

WALK WITHOUT MUTING YOUR VOICE: THE LOUD LEGACY OF A GENERATION FROM SUBCULTURE TO STADIUMS

Sometimes, to understand that music is not just a sound but a stance and an identity, you only wait for the right song to play. For me, this journey began in 1992. As someone born in 1992, long before reaching the massive explosion of rock and metal in the 2000s, I opened the doors to this world with the magical cassettes I had at hand. Although rock and metal music appear to most as just loud guitars and drums, they are actually the manifestation of the purest rebellion, the search for freedom, and sincerity within a person. Rock Music: Born in the mid-20th century as an act of defiance, this genre feeds on sincerity, the voice of the street, and "having a story to tell". Metal Music: The harder, more technical, and darker version of rock. It is characterized by distorted guitars, powerful drum rhythms, and vocals that push the limits. Philosophy: The sole rule lying at the foundation of this music is: "Be yourself, walk without muting your voice". Rock and metal represent the individual's struggle to find their own voice against the molds imposed by society. Before the doors of the digital world were fully opened, my world consisted of the cassettes under my hand. I met the heavy and dark tones of Black Sabbath, the unstoppable riffs of Metallica, the epic stories of Iron Maiden, the uncompromising hardness of Slayer, and many others at a very young age. Back then, I didn't understand most of the English lyrics or fully grasp what the songs were about, but those harsh sounds touched something in my soul. When those hard guitars struck my ears, it felt as if the doors to a new world, private only to me, were opening. Every note played offered me the map of an unknown but exciting continent. The doors of a very different world were opening, though I didn't know it at the time. While my ears sought those hard Western sounds, I was also growing up with the bards of these lands. I would find the cassettes of Barış Manço's educational tales, Cem Karaca's majestic and social voice, Ayna's melodic rock songs, and Haluk Levent's rebellious style, and I would always listen and try to sing along whenever their songs played on the radio. Outside of what was popular on television or radio, I was always chasing those "hard tones". These artists showed us how powerful rock music could be in our own language, telling our own troubles. In the late 1990s in Turkey, listening to rock was not just a musical preference; it was building a "lifestyle" by inhaling that fresh plastic scent coming out of the cassette shop. Of course, those times were very difficult, especially for a small child. It was much harder for a child who didn't know the bands or the names of the songs, lacked information about them, and didn't know where or how to buy their cassettes or CDs. While I was rewinding and listening to those cassettes on my Walkman, the world was preparing for another phase. The sincere and underground spirit of the 1990s was about to leave its place to the massive energy of the digitalizing and globalizing 2000s. My discovery of that "new world," the foundations of which were laid with Black Sabbath and Metallica, would turn into an explosion with the arrival of the 2000s. The whole world would see and be affected by this explosion.

But first, we must never forget the power of those first notes that fascinated us, even if we didn't understand it at the time, and how this music seeped into our veins. To understand these moments, we must actually go back to the 1990s; of course, there are earlier times, but I think the big steps were taken in the nineties. Following the Grunge fatigue at the end of the nineties, the world music scene was experiencing a pause; however, with the arrival of

the 2000s, rock and metal music began to breathe again worldwide. This period was a "golden age" that both honored the legacy of old giants and saw genres hybridize to take over the mainstream. The biggest reason for this was the emergence of new bands and female vocalists beginning to exist in what was called a male-dominated world. Nu Metal: The Rage of the Digital Generation and the Linkin Park Phenomenon. In the early 2000s, Nu Metal became the biggest force carrying rock and metal to the mainstream. The popularity of this movement, which emerged in the 1990s, among the youth and the successful albums of new bands in this genre had a massive impact on rock and metal music becoming popular or rising. Of course, a secondary role in this was the use of the music in the films of the period. Linkin Park, by the way, was not the pioneer of this music; they simply increased the awareness that such a genre existed and made it known to people who had no interest in these genres. Nu Metal, this unusual combination of rap, electronics, and metal guitars, perfectly summarized the digitalizing spirit of that period. Linkin Park became a worldwide phenomenon with the Hybrid Theory (2000) album and fascinated millions of listeners with its rap-metal synthesis. Those who admired this band also emerged and tried to imitate them. Slipknot created an unforgettable experience by redrawing the boundaries of metal with the anger accumulated behind masks and their aggressive energy on stage. Many young people even listened to the albums of these bands, memorized the songs, and learned who the members of the group were. The Golden Age of Symphonic and Gothic Metal. The early 2000s were the years when bands with female vocals, bringing a dramatic and theatrical touch to the metal scene, reached their peak. Actually, the big explosions of bands founded in the mid or late nineties happened in the early and mid-2000s. They started giving concerts on big stages, and thus their visibility increased. Another feature of this genre was that it proved rock or metal music didn't always have to be harsh; it could also be like opera or film music with symphonic rhythms. The bands that showed this were loved for this reason and enabled the birth of a new sub-branch. Nightwish pushed the limits of operatic metal with the Once (2004) album and turned this style into a giant genre that filled stadiums worldwide. The musical genres were out of the ordinary and immediately attracted attention and were listened to. They were also loved because of the female and male soloist preferences. Evanescence became a global phenomenon with the Fallen (2003) album, driven by Amy Lee's vocal power and a piano-centered dark atmosphere. "Bring Me to Life" became one of the most symbolic songs of the era. Evanescence especially blended Gothic darkness with the Alternative Metal genre very well, and their songs and albums served as bridges. When necessary, Evanescence literally revealed its difference by making songs in a dark theme with only a single piano. Within Temptation achieved massive success in the international market by offering a more romantic and mystical symphonic metal line. The fact that their early period albums were in the gothic rock style and told specific themes caused the band to be loved and to rise. If I don't mention the band Epica, I think the third group of the "Big Three" concept of symphonic metal would be missing. Epica, like other bands, used orchestral sounds that softened the harsh metal music while singing with an operatic female vocal technique. Their themes were not ordinary subjects; more specific topics were chosen.

While hard tones were rising on one side, the cooler and more minimalist face of rock music continued to swallow the dust of the streets. Garage Rock: Bands like The Strokes, The White Stripes, and Arctic Monkeys made rock popular again with their raw and energetic sounds that stayed true to the punk aesthetic of the 1970s. These bands revealed their own styles and made very good albums that were worth listening to, and these albums were loved. Pop-Punk and Emo: Blink-182, Green Day, and My Chemical Romance carried the

rebellion and search for identity of youth to the top of the charts. For a period, they even enabled the emo trend to spread worldwide. Of course, later the emo style changed, and the songs changed as well. The 2000s were also a turning point for the birth of Metalcore. Combining melodic death metal riffs, hardcore breakdowns, and both clean and aggressive vocals, this genre became the new face of modern metal. Killswitch Engage, As I Lay Dying, and Trivium stood out as the bands leading this movement. This new movement was also loved by certain groups and had ensured the emergence of a sub-genre that is still listened to today. As technology developed, the era of cassettes and CDs was coming to an end, and everything was becoming digitalized. Thanks to this digitalization, a revolution was taking place in the method of sharing and listening to music. The most important factor supporting this explosion was undoubtedly the widespread use of the internet. Thanks to Napster, YouTube, early social media platforms, and MP3 sites, music moved out of cassette or CD shelves and onto computer screens. This digital wave ensured that our generation was the first to consume music directly from the computer, not from a cassette. Of course, this situation negatively affected many bands, and even music listening trends were changing. There were certainly pluses to this situation as well. Songs were shared on forum sites and especially via MySpace; people shared music with each other, shared the songs they had newly discovered or loved, ensuring that the names of very different bands were heard. This situation, of course, did not suit the record companies that stood at a distance from certain musical genres that became large and monopolized. Less known music bands communicated very comfortably with their fans, or the songs of bands that couldn't make albums but had songs in hand were easily heard. Of course, an effect of this digital revolution happened in Turkey as well. The albums of bands whose names were heard but whose songs or albums could not be reached achieved easy accessibility thanks to websites. This situation also caused the world to globalize. How was the situation in my hometown, Turkey? I want to touch on this a bit. Rock and metal music were being listened to in Turkey, but they were not listened to by large crowds, and concerts were not held in big stadiums. In fact, apart from a few well-known names or bands, there were no those who could properly make albums and give concerts. There were even those trying to release albums with their own money and trying to give concerts, but they were doing these in small places. Indeed, the rock and metal culture was seen as a "Subculture," and people stood at a distance. Due to the explosion of this culture in the world in the mid-nineties and early 2000s, it began to cease being a subculture, albums were made, and big concerts and festivals began to be organized. There were many names and bands in Turkey in the 1990s, and I think the most known of them was Pentagram (Mezarkabul). Pentagram's Trail Blazer album, released in 1992, had made a big impact; then the Anatolia (1997) album created a revolution by synthesizing West and East. In periods when the internet was non-existent or not widely used, cassettes would pass from hand to hand, and the fanzine culture was kept alive. Reviews of bands and songs were made in magazines such as Blue Jean and Heavy Metal Magazine. These exhibitions and fanzines were important and were a culture; this culture was attempted to be kept alive.

In the 2000s, the rise of rock and metal music was being experienced in Turkey, and many bands and names emerged and showed presence in the music sector. Important bands of those times like Manga, Duman, Mor ve Ötesi, Kurban, Çilekeş, Gripin, Şebnem Ferah, Aylin Aslım, Hayko Cepkin, and many more names were loved more in these periods. When big concerts and festivals began to be held more, these festivals and concerts were also activities where youth socialized. Of course, the effects of the symphonic rock and metal

music rising in the world were also seen in Turkey, and bands making music in this regard were founded. Groups that would be called Turkey's Nightwish, Evanescence, or Epica were being established. I think perhaps the most famous known band of Turkey was Almora. Almora showed that this genre could also be done in Turkey with *Kayıp Cennet* (2002) and *Shehrazad* (2004). Quality songs had emerged with the combination of operatic soloist technique and Ottoman-Middle Eastern rhythms with European rhythms. Another band was the band *Catafalque*. The *Unique* (2005) album was by a band making original songs in gothic and doom metal styles. Another band was the band *Dramtone*. This band was the strongest representative of Progressive Metal in Turkey and did very successful work in Europe. Of course, there were places and venues called the fortresses of this music. Those venues were the places where rock and metal music was performed, listened to, and where bands made their voices heard. In Istanbul, *Kemancı* was literally a cult venue, and this place was the venue for rockers and metalheads. Going to *Kemancı*, performing on stage there was a massive prestige, and those who could go there were seen as "cool". Venues like *Dorock* and *Bronx* were like temples for rockers and metalheads. Although Istanbul was always seen as the capital for this work, the place where this work really took hold and perhaps the academy for underground bands and where their names were heard was Ankara. Indeed, a phrase was coined saying "one who cannot hold on in Ankara cannot manage this work elsewhere." Ankara was not like Istanbul; it was the place where the underground spirit lived. It had a harder, more political atmosphere. Izmir was also seen as a fortress of this music, but Izmir was where more melodic tones were. Izmir bands met the listener with gothic and more doom themes and lyrics. The times when big concerts and festivals were held and when these concerts and festivals were broadcast on channels also coincided with the 2000s. Foreign bands, names that many people were fans of, were being brought to the country, appearing on stage at festivals, and these, as I said, were being broadcast on channels. Festivals like *Rock'n Coke*, *Mastival*, *UniRock*, *Barışarock*, *Zeytinli Rock Fest* were being held, and going to these festivals was important for the youth. Young people would unite, listen to the names and bands they loved, and socialize. Many bands and names coming to the country for the first time appeared on stage at these concerts and met the Turkish audience. They saw their songs being sung in unison and would come to concerts again. I was able to go to some of these, but unfortunately, I couldn't attend others. Some festivals faced obstacles over time or the organizers stopped making them. There was a media leg to this event, namely the TV part. The music videos of the bands and names making the music had begun to be visible on TVs. While MTV kept up with the change in the world, Dream TV was taking on this task in Turkey. It would broadcast clips, conduct interviews, broadcast concerts and festivals, and even become a sponsor. Programs were made where rock and metal music was discussed and guests were invited. Especially the '*Yürexes*' program on Dream TV was very important for us. Bands that were known but not visible in the mainstream media would appear, chats would be held, and mini-concerts would be performed. Besides that, big names were also coming, and quality conversations were happening. Still today, many people watch these conversations and listen to the songs there. Again, different programs were being made on other channels; they were invited to well-known Talk Show programs and their albums were introduced.

In the early and mid-2000s, the Turkish rock and metal scene was truly experiencing its golden age, and the efforts given for years were bearing fruit. Concerts had begun to move to stadiums; the quality albums that emerged were literally telling their troubles to the listener and saying "be yourself" to the one listening, i.e., to us. Very good albums were coming out

in the world, and we were trying to gain access to them, talking about the albums, and discussing which song was better. Young people would play rock-metal songs because it was fashion or they thought it would look "cool". Images like "subculture" or "bad" were being demolished; the rock and metal community was explaining itself and stating how it looked at the world. The albums and songs released in that period had also made big impacts.

Manga's "Bir Kadın Çizeceksin," Duman's "Herşeyi Yak," Mor ve Ötesi's "Bir Derdim Var," Şebnem Ferah's "Ben Şarkımı Söylerken," Hayko Cepkin's "Bertaraf Et," and those many other songs came out in those periods and became hits. Almost everyone had begun to listen. These songs were being played on many music channels. I had heard these songs too and was trying to listen as much as I could. We were trying to learn about the bands that the rock and metal audience also listened to in the forum sites of that period. Especially a concert that added excitement to the metal community and was a major breaking point had taken place. The concert organized by Pentagram at the Bostancı Show Center in February 2007 created a break. Pentagram had given concerts and appeared at festivals before, but this concert was very big and beautiful. Later in the same year, Şebnem Ferah gave a concert with a symphonic orchestra in March, and this was released as a DVD. These concerts made a big impact in the rock and metal world and showed that such concerts could be made. Concept concerts were being organized, and in these concept concerts, various groups were brought together. As technology developed and the internet began to enter many homes, it had also entered our home. As the internet developed, I had discovered forum sites and chat rooms. There we would talk about what we were listening to, which names or bands' songs we liked or disliked, saying "if this was like this, if that was done like that," reading the articles written, and I was even writing and sharing articles. The contents of these articles were not in the style of technical writings. My writings were mostly about what we liked, what we didn't like, and things like how the songs could have been better. I had now started becoming a person who wrote articles on various sites, and my opinion was being asked on some issues. Thanks to my writings on these sites, I had started writing articles for some magazines. My writings were weak in technical matters; I was writing more as a listener, but it was loved, and this also made me happy. I was writing on sites that were underground culture and also on very well-known sites. I wrote some with pseudonyms and some with my own name. In this way, I had reached a certain recognition, and when a group or name made an album, there were those who wondered what I had to say; indeed, even though I was a middle or high school student at the time, there were those who thought my age was older, and I had even received writing offers from some magazines. Of course, because my age was young, I couldn't work as a writer, but they had published the articles I wrote. Because I was actively present on these sites constantly, I had the opportunity to meet names that are still in the Turkish rock and metal market today. Meeting these names, having them listen to my ideas on some issues, and valuing my ideas made me feel special, but I had understood this: no matter what, they were listening to me as a listener and taking note of what I said. Many would invite me to their concerts, some would talk with us saying "we are going to do something like this"; I don't know if those in another musical genre do this. For myself, I was establishing communication and could chat with the people I loved. When I entered chat rooms, it made me happy that the person knew me, was reading my articles, and stated their ideas.

Still today, when talking about some bands or going to their concerts, the fact that the group members recognize me and that we chat showed that those making this music cannot look down on people. Besides this, it had also granted the chance to meet other people on forum

sites or sites where rock and metal music was discussed. I was meeting and could chat with names my age or older than me. These were people outside my city, even in various parts of the world. Besides chatting with each other, we were also sharing music and saying "listen to this too". Even people founding their own bands shared their songs with us and asked for our ideas. These sites were literally the places where we socialized and chatted comfortably. Of course, it was our natural environment for us who lived by adopting this culture. Being in such environments made me happy, and perhaps the foundations of my first writing experiences were laid. Of course, we were happy about the rock and metal music explosion in the world; bands and names that should be known were being known, and rock and metal music was being played on TVs. Indeed, we were happy because some were seeing the values they deserved to see, but bands and names that wanted to benefit from this popularity had also begun to enter these works without knowing what rock and metal music was. Their quality was a matter of debate, and they were not very loved, even being criticized by those who listened to rock and metal. I was trying not to listen to names that did not understand or respect the philosophy of rock and metal music, and I was writing articles about these bands stating what I didn't like. The issue was not whether they made hard music or not; the issue was that they were trying to make this music without fully grasping the things rock and metal music made one feel. They had lovers and fans in magazines and forum sites, and they were trying to defend them, but we, the core audience, were explaining why we didn't love them and even discussing it. The fans of those bands disappeared over time and they can be described like a youthful craze, but I am still someone who listens to rock music and metal music with love, conducts research on these subjects, and writes articles. Most names and bands that began making music in the late 1990s or early 2000s still continue their music today, and they all became big names. They continue their concerts on big stages and at festivals. Indeed, their continuing by adding onto the legacies they received from previous generations shows that this music will never die. I say to myself, I'm glad they make this music and I'm glad I know and listen to these names. I think having listened to this music with love in that environment called noisy in the 2000s and having learned many things added values to me. When I look back from today, I can say a solid legacy was left; for better or worse, a legacy was left. It is still possible to hear those nu-metal and metalcore genes in today's popular bands like Bring Me The Horizon or Spiritbox. There is also another legacy left to me from those times. Friends I gained from sites where rock and metal music was discussed, musicians I met and still love, and my courage to write and publish articles on these subjects. Thanks to this courage to write and publish that I took from there, it allowed me not only to write review articles but to think critically and write it. While songs in those hard tones opened the doors of new worlds to me, I didn't know that thanks to the music where those hard tones passed, I would meet people in forum sites and would do authorship. I say, I'm glad I put on the first cassette and listened and liked it.

While saying my final words, Rock and Metal music tells me: that I must be myself no matter what, and that I must walk without muting the volume of the music and always question everything. Rock and metal music did not emerge for the first time in the 1990s or 2000s perhaps, but the effects and legacies of the solid foundations laid at that time still live today and will continue to live. Because rock and metal music is an identity, and as long as there are those who live and keep this identity alive, it will continue to live.