

Alisjahboana

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The Lessons  
In The Music

Millennial is a term for those who were born between the year 1981 to 1996. I am a millennial because I was born in the year 1995.

I was not aware of the term until the older generations (read: Baby Boomers) began to speak about us, reporting on studies, articles, or observations on the behaviours and lifestyle that we have. To them, we are notorious for being lazy, self-absorbed avocado eaters who could not handle working in cubicles and are doomed to a life under the mercy of a crippling economy.

Now, I know all these statements sound ridiculous to us. How dare they call us lazy when we are just trying to make sure we are making the best use of our time? Generalising the fact that we only eat avocado toast when some of us might not even like avocados? And that we could not handle working in cubicles when, really...why choose being in cubicles when nowadays there are so many kinds of profession and working arrangements to choose from?

Ah, but stop right there. Do you hear yourself complaining about what they say about us? True, it is unfair that they make such statements and generalisations, but what if what they say about us might be true?

Listening to how these two generations bicker with each other sometimes remind me of what usually happens at home. It is as if the millennials are

the children who are closing their eyes and ears to the advices of their parents, ending in heated arguments where children shut themselves in their room and are left to reflect on their own. I know, it is not nice to always be treated as a child but like how we sometimes realise what our mothers say is the harsh reality, the Baby Boomers might be right.

Parents and the way we were brought up are, no doubt, huge influences on how we are living now. But in those lonely times that we reflect, we tend look to other things to find answers to our private questions. Whether that is we speak to someone, watch a movie, read a book, or...listen to music in the safety of our bedrooms.

Music, especially, has a way of pulling us into the mood of its lyrics and tunes. It accompanies us in the most ceremonial of times—weddings, birthdays, funerals, or a mere party. It is so powerful that it breathes life into the stories that we like to watch in cinemas or in theatres. It has become such a basic part to the human lives.

I believe that we also learn from music. If not by listening to all those lyrics, by seeing all those the images that they portray in music videos. We learn from these musicians about expressing ourselves at a young age, no matter how ridiculous it can be. Considering how we were exposed to everything technology has to offer since we were children, it is possible. And the songs that I will talk about after this could show you...

# Perfect

# Simple Plan

2003  
No Pads, No  
Helmets...Just Balls

*Hey, Dad, look at me  
Think back, and talk to me  
Did I grow up according to plan?*

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I can speak for myself that I did cry to these words once. It was as if lead singer Pierre Bouvier was amplifying the questions in my stead to my parents as my anxiety grew from the pressure of becoming a trophy child while my grades were saying something completely different altogether.

*And now I try hard to make it  
I just wanna make you proud  
I'm never gonna be good enough for you  
Can't pretend that I'm alright  
And you can't change me*

The song was released in 2002, it came up at a time when we were mostly tweens and teenagers just barely getting a grasp on who we are and what we mean to the people around us. The music video also shows people of our age at that time, brooding in their bedrooms adorned with memorabilia, trophies, and posters suggesting how normal their lives seem to be.



*[chorus]*  
*'Cause we lost it all*  
*Nothing lasts forever*  
*I'm sorry*  
*I can't be perfect*  
*Now it's just too late*  
*And we can't go back*  
*I'm sorry*  
*I can't be perfect*

Yet they seem to be struggling to express themselves to their parents, rewriting a letter that never say enough and throwing things as they peak in anger—or in one of the scenes—showing one of the kid trying to ignore the parents who are silhouettes shouting at each other. In the end, one of the girls runs away from home.

This song may be showing us one of the reason why we are struggling and having more anxieties than the generations before us. That struggle to be the perfect child among countless others we carry within us, maybe even until now.

# Stan

2002  
The Marshall  
Mathers LP

# Eminem

A song that became the origin story of the word "stan". Urban Dictionary defines the word as "a crazed and obsessed fan, ...the term Stan is used to describe a fan who goes to great lengths to obsess over a celebrity." Nowadays, it is commonly used in internet speak and the birth of such a word is a testament to how popular this song is. This is because the song takes the point of view of a guy named Stanley, a crazy and obsessed fan of Eminem, who continues to write fan mails to an idol who seems to never write back. 11

But when you dissect the song, it reveals something even more than just being the origin of an internet slang.

*See, I'm just like you in a way:  
 I never knew my father neither  
 He used to always cheat on my mom and beat her  
 I can relate to what you're sayin' in your songs  
 So when I have a shitty day, I drift away and put 'em on  
 'Cause I don't really got shit else  
 So that shit helps when I'm depressed  
 I even got a tattoo of your name across the chest  
 Sometimes I even cut myself to see how much it bleeds  
 It's like adrenaline,  
 the pain is such a sudden rush for me  
 See, everything you say is real,  
 and I respect you 'cause you tell it  
 My girlfriend's jealous 'cause I talk about you 24/7  
 But she don't know you like I know you, Slim,  
 no one does  
 She don't know what it was like for people like us  
 growin' up.*

As shown in this part of the song, it highlights some of the mental issues in society from the perspective of one disturbed man. It was released in 2000 and was aired on MTV.

When I watched it for the first few times as a kid, I was scared, the movie-like music video was dark and full of brutal scenes. I wasn't sure I should be watching it, to be honest, but I kept on anyway. And now, I realise it might have been one of the first music videos introduced us to the awareness of mental health.



# Numb

# Linkin Park

2003  
Metora

Another song for the troubled and a song that you can really scream your lungs to when you are frustrated. And that is most likely what we did when we heard this song after a few times. Chester Bennington (rest in peace) really captured the emotions with his signature raspy voice. 15

*I've become so numb, I can't feel you there  
Become so tired, so much more aware  
I'm becoming this, all I want to do  
Is be more like me and be less like you!*

This song alludes to the pressure from society that ends up pressing someone to the point of depression. If the previous song was responsible for raising our awareness about mental health, this one made us realise that some of us might be having these issues because the society is a toxic environment for one's mental well-being.

*Can't you see that you're smothering me?  
Holding too tightly, afraid to lose control  
'Cause everything that you thought I would be  
Has fallen apart right in front of you  
Caught in the undertow, just caught in the undertow  
Every step that I take is another mistake to you  
Caught in the undertow, just caught in the undertow  
And every second I waste is more than I can take!*

The music video amplifies the notion of being pressured by society by showing a college girl who gets isolated from the society who moves faster than she can really deal with. I am sure some of us related to the girl.



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# Linger

# The Cranberries

2002  
The Marshall  
Mathers LP

Linger is as familiar as the songs you would hear when you are riding in a cab with a talkative uncle. It is undoubtedly an anthem for the lovers and the love-struck in the 90s.

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*But I'm in so deep  
You know I'm such a fool for you  
You've got me wrapped around your finger  
Do you have to let it linger?  
Do you have to, do you have to, do you  
have to let it linger?*

The song is a love letter to a man that Dolores O'Riordan met at a disco, who stole her first proper kiss and yet dances with her friend the next time she went. Sounds like a bad case of a Tinder match who stole our heart but left only days after? Yeah, I am sure some of us have had that moment.

# Wonder wall

2003  
Metetra

# Oasis

*Because maybe  
You're gonna be the one that saves me  
And after all  
You're my wonderwall*

*And all the roads that lead you there were winding  
And all the lights that light the way are blinding  
There are many things that I would like to say to you  
But I don't know how*

A song loved by many, a song for many karaoke sessions, and a classic in radio playlists. The word "wonderwall" itself does not have any concrete meaning. It was inspired by George Harrison's Wonderwall Music, the debut solo album that he released after departing from The Beatles. No matter what the origin of the song is, listening to this song you cannot help but to want someone or something as your wonderwall too. 21

It almost sounds as if the song might be a pre-cursor to the emo music that we know today. The songwriter and Oasis' singer, Noel Gallagher, said initially that this song was about his then-girlfriend but later on revealed that it is about his divorce.

Taking cue from the emotion in this song and the way that it speaks about a romantic conflict, this song might have shaped our perception of the kind of romantic relationship that we look for, which is one that fosters a deep and meaningful connection before committing to a life together.

# Hollaback

# Girl

# Stefani

# Gwen

2005  
Love. Angel.  
Music. Baby

Born as a diss track, and ending up a power song. Gwen Stefani had us hooked and spelling "B-A-N-A-N-A-S" all over town before we even realised we were doing it. The song was a response to Courtney Love in an interview with Seventeen magazine who compared the celebrity scene with a high school TV drama and said that Gwen Stefani is the peppy popular "cheerleader", while Love is the "smoker"—an insult to the former singer of ska punk band No Doubt. So naturally, Stefani took it up a notch and became the leader of her own proverbial cheer squad, adopting cheerleading terms to craft her iconic diss track.

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*A few times I've been around that track  
So it's not just gonna happen like that  
'Cause I ain't no Hollaback Girl  
I ain't no Hollaback Girl  
A few times I've been around that track  
So it's not just gonna happen like that  
'Cause I ain't no Hollaback Girl  
I ain't no Hollaback Girl*

If you ever happen to wonder why the ladies born in-between 1981-1996 are more shameless and fiercely unapologetic than the previous generation, this track could be one of the reasons why. Because the song has turned cat fights into a celebration of how bad ass women can be, even to their own haters.

# 24 Wannabe

2002  
The Marshall  
Mathers LP

# The Spice Girls

In the same spirit as "Hollaback Girl", British power pop girl group The Spice Girls had everyone jumping and singing along to their catchy hit song, in which they explain to a potential lover that they must get along with their friends if they want to stay lovers. It was the girl power anthem of the 90s, though unlike Stefani, this song just screams "girls stand by each other".

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*If you wanna be my lover, you gotta get with  
my friends (Gotta get with my friends)  
Make it last forever, friendship never ends  
If you wanna be my lover, you have got to  
give (You've got to give)  
Taking is too easy, but that's the way it is*

The music video shows them running and ransacking through a hotel building in London, ruining tea parties while each girl shows their wild personality throughout the one-shot video. It was far from ladylike but the fun and upbeat attitude portrayed by the Spice Girls was a sure recipe for the song's success. I mean—how many of you ladies out there remember singing and dancing to the song, or at least witnessed your sisters jamming to it?

The music video was remade for a United Nations Global Goals campaign with girls from around the world singing along to the song and address the gender inequality issues faced by women worldwide. So I guess while we listened, danced, and sung to it, we might have learned early of what girl power really meant or that a girl can be anything they want to be, and sure as hell will not get with you if you do not get with their friends.

# Black or White

1991  
Dangerous

# Michael

# Jackson

We are one of the lucky generations to have witnessed Michael Jackson's talent and everything he had to offer to the world. His music was not only addicting but also carries a message for everyone to heed. One of the most popular songs that he has released is "Black or White", a song that addresses racial harmony in the most shameless way possible.

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*But, if you're thinking about my baby  
It don't matter if you're black or white*

The phrase, repeated multiple times in the song, shows how skin colour does not matter to Jackson when it comes to making connections. The fact that he packed this message into a pop song was phenomenal at that time, proving just how great he is and how influential music can be.

In addition to the lyrics, the music video celebrates diversity as much as it could. It shows Michael dancing along in sequence to different types of traditional dancers from around the world—Southern African, Thai, Native American, and Russian—before shouting "I ain't scared of no sheets", a reference to the KKK supremacist group, with defiance.

*Protection for gangs, clubs and nations  
 Causing grief in human relations  
 It's a turf war on a global scale  
 I'd rather hear both sides of the tale  
 See, it's not about races  
 Just places, faces  
 Where your blood comes from is where your space is  
 I've seen the bright get duller  
 I'm not going to spend my life being a colour*

Another scene shows a sequence of people with different races and nationalities dance to the song while morphing into one another. The song was released in 1991 and with its colourful references to world cultures and fun images of a rapping Macaulay Culkin, the music video might have made its way into our collective memories and taught us a thing or two about racial harmony, and is one of the many reasons why Millennials are most likely to oppose racism



Where is

The Love?

Peas

Black Eyed

2003  
Elephunk

*People killin', people dyin'  
Children hurt and you hear them cryin'  
Will you practice what you preach?  
And would you turn the other cheek?  
Father, father, father, help us  
Send some guidance from above  
These people got me, got me questionin'*

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I could remember being so captivated by the song because a.) it was hip-hop, and b.) because it was talking about peace and love. It easily became one of my favourite songs, even until this day.

Honestly, who would not relate to this song? Unless you are heartless, the Black Eyed Peas delivered the message in this song with so much swag and class that there is no way you can forget this song. It might be even more so for us millennials who were still young at the time of this song's release, because it became a quick insight into the problems that were happening in the world.



32 *I feel the weight of the world on my shoulder  
As I'm getting older, y'all people gets colder  
Most of us only care about money-makin'  
Selfishness got us followin' the wrong direction  
Wrong information always shown by the media  
Negative images is the main criteria  
Infecting the young minds faster than bacteria  
Kids wanna act like what they see in the cinema  
Whatever happened to the values of humanity?  
Whatever happened to the fairness and equality?  
Instead of spreadin' love we spreadin' animosity  
Lack of understandin' leading us away from unity  
That's the reason why sometimes I'm feelin' under  
That's the reason why sometimes I'm feelin' down  
It's no wonder why sometimes I'm feelin' under  
Gotta keep my faith alive 'til love is found  
Now ask yourself...*

They bluntly speak of the social issues in the world including terrorism, war, and racism. Maybe it is because of songs like "Where is the Love?" that also built the spirit of love that we hold on to today.

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2006  
Supersunny-  
speedgraphic,  
The LP

Learn to Live

With What

YOU ARE?

BEN  
FOLDS

35  
They bluntly speak of the social issues in the world including terrorism, war, and racism. Maybe it is because of songs like "Where is the Love?" that also built the spirit of love that we hold on to today.

*And I'm not saying that the effort is  
a waste of time, but I  
Just love you for the things you  
couldn't change though you tried  
These hours of confusion they will  
soon expire like, Everything does*

The music video for this song shows Folds dressing up as a pirate after a show and frolicking about the town to the dismay of some people calling him a "creep". Yet he does not care about what these and continues to walk as a pirate. It shows Ben Folds' signature sense of humour and also tells us that we really should not care about everyone else too much and that as long as we have accepted who we are, life is not that bad.

*Sometimes  
Everything you've ever wanted  
Floats above  
He's sticking out his tongue and laughing  
While everything  
Anyone can ever need  
Is down below  
Waiting for you  
To know this  
There's never gonna be a moment of truth for you  
While the world is watching  
All you need is the thing you've forgotten  
And that's to learn to live with what you are*

After listening back to all these songs, I realise our young minds have absorbed so many messages and lessons in such a short time. With the help of technology and media at that time, we were exposed to so many images that shaped our whole thought process and perception even to this day.

The songs that I presented to you in this little playlist certainly shows how depressed we are as a generation and despite the fact that we grew up in one of the most peaceful times in history, we are also facing many problems in the world that we cannot ignore.

It goes without saying that everyone's experience is different. I am sure that if we analyse the music that the Baby Boomers listened to in their younger years, we will be able understand why they think the way that they do. And because of that, there is no reason why we Millennials should despise the elders just because of what they say about us. It goes towards the elder generation as well—maybe if you tried listening to the young'uns, you can understand too. There is no use in arguing with one another anymore.

Just listen to the music and you know...learn to live with what you are.

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