freddie Mercury is a legend in rock and roll performances and an icon in queer history. Regardless of what he chose to publicize or keep to himself, his talent stands. As Mercury said in an interview with Lisa Robinson, "The media built me up being a real ogre and a tyrant because of the way I come across on stage, you know I'm very volatile and that's the only part of me they see... so they don't really know the real me, and I don't think anybody will."





# C.R.E.A.M. - Cash Rules Everything Around Me

written by Andrew Zendejas  
designed by Lucia Agnew

Capitalism finds a way to insert itself and corrupt the beauty of the world through greed and the intrinsic exploitation that it requires for a true free market to function. Within the music industry, the business aspect has corrupted the creation and consumption of art by making it all about numbers, profits, and how much companies can benefit off of fans and the artists they employ. Because of the constant emphasis on profit, capitalism has gone and ruined music for fans and artists.

Despite technological progress, which one would think would make things easier, attending live music events and entering the music industry itself has recently displayed signs of heavy class disparity. The monopolization of Live Nation, the parent company of Ticketmaster, and the practice of risk-averse business strategies combine to create an atmosphere of stress and negative energy surrounding music.

## How capitalism has ruined music for the fans

Ticketmaster, the premiere site for live event ticket purchases, has come under fire for their business practices surrounding their dynamic pricing and platinum ticket sales. The predatory practice of dynamic pricing transforms purchasing a concert ticket into a free market where the prices of the ticket fluctuate according to the demand for the ticket. With Ticketmaster's dynamic pricing, a ticket in the nosebleeds section that was originally set at a price point of fifty dollars by the touring artist could be sold by the platform for four hundred dollars excluding fees if the demand is deemed to be high. Although fans have been forced to deal with the profit-driven actions of Live Nation subsidiaries for years, the ticket sale for Taylor Swift's the Eras Tour was what finally garnered attention from the media and government. During the presale on Ticketmaster's website, fans looking to score tickets for the Eras Tour were forced to overcome obstacles facilitated by Ticketmaster such as dynamic pricing, fighting resellers and bots, as well as platinum tickets. Fans, both who were and weren't able to secure tickets to the tour, took to social media to express their outrage at the difficulty surrounding the ticket-buying process. The comments ranged from complaints about the ticket prices being expensive to technical difficulties while in the queue for tickets. The outrage was met with governmental action, including a threatening tweet from a Senate Judiciary committee directed at Ticketmaster when Beyoncé announced the sale of her Renaissance Tour tickets. It simply read "We're watching, @ticketmaster." and suggested that if the company were to handle the sale of Beyoncé's tickets like they had with Swift, digging would be done into the monopolization of live entertainment under Live Nation.

Now, one might ask themselves, "Why do artists continue to work with Ticketmaster if they know they're being used as a modem for their

fan's exploitation?" Big artists are forced to abide by the rules set by Live Nation because of the monopoly they have over live entertainment purchases. Live Nation owns Ticketmaster, House of Blues, Roc Nation, Ticketweb, TicketsNow, and more. The only other options artists would have is to sell tickets at the box office (a strategy currently being employed by Maggie Rogers for the Summer of '23 tour) or partner with companies known for being third-party ticket resellers. There are reasons why these strategies aren't common amongst artists. Organizations like Seatgeek, who are essentially the only other option, are not developed enough to handle the demand necessary for the initial sale of mainstream artists, meaning that in an attempt to have everything surrounding their stadium tours run more efficiently, labels are forced to sell their tickets with Ticketmaster. Because artists and labels continue to work with Live Nation for their live events, if fans want to go to the artist's concert they are forced to deal with Ticketmaster. The problem is passed down from the artists to the fans. This takes the form of music becoming less accessible to low-income individuals because Live Nation essentially sets an income requirement for concerts through their constant quest for more profit. Low-income individuals are forced to choose between financial irresponsibility and not going. People shouldn't be completely deprived of enjoyable experiences just because they face financial issues. Money should not be a considerable factor in how much happiness can be experienced by fans, yet the industry has made it so.

Key players within the music industry such as producer, songwriter, and artist, Jack Antonoff, have commented on how artists do not want dynamic pricing because it makes attending concerts about how much money a person has and not how much love there is for the music. In a response to a question regarding Live Nation following his Grammy win for Producer of the Year, Antonoff said, "There's no reason why if I can go online and buy a car and have it delivered to my house, why can't I buy a fucking ticket at the price that the artists wants it to be." This was quickly followed by a more direct statement where he said "Don't turn, um, a live show into a free market. That's—that's really dirty. Charge what you think is fair, but if one person \$50 is nothing and one person \$50 is more than they can ever spend they can both— you're creating a situation where a different group of people can come together at one price. The second everything fluctuates is a second it goes k-shaped and turns into a weird free market.

It's not what we do." Before these remarks he commented that it was not the artists to blame for the negative circumstances surrounding absurd ticket prices, and alluded to Live Nation being the issue without explicitly stating so.

## How capitalism has ruined music for the artists

If fans were being exploited by the effects of capitalism, one would think that the artists who





make the music would be the ones to benefit from the capitalist motivations of the music industry. In reality, capitalism has ruined music for the artists too, some of which outright cite the business aspect of music as driving their desire to quit music altogether.

SZA is an example of an artist that has threatened to leave the music industry multiple times due to the business aspects of the industry. At the time of her sophomore album release titled *SOS*, she discussed in press interviews that the release was going to be her last. Behind the scenes there had appeared to be a disconnect between SZA and Top Dawg Entertainment because she had mentioned earlier that year that the album was intended for a summer release. Ultimately, the album was released in December 2022. The disconnect between the artist and management had become public after a fan commented under SZA's post asking what had happened to the original plan for a "SZA summer" to which she responded "it's 100% punch and rca on this one. I wanted the summer. They wanted more time." Leading up to the album's release she had said that she hated the business aspect surrounding releasing music and how she had strong negative feelings over how her album release was handled. *SOS*'s release was not the first time she faced issues with her label. She had similar issues with the release of her critically acclaimed debut album *Ctrl* as well. She threatened to quit music in a 2016 tweet that said "I actually quit. @iamstillpunch can release my album if he ever feels like it. Y'all be blessed." Consistently, the issues that create stress in SZA's life which makes her not to be involved in the music industry anymore are the actions by the label which morph her into a product to be sold. She doesn't detail the artistry aspects of her creative process but rather the promotional efforts when she describes why she is interested in quitting.

Another example of capitalism ruining the artform for the artist is Selena Gomez. In her documentary *My Mind and Me* she expressed how she suffered with her mental health because of all the stresses that the industry put on her. The particular aspect of her career that she loathed was when she would have to go out and promote her music. She felt as though the interviews had been soulless and as if the interviewers were simply using her for clicks and interactions and not actually listening to what she had to say. It got to the point where she became depressed and struggled with her mental health heavily. The documentary was made to show her audience that mental health is important and that they should reach out if they need to. At the end of the day, capitalism and the constant push to sell more records and

concert tickets pushed her to her limits, sending her into depression.

Risk-averse business strategies are also ruining the artistry of music. Newcomers entering the music industry without any connections has now become a rare occurrence. Music companies are practicing risk-averse motivations which means there is less inclination to put money into an investment that might not pan out. This is why labels don't typically bring on newcomers without a viral moment of some kind. The popularity of TikTok encourages the business practice because there has recently been an association between trending songs on the platform and those which have risen to the top of the charts. Labels and artist management companies have therefore forced new artists to prove themselves before they are signed. Through this, the music industry companies take on less risk with their investment because if the artist has already gone viral they bring with them a fan base, proof that people are interested in their art, and a foundation to build off of to create a fruitful, lucrative career. Platforms like TikTok have transcended traditional modes of music discovery which has allowed artists to achieve new levels of success, but it has also excluded excellent musicians and music that have the talent but not a viral moment. The aspirations of corporations within the music industry is to replicate what happened with Doja Cat and Olivia Rodrigo; viral moments that were supported into Grammy award winning artists that made their company lots of money in the process.

Doja Cat was thrown into stardom due to the popularity of "Say So" and "Streets" on TikTok. With the popularity from social media, which the record label pushed in efforts to profit off of trends, Doja Cat was able to exponentially increase her first week's sales for her studio albums from ~20,000 copies for *Hot Pink* to ~109,000 copies for her sophomore album *Planet Her*.

Similarly, Olivia Rodrigo's career was catapulted because her label took advantage of the opportunity that presented itself when the love triangle drama surrounding Sabrina Carpenter, Joshua Bassett, and herself went viral. The mental health and physical health (including a near-death experience) of the individuals involved were the cost to Olivia's success, which was rooted in the label's promotion and the encouragement of discourse surrounding the individuals. They did so because it meant more engagement with Olivia's music which in turn meant more profit!

Risk-averse business is not confined to new artists either. When established artists want to go in a new direction or even simply release their next project, labels are forcing them to generate viral content so that the release is less of a risk, meaning the money spent on them is more justified. Artists have commented on their disliking of this new trend within the industry (e.g. Charli XCX's TikTok complaining about being forced to make a tiktok for crash).

Essentially, artistic creation is being reduced to engagement, likes, and profit, and that is how capitalism ruined the music industry for artists.





# EL COLOR DEL CALOR EN EL SUR



WRITTEN BY  
JASMINE LOZANO  
CASTILLO  
&&&  
DESIGNED BY  
LUCIA AGNEW

Mariana De Miguel, who performs as Girl Ultra, is an artist from Mexico City known for her wide influence of music styles which include garage rock, house, and techno. This fusion of genre brings a unique and electrifying music experience to any audience. However, her intimate and intricate melodies captivate the body and mind of listeners far beyond the limits of R&B.

De Miguel is also a beacon in the counterculture as soulful female punk music is not common in the sound and movement of popular Spanish music. Her use of bilingualism in her music caters to the sounds and duplicity of the soul as well as to bilingual audiences. Girl Ultra's intersectionality sheds light on navigating the music industry as a bilingual Mexican woman of color whose music may be categorized as culturally provocative considering it does not fit inside the mainstream culture of Mexico.

Mariana de Miguel is a 28 year old singer who was born in Mexico City and encapsulates the passion of the Spanish language in her music. Her new album is a blend of R&B, garage rock, house, and techno which are not often popular amongst Mexican musicians. "I don't like to lock myself in a cage . . . I don't want to keep that label forever. I just want to be Girl Ultra or Mariana de Miguel and allow myself to change. As much as I change as a person, I want to allow myself to change in my music," expressed de Miguel when asked how she felt about being labeled an R&B artist. De Miguel's sentiment captures the importance of fluidity and acceptance in our evolution as people. She embodies unwavering confidence and a radiant captivity through her intimate lyricism in both Spanish and English, giving her industry name—Girl Ultra—an almost heroic, countercultural mirage.

Bilingualism is not adequately represented in the popular American music industry. Lyrics and music that euphorically capture emotion in more than one language is not typically showcased in mainstream media. More

specifically, women of color who do not meet the traditional expectations of a white dominated industry and who celebrate bilingualism (catering to audiences that reach beyond English speakers), are often not acknowledged and recognized due to limited exposure. Mariana de Miguel is a woman of color who has exceptionally bent and broken the traditional expectations of women in music by using lyrics that are bold, passionate, and sensual.

Many women of color are not properly accredited for their hard work and talent because they do not fit into the Eurocentric standards that are so deeply embedded within the music industry. Paradoxically, white women and white artists who bend and break industry expectations are typically romanticized and rewarded as "trendsetters." As seen with Taylor Swift or Miley Cyrus, when white woman put out "unhinged" music with a more alternative touch (regardless of how it is received by fans), critics never use their race to justify disapproval the way Megan Thee Stallion, Cardi B or Kali Uchis have been scrutinized.

These double standards in the music industry reinforce white supremacy and perpetuate systemic oppression. Presentation and representation are core pillars in paving a path for minorities and BIPOC artists to succeed in the popular music industry.

Illuminating artists who don't get adequate recognition of their talent due to white supremacy in music, is a critical part of providing platforms to voices who aren't equipped with the same opportunities. I find it crucial to highlight underrepresented voices in music for the sake of increasing visibility. Therefore, here I uplift the voice of Mariana de Miguel who was born in La Ciudad De Mexico and cultivates sounds of sensuality, invitation, and excitement as heard in some of her most popular songs— "Punk," "Morena Mia," "DameLove," and "Bombay."

Girl Ultra is undoubtedly one of the Spanish artists who is breaking the typical molds for women of color in the music industry as she continues to amplify philosophies and concepts in her writing that uplift the embrace of unapologetic existence. The symbolism of her existence and representation she brings to the music industry is significant and empowers young creatives who see her as one of their own. Her music embodies the sensuality, cinematic beauty, and unapologetic existence of the Spanish language beyond the R&B music landscape.

In one of her first songs—"DameLove"—Girl Ultra explores a sensual sound that captivates and swings the bones and



soul of listeners. From her debut album, *Nuevos Aires (Fresh Air)* (2019), "DameLove" highlights de Miguel's journey with sounds and the music she's put out that is a blend of historic R&B sounds with modern alternative beats. Her lyrics have a sort of realist approach, placing an emphasis on living in the moment. She begins the song with "I won't tell you twice, amor. Feelings always come and go. Si lo tienes, dámelo. Dame love, dame love." Through her wording and use of bilingualism, the audience hears not just an unapologetic declaration of intimacy but an authentic understanding of navigating love and romance. Her album captivates the fluidity of sensuality.

Similar themes are explored in one of her later songs—"Bombay." Lyrically, she declares her attraction and through rhythmic sounds she emphasizes the thrill in doing so. "Ah, tu y moi. ¿Qué es lo peor que podría pasar? No ponemos high, touch the sky." The bilingual language of intimacy used in Miguel's lyrics caters to the expression of many bilingual listeners around the world. Bombay's essence captures a sort of 'thrill in the tease and endless possibilities' feeling. The song explores the possibilities of a night of intimacy and passion.

Girl Ultra's cover of Miguel Bose's "Morena Mia," takes us through the soulful and sensual experience of touching lips with another human being. As "Punk" is more of an ethereal freedom anthem in which you can feel the free spirit movement within the lyricism, much of Girl Ultra's music romanticizes specific moments in time and places a cinematic focus upon the lives of the listeners. "I've always been very inspired by the tendencies of lust in the city, especially in a city like mine. Mexico City is a very sexual city, very lusty and mysterious . . . I get very inspired by the night and where the night can lead you. I really like to sing to that—to lust."

Girl Ultra recently concluded her first tour in the United States and performed the last show at Berkeley's esteemed Cornerstone venue on Sunday, April 16, 2023. When asked how she felt about the tour, de Miguel expressed that her album *El Sur* (2022) was a lot more unapologetic the more she used language that made her feel more in tune with herself as a woman and as a composer. When asked her favorite song from the album, one that she feels captivates the concepts she values, Mariana de Miguel highlighted "Para q te acuerdes de mi," the third track off *El Sur*: "It's very unapologetic and it's like a letter to myself. To allow myself to be myself and fuck up. I enjoy that. It's hard to write for yourself. Usually, I like to write for other people or I'm inspired by other people but this was like the

core of myself at that moment."

It was refreshing to hear de Miguel emphasize the importance of allowing ourselves to make mistakes and learn from our experiences. For young creatives and aspiring artists, learning from our mistakes is vital to our growth. Like her newest album urges, we should all be unapologetically ourselves.

Girl Ultra is a pillar of the Spanish music industry who is aiming to shift the perception of "Latin Music." Her music curates the freeing of the soul, loosening of bones, and liberation of the mind. Mariana de Miguel has become an embodiment of refreshing Mexican cinematic and soulful sound within the Spanish music industry and is a fluid beacon of bold passion. Her music persona and representation in the music industry put a revitalizing emphasis on the importance of being unapologetically oneself. Change and difference makes an impact. Reclaiming space and allowing ourselves to unapologetically take up space is how we make ourselves seen and heard. Girl Ultra's music reminds us that it is okay to be ourselves, unapologetically exist, and most importantly: make a lot of mistakes.



# JAZZ

## In the Foreground: The Theatricality of Cécile McLorin Salvant

Written and Designed by Victoria Rowe

I went to a gala the other day. The event organizers hired jazz musicians to play while attendees trickled in, and a night of sophistication for typically underdressed university students was elevated by jazz music. However, the night's jazz quartet promptly became the background noise of conversation and the opening act for the 'real' performer of the night: the DJ. I say this not to discredit the work and talent of jazz musicians, but on the contrary: to highlight the conception of jazz to Gen Z and college students as background noise.

On Spotify, the most popular curated jazz playlists are listed as "Jazz in the Background" and "Smooth Jazz." If new listeners hope to familiarize themselves with this subgenre of jazz, they would be first greeted by these two playlists. When Gen Zers or college students listen to these playlists, they often seek peaceful sounds to study to without being distracted. They are not choosing their own music, but letting Spotify algorithms then dictate the sounds through which one develops an ear for jazz. A search for smooth jazz could denote a call to feel mature through the connection of a rich, established, American genre; it is the sound of living alone in your New York apartment, sipping on wine, reading bell hooks and taking a bubble bath.

At the gala, while mingling in my cheaply purchased Amaz\*n gown and holding a champagne glass full of sparkling cider, I felt myself wanting to perform maturity. I was looking grown up, feeling grown up, and my attitude shift was influenced by the presence of jazz. However, although I listened to the music, I was not actively hearing the music. The night's jazz music did not grab anyone's attention, which was obviously intentional; the context of the music had a subtler role: to orchestrate socialization and work as a musical buffer, a social safety net to expected silence. Smooth jazz was treated as background noise and light stimulation. The treatment of jazz at the gala, and the title of the Spotify playlist, "Jazz in the Background," begs the question of what styles of music are more prone to being used as light stimulation or background music.

Jazz, the quintessential American musical genre, has gone through many iterations across the decades, transforming from big band to bebop to smooth jazz and fusion. Although many subgenres and complex musical elements exist in jazz, what may be most synonymous to Gen Zers and college students outside of the jazz community is the sleek, smooth jazz played at the gala. But jazz exists in many forms. It can be lively, fast-paced, chaotic, sublime, and peaceful, but perhaps to an untrained ear, its proper setting is at a wedding reception, café, in Pixar's *Soul*, the score of *La La Land*, or in my case, a gala. Not all jazz falls into the camp of background noise, and of course, smooth jazz is not inherently background noise, but at the gala, and perhaps when students listen to those aforementioned Spotify playlists, smooth jazz becomes correlated to subtlety and partial stimulation.

Making music that is not too distracting is a talent and an art in itself. Maintaining subtle stimulation is a balancing act that treads the conscious effort of the listener. Thus, the real crux comes in the interplay and control of dynamics. Years of study go into understanding the music theory behind jazz and musicians exercise expertise, talent, and discipline to create their mode of art. However, music's interpretation falls on a listener's context.

If you are studying, you want music that will not interfere with your thoughts. If you are mingling at a gala, you don't want music to infringe on your conversations. Jazz in this form then lends itself as a solution to overstimulation. The constant overstimulation from short-form content and social media challenges a collective ability to appreciate and digest instrumental music. The rise of TikTok cripples the ability to put smooth jazz at the forefront of activities with the true intention of hearing the music. Paying attention and truly hearing, not just absentmindedly listening, requires effort. Overstimulation and shortened attention spans today hinder people from concentrating long enough to appreciate all that jazz has to offer.

Easy consumption betrays a true appreciation of genres such as smooth jazz, and the music exists not to stand alone, but to be accompanied by another action of importance. Jazz can command attention and goes beyond the curated songs selected by Spotify. One exemplar of jazz's manifold nature is the Haitian-French vocalist, Cécile McLorin Salvant. Salvant knits theatre and jazz, barraging the genre to the foreground of your attention threshold. Salvant is a three-time GRAMMY-award-winning musician for Best Jazz Album, a 2020 MacArthur Fellow, and winner of the 2010 Thelonious Monk Jazz Competition. She is also a visual artist exploring different mediums through textile drawings.



Salvant demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of art and storytelling. Her visual art is a testament to her ability to construct and weave different narratives out of many mediums. By doing so, she adds meaning to performance and does not shy away from eccentricity to make her work distinctive. She refers to herself as a "frustrated actress or non-actress" and creates a distinction between singing and performing. Salvant's testament to performance is present in her incorporation of vaudeville, folk, cabaret, and musical theatre to create a blend of storytelling modes.

Her 2022 album, *Ghost Song*, is representative of constructing new from old. Although Salvant has remained faithful to iconic jazz standards from the past, she adds new life and invigoration into the familiar. Salvant would not fit alongside the talented musicians in Spotify's "Jazz in the Background" playlist; she is too thundering. Therefore, Cécile McLorin Salvant posits jazz, in one way or another, in the foreground.

*Ghost Song* is Salvant's 5th album and explores themes of romantic haunt, (un)desire, and the avoidance of love. The album opens with a cover of Kate Bush's "Wuthering Heights" and centers on Salvant's preoccupation with storytelling, of defamiliarization, of taking what is accepted and reintroducing it in interesting interpretation of the song is an outcry, a folkloric yearning, and engages jazz in a way heard as background noise. She grabs your attention from the first note as she shortens length of the song. Salvant cuts to the first verse of Bush's version, beginning with a "Heathcliff, it's me I'm Cathy," almost as if Salvant is speaking to the audience: that we and she is the abusive Cathy we will encounter throughout the album. range speaks and adds texture to the song, her timbre reeking of desperation and neediness. Salvant sings acapella until she is later joined by upright bass and wind instruments. Salvant breathes new life into Bush's 1978 hit by taking the common element of call and response and engaging with the audience; she grabs us, tells us to listen, and opens herself up to conversation through her music.

The titular track, "Ghost Song," goes back to Salvant's jazz and blues roots as she opens with another pessimistic outcry. Her diction is clear-cut and emotive. Each word rings and echoes, her vibrato lingering and 'I' vowels, which deviates from a singer's typical reliance on 'O' and 'U' vowels performance is uplifted, the stressed syllables falling at the end of each word. Words such as "I'll" and "My" are spotlighted to demonstrate how despite the union of love, she is preoccupied with how love affects her rather than her partner. Salvant's performance is nuanced, intricate, and complex. She manipulates speech patterns to emphasize the song's themes of romantic abandonment. The guitar's twangs and riffs come sparsely alongside piano chords and drum kicks, but the focus of the song is Salvant's voice, which becomes the central instrument to express feelings of (un)desire. Salvant also includes a children's choir to contrast the complexity of adult emotions against a purported childhood ease.

She continues to play on heady emotions in "The World is Mean" and demonstrates her vocal chops, creating a whiplash of tempo and genre. She sets aside her usual lyrical style in lieu of talk-singing. Salvant goes back and forth between drama and sprechgesang; the song rides an emotional rollercoaster. The listener is transported to a burlesque show, to Disney on Ice, to a music session on Salvant's native Miami streets, and back again. Salvant borrows from elements of musical theatre; the drama and grandiosity of "Ghost Song" is reminiscent of Ursula's "Poor Unfortunate Souls" from *The Little Mermaid*. Salvant goes from her 'Ursula' voice where she embodies a Disney villain, modulating and lowering the register of her voice, to a more classic style of jazz vocals. Coupled with her vocal teetering, Salvant's main instrumentation choice is a flute, possibly to denote the airy nature of asking her partner to satiate her emotional needs. On the titular track, Salvant transports the listener everywhere as she explores stylistic chaos through the fusion of jazz, folklore, and theatre.

Salvant's love of the theatre is obvious in "Optimistic Voices / No Love Dying," which meshes two seemingly disconnected songs into a cohesive unit. "Optimistic Voices," originally from *The Wizard of Oz*, shows her attraction to storytelling and musical theatre. Salvant chooses a deep cut from the classic Hollywood musical, but her version includes more bluegrass elements, featuring stylistic hollers, upbeat kicks, and colorful diction. Salvant lingers on the word "open" for almost a minute. This midpoint of the song is a seamless transition between songs and demonstrates the openness of musical merging. Salvant turns two songs into one, demonstrating her range of artistic possibilities. The latter end of the piece, "No Love Dying," is a cover of Gregory Porter's 2013 song of the same title. Here, Salvant breathes new life into the old. "No Love Dying" falls into the camp of contemporary jazz, but Salvant merges its traditional structure with that of tropes from the theatre, integrating the elements of theatrical performance into jazz. Salvant successfully executes a seamless transition by adding the formerly absent flute and banjo to both pieces, creating cohesion. This stylistic choice, along with Salvant's vocal performance, demonstrates how eccentricity is attention-grabbing. Not every artist has the capacity to transform the seemingly disparate into one. Salvant does it seamlessly.

Cécile McLorin Salvant fuses other genres and musical disciplines to make her voice heard. She utilizes elements of theatre to create musical nuance, bringing dynamics and emotion to her re-imagined renditions of classics. In the imagination of Gen Z, particularly those without jazz knowledge and who use the genre as a study aid, jazz has become background noise. The artistry of Cécile McLorin Salvant works to make not only her music but all forms of jazz by extension, more distinct and unforgettable. Cécile McLorin Salvant demonstrates that jazz should be heard and not just passively listened to.



# Crossing Continents: How Afrobeats Is Taking Over the World

Written by Saida Dahir  
Designed by Savannah Rice

As a young student, I vividly remember the daily ritual of walking to my middle school. It was the perfect opportunity to plug in my headphones, let the music take over, and shut out the rest of the world. In those brief but precious moments, I would immerse myself in a playlist that never failed to set the tone for my day ahead. Its title said it all: “Afrobeats in the Morning.”

During my formative years, Afrobeats became an integral part of my musical journey. As a first-generation refugee from the African continent, this genre of music held a profound significance for me, serving as a powerful thread that kept me connected to my cultural roots and the small but mighty African community in my hometown.

As I grew older, I witnessed with awe and excitement the rise of Afrobeats in the global music scene. Over the last couple of years, this genre has transcended boundaries and captivated audiences worldwide with its infectious beats and captivating grooves. Afrobeats has become a force to be reckoned with, dominating not only the airwaves but also the stages of music festivals around the world. It has been nothing short of inspiring to see how the genre has taken the world by storm, leaving its indelible mark on popular culture and the music industry. The surge of Afrobeats has been more than just a musical revolution; it has been a celebration of African culture, resilience, and creativity.

Afrobeats is a vibrant genre of popular music that has its roots in West Africa and has gained widespread popularity in the diaspora. This musical style originated primarily in Nigeria, Ghana, and the UK during the 2000s and 2010s, and is often interchangeably referred to as Afro-pop or Afro-fusion. Afrobeats songs are typically sung in a variety of languages, including English, Yoruba, Twi, Pidgin English, and other local African languages, reflecting the rich linguistic diversity of the region.

Afrobeats pushes the boundaries of traditional African rhythms by infusing them with contemporary influences like hip-hop, R&B, and pop. This unique blend of musical elements has created a genre that resonates with audiences all over the world.

Afrobeats has a rich and long history that can be traced back to the 1960s when Nigerian singer Fela Kuti, drummer Tony Allen, and their band Africa 70 (later known as Egypt 80) pioneered the sound. Fela Kuti, often referred to as the “father of Afrobeats,” was known for his innovative approach to music, fusing traditional African rhythms with elements of jazz, funk, and highlife. His music was not only musically groundbreaking, but also socially and politically charged, addressing issues of corruption, oppression, and inequality.

The early 2000s saw the emergence of other Nigerian musicians like 2face Idibia and D’banj. These artists spearheaded the popularity of the genre but the global popularity of Afrobeat music did not take off until the middle of the 2010s. Wizkid, Davido, Burna Boy, and Mr. Eazi are just a few of the musicians who have launched the genre into mainstream

international success. Afrobeats artists have now amassed millions of streams on platforms like Spotify and Apple Music and some have become household names.

These artists and others have perfected the art of blending genres such as Hip-hop, R&B, dancehall, and more, in their Afrobeat music. For instance, in hit songs “On The Low” Burna Boy and “Show You The Money” by WizKid skillfully combines Yoruba rhythms with captivating afro-fusion elements. Similarly, Davido’s chart-topping track “Fall” exemplifies the convergence of Western and Eastern influences. These are just a few of the countless songs that have left an indelible mark on my childhood. They are the timeless tunes that are played at weddings, blaring in the car with friends, and forming the soundtrack to my solo dance parties. They are more than just songs; they are cherished memories and a testament to the enduring popularity and impact of Afrobeat music in my life and beyond.

Along with these cherished memories associated with Afrobeats, this genre of music also serves as a powerful expression of African and Afro-diaspora pride within myself and those around me. Through its lyrics that often celebrate African identity and culture, Afrobeats music becomes a vital component of African cultural expression. Many African listeners are deeply drawn to Afrobeats songs as they view them as a means to proudly showcase their rich heritage, traditions, and identity to the world. Afrobeats also critiques systems of power and inequality on the continent and in the diaspora. Afrobeats music often addresses social, political, and economic issues faced by Africans both within Africa and in diaspora communities around the world. Afrobeats artists often use their music as a platform to raise awareness and critique the existing power dynamics and inequalities that impact African societies.

Afrobeats serve as a unifying force that instills a sense of pride, belonging, and cultural representation, resonating with the hearts and souls of African communities worldwide. It’s more than just music: it’s a celebration of African culture and an affirmation of African pride.

The growth of Afrobeats abroad can be attributed to many things, globalization being one of them. Afrobeats artists have recently partnered with western artists to create chart-toppers. Rapper Drake has been featured on many Afrobeats songs including 2017 “One Dance” featuring WizKid and “Fountains” featuring Tems. Drake is no stranger to Afrobeats and for many, “One Dance” was their first interaction with the genre. Pop singer Ed Sheeran has also been featured in numerous Afrobeat tracks, including Fireboy DML’s “Peru” and Burna Boy’s “For My Hand.” Additionally, actress and singer Selena Gomez was featured in the hit song “Calm Down” by Rema.

These cross-genre collaborations have been instrumental in introducing Afrobeats to a wider audience and expanding its reach. By collaborating with Western artists, Afrobeats musicians have been able to fuse their unique African rhythms, melodies, and cultural elements with other popular music genres, creating a fresh and dynamic sound that appeals to diverse audiences around the world.

The popularity of Afrobeat music has also grown significantly as a result of social media. Without the aid of conventional record labels, platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram have allowed musicians to interact directly with fans, create dance challenges, and be featured in Afrobeats compilation videos. This has made it possible for emerging musicians to develop popularity without having a large label agreement.

As the genre continues to gain momentum and captivate foreign audiences, Afrobeats artists are setting new standards of success, challenging the status quo, and redefining the global music landscape. With their undeniable talent, infectious beats, and rich cultural heritage, Afrobeats artists are taking the world by storm and leaving an indelible mark on the music industry, inspiring and captivating audiences far and wide. The Afrobeats revolution is here to stay, and the world eagerly awaits what the genre’s future holds.

It has been a source of pride for me as I witness the motherland being embraced and celebrated on a global scale. Afrobeats has not only brought joy to my ears but has also ignited a sense of pride and belonging in my heart, reminding me of the power of music to transcend borders, bridge cultures, and create a sense of unity among diverse communities.



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