

Hope's Soundtrack

I follow music the way people follow sports. I hover on the edge of my bed, legs bouncing as if my team was to clutch a fourth down or game-winning goal. The anticipation builds in my stomach, grueling over the two minutes to midnight until finally, the album drops. To me, music is a magnet, pulling me in with perfect pentatonix, harboring hues of harmony under heavy hymns. Music is my muse; its emotionality resides in me like Mozart's *Serenade for Winds, K. 361* does to Salieri. Yet, my music interest does not stop at classical. From rap to rhapsody, blues to bossa nova, music ignites my spirit as if "I was hearing the voice of God" (*Amadeus*, 1984). I can still recall the first time I listened to *Nights* by Frank Ocean, or *Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out* by Scrapper Blackwell. The notes tingle, clanking my bones as if my ribs were a vibraphone. And to this day, I am entranced by music like a sports fanatic is to their fantasy league. My reveries, however, do not only rest in my ears, but rather they reverberate in my own renditions. I imitate the art of my favorites: *Libestraum* by Franz Listz, *Happiness* by Rex Orange County, *Maple Leaf Rag* by Scott Joplin, all translated to ebonies and ivories with my own hands.

But, music is more than just inspirational; it is a living organism manifesting its own identity while always emanating the DNA of its parental pioneers. When I first listened to Mob Deep's *Survival of the Fittest*, I was struck by four menacing notes lingering behind the main beat. The piano, deeply toned and dark, prominently stood past the hi-hats and voice of Prodigy, impossible not to notice. As I relistened, those two sounds continued to spark a familiar flame in me. And so, I began the dig, only to unearth a jazz cover, Hoagy Carmichael's *Skylark* as recorded by the Barry Harris Trio and Al Cohn. By underscoring *Survivial* with the Trio's four already-moody notes, down-pitched, Mob Deep's frustrated anthem appears haunted by its musical past. Sampling grounds contemporary music, reminding us that, no matter the innovation there is no solitude in sound.

For me, music is hope's soundtrack. It is the embodiment of human creative potential. Just as a painter swirls reds and blues, or a florist mingles carnations and

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dahlia, musicians intertwine traditional tones with tender beats to score timeless compositions. Every new song pays homage to a long history of creativity, while experimenting with diverse genre combinations. From sampling to improvisation, modern music marries old and new; it is the great equalizer. Beyond barriers of difference, over walls of ignorance, music silences discord. Harmonious voices elevated above a community of instruments reminds us of the power of collective experience. So, while recently we have suffered unbearable seclusion, intolerance, and grief, music will be the legato link to our loneliness. Music makes us dance, laugh and cry. It is and will be our coach, our counselor, our confidant.