BIZZARH

a conversation on how to craft new narratives
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04.</td>
<td>Staff Letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07.</td>
<td>What Are You Listening To?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.</td>
<td>Educate, Create, Cultivate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.</td>
<td>New Sounds on Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Made of Soul: Tamera Russell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Looking Back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Life Under the 6ix God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Bizzarh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>“Indie music is not ‘white music’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Thnks Fr Th Msgny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Hand Over the Microphone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Cole Mendez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Being South Asian Is A Blessing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Code Generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Critiquing the Spaces of Music Criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Black Grammys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Weathering the Modern Typhoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Boy Better Know About Grime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Best Albums of 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Contributors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I remember my introduction to demo vividly. After a chance meeting with this year’s music coordinator, Aviva, in my first year, she did everything but drag me by the arm to the first meeting, and I have had my feet firmly planted in the demo community ever since. Reminiscing on my experience has made me wonder not only how our writers stumbled into demo but exactly which of the magazine’s qualities keep them coming back. Aside from being an ever-growing community that is endlessly supportive and freewheelin’ in its playfulness, I think much of it has to do with an unfettered freedom that is surprisingly rare in campus spaces. Both intensely personal and capable of capturing board opinions, demo remains a platform where our writers not only have space to experiment with their prose but with their ideas.

Demo is not just a subversive music publication with a penchant for hot takes but also a landing site for poignant commentary on the new and ongoing challenges facing music scenes on a larger scale. The tone of this year’s issue continues our tradition of pushing the envelope in order to capture student responses to an increasingly precarious social paradigm. Our articles this year are poignant, direct, and, above all, gutsy as hell. I anticipate that they will pry open a conversation, with good reason; the time for complacency is past and our writers are pushing for direct action. You should probably take notes. Thanks to everyone that’s joined us on this journey, you are forever in our hearts (and you should probably take notes as well).

I cannot imagine my time at the University of Toronto without demo. This is super cheesy and definitely not something clever where I drop a bunch of Kanye lines about how awesome I am but seriously, demo shaped my University of Toronto experience. In high school I always wanted a reliable concert buddy. Through demo, I have found a community of concert buddies who have introduced me to amazing music and the coolest venues in Toronto (RIP S.H.I.B.G.B.❤). Demo is everything I wanted in my squad goals: hangouts, dynamic effort and talent, and everyone letting me freak out about how much I adore St. Vincent. Being a part of the masthead this year was a privilege I never expected, and it has been a heck of a ride. Thank you, demo, for keepin’ it 3 hunna; thanks to you, I have never felt alone in the Toronto music scene.

In first year, four (and a half million) years ago (yes, I am old, and yes, I fear death), one of my professors narrativized that the graphic novel had blossomed as an artform because no one paid any attention to it. If no one is paying attention, there are few rules. Demo can be read in much the same way: perched a little precariously on campus, without the prestige of a literary journal but not quite cool enough to sit with the art publications either. Instead, it occupies a less visible space; somewhere without the crushing weight of all those readers. Hidden in the back of the garden with the overlooked weeds and the little clusters of mushrooms, demo has bloomed.

Is this reading entirely accurate? No, but there is at least some truth to it. In the space, the time, and the freedom demo has been given, it has grown significantly. Of course, hopefully, it will continue to do so. Attention is no more than what these insightful, dedicated, wonderful writers and artists deserve. However, I also hope that demo will stay a misfit, even after it becomes bewilderingly famous and influential (do not hold your breath; your uncle’s punk zine has a larger circulation). Those qualities have attracted a really wonderful community, and I am grateful to have been a part of it. As such, thank you to everyone who has been involved here, online, and at the hangouts and meetings. It has been an honour and a pleasure.

I first learned about demo amid the chaos of Frosh week, before I had even stepped foot into any of my classes. My contributions to the print issue started off small; I contributed to layout first year, wrote an article second year, and now I have been given the opportunity to make an even greater contribution as Design Editor. Getting this position taught me many a thing, but most importantly it taught me the beauty in having people believe and trust in you and your abilities. So I wanted this issue to be a thank you: to all the incredible writers who dedicated so much of themselves and their time to bring to light the issues within the music scene; to everyone who helped with design; and to the truly inspirational people with whom I share a masthead position. And to you, for reading this and picking up our issue. I hope it serves you well.
Welcome to the Spring 2017 issue of *Demo*. With the University of Toronto devoting significant resources to determining how it will respond to the calls to action from Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, this issue’s theme of Representation and Reclaiming Space is perhaps more pertinent and pressing than ever.

Hart House has recently completed a new five-year Strategic Plan highlighting the key themes of Diversity, Exploration and Engagement. Hart House is committed to becoming an even more inclusive, welcoming and respectful space where students of all communities, backgrounds, identities, and abilities see themselves reflected; where they come together to learn about themselves, one another and the world beyond U of T in an atmosphere of collaboration, common interest and community.

Student publications like this magazine are essential to that undertaking. *Demo* provides an important way of establishing connection between students and the broader community beyond Hart House’s walls. The arts and arts-related journalism can play a powerful role in reclaiming space, providing a platform to previously-unheard voices, and creating new communities-of-interest that are equitable and inclusive. The arts do not merely reflect the world as it is; rather, they are fundamentally creative, and help to point out new ways of understanding and relating to our world both as it is and as it could be.

Since becoming Warden last year I have had the extraordinary privilege of meeting and working with countless dedicated and engaged students from all across the University who have made Hart House their home. Those whose connection to the House is primarily defined by their love of music in one form or another infuse our community with a particular energy and vitality. I would like to extend a special thanks to the team who put together this most recent issue of *Demo*, and to the rest of the Music Committee who do such important work to ensure that Hart House pulsates with as wide a variety of musical sounds and rhythms as there are members of the House.

I would also like to extend a special thanks to the team who put together this most recent issue of *Demo*.
It is easy to associate Toronto’s early 1990s independent music scene with Jonathan Bunce, better known by his stage name Jonny Dovercourt. Often lauded for his outstanding work founding Wavelength, a Toronto-based weekly music series on CIUT 89.5 FM, Bunce has also built an impressive portfolio as an editor, writer, musician, and organizer. Since founding Wavelength, a Toronto-based weekly music series in 2001, the live music scene has been continuously developing, with local bands finding a voice in the city’s established live music clubs such as The Legendary Horseshoe Pub or The Horseshoe Tavern.

How did U of T help facilitate real talent and extend it to the Toronto scene? U of T helped support the Toronto music scene through coverage in student papers such as The Varsity or The Gargoyle. As people who truly get his start writing about the local scene, he described the airplay on CIUT 99.5 FM—which has hosted countless influential radio shows, including The Masterplan, Mods and Rockers, No Beat Radio, Equalizing X-Distort, and Dementia 13. Canadian post-punk shows, including The Sadies, The Shovels, and The Gargoyles, are great examples of the underground scene that has been thriving at U of T for many years.

In a few sentences, how was the music scene at U of T when you attended the institution? There was not much of a music scene on campus when I attended the mid-1990s, besides a few bands that would play orientation events. I had to go off-campus to hear new or interesting music, at many of the city’s established live music clubs on Queen West or College Street. How did U of T help facilitate real talent and extend it to the Toronto scene? U of T helped support the Toronto music scene through coverage in student papers such as The Varsity or The Gargoyle. As people who truly get his start writing about the local scene, he described the airplay on CIUT 99.5 FM—which has hosted countless influential radio shows, including The Masterplan, Mods and Rockers, No Beat Radio, Equalizing X-Distort, and Dementia 13. Canadian post-punk shows, including The Sadies, The Shovels, and The Gargoyles, are great examples of the underground scene that has been thriving at U of T for many years.

For more information, visit Facebook.com/pg/realvicsrecords/ to find more information when it is scheduled!
An interview with rising Toronto R&B artist Tamera Russell

by Isaac Fox

MADE OF SOUL

Edited and condensed for publication.
What are some of demo's cover stars up to today?

Stuart Oakes

JORDAAN MASON

Jordaan has been working since I interviewed them. In July 2016, they released “11 short songs about dysphoria, transitioning, becoming, but not becoming anything in particular,” titled forma less. The album was, at least visibly, a success: tapes were “running low” in October and the whole thing got streamed by the big-name tastemakers at Stereogum. Jordaan also recently released a collection of demos for their 2015 album the decline of stupid fucking western civilization (both can be found on the “Jordaan Mason” Bandcamp) and some very nice long drone tracks under the Bandcamp name Slow-Blink & Purring. Other announcements included a new band called Winter Sisters, that you should not buy their albums for “ridiculous amounts of money” because they will come back into print, and that you should follow them on Twitter @hymn_her.

LIDO PIMIENTA

Lido Pimienta has also been making moves. In October 2016, she released her second album, La Papessa (find it on her “lido pimienta” Bandcamp). La Papessa was several years in the making, and is explicitly political, engaging with a range of issues including the international water crisis, living in a heteronormative, patriarchal society, and life as an outsider—an Afro-Colombian and South American Indigenous woman—in Canadian spaces. She has already begun work on her next release, the “industrial reggaeton” album Miss Colombia, according to her Twitter. In the meantime, she has released a series of one-offs on Soundcloud including a stunning re-work of Rihanna’s “Work” called “Camellando,” has appeared on A Tribe Called Red’s 2016 album We Are The Hallucination Nation, and has snagged a series of excellent interviews with The Fader, Bandcamp Daily, Vice, and NOW.

ZOOWOLF

Just after demo last talked to Zoo Owl, whose music and live show investigate cyber-organics, biometrics, and light-sensors through experimental, dance-dont-hears, the dinosaur-loving producer released his first album, Hollow (available on Bandcamp). Since then, there has been too hint of new music. Instead, Zoo Owl has been focusing on developing as a live performer. He played Summerworks, Camp Wavelength, and Long Winter in 2016, as well as a seemingly endless number of regular shows around town (check his Facebook page for updates). He has been busy refining his equipment, including an updated version of his infamous light goggles, which resemble bird’s eyes shining in the dark.

Demo’s history is a mystery to me. I started writing (rap reviews, because of course I did) for the magazine in 2014—my first year of undergrad. That year, demo interviewed Toronto’s multi-sensory avian staple Zoo Owl for its cover story, a formal precedent that has been followed faithfully in the years since. In 2015, the fantastic art-pop activist Lido Pimienta graced the cover. In 2016, demo reached out to the insightful non-binary (“human mess”) author and songwriter Jordaan Mason. This year we are excited to feature the exhilarating cosmic rap duo Bizzarh. That, however, is the extent of my knowledge regarding demo trivia. Of demo’s ten years prior to 2014, I know little, having heard only myth and seen nothing but the few, grainy images of a “Westsiiiiiiiiiide! of Toronto? Exploring Hip Hop in GTA suburbs” cover and something called “Off The Beaten Path.” Student publications are like that: editors graduate, print copies disappear, and a single specimen is perhaps archived in a dark, lonely corner of who-knows-which library. Before I leave demo, I would like to shine some present-moment light on those mysterious issues. A tidy place to begin that journey? On solid ground, of course, with an update on our star cover artists of the past three years; the one’s this old fogy remembers.

© Photo by Will Goldie.
Aubrey Drake Graham's story began in 2006 when he delved further into the city's rap scene and soon discovered his label, October's Very Own (OVO) Sound. Intrigued, She proceeded to tell me a story about forgotten artists, release, Views, and she let out a sigh of exasperation.

Today, Drake reigns as the self-proclaimed “Six God” of Toronto. However, the true benefit of his presence has been called into question as the local scene continues to struggle out from within his lengthy shadow. The fledgling Canadian rapper soon after, on the cover of House of Balloons, the story of an OVO co-signees that have failed to receive support from their label. iLoveMakonnen, for instance, is an Atlanta rapper who

In April, I was visiting with an old friend from high school and we came upon the topic of Drake, Toronto's all mighty ruler. I asked her what she thought of his latest release, VIEWS, and she let out a sigh of exasperation. She proceeded to tell me a story about forgotten artists, manipulation, and mistreatment at the hands of the “6 God” and his label, October's Very Own (OVO) Sound. Intrigued, I delved further into the city's rap scene and soon discovered the lesser-known narrative of Drake's Toronto.

Still, it is unclear as to whether OVO's domination is a true benefit to Toronto and its diverse range of local talent. Over the past couple of years, allegations have emerged accusing Drake of underpaying, stealing from, and not supporting many of OVO's signees from the downtown core and the GTA. The question remains as to whether the “6 God” is deserving of his title or if he has instead manipulated Toronto's rap scene in order to remain relevant and advance his personal image.

Perhaps feeling self-indulgent in his personal success story, Drake claims in a 2015 Sprite “Obey Your Thirst” video feature that an artist does not have to relocate to a major music city like New York in order to find success. Instead, he recommends that you “do it the way The Weeknd did it, do it the way PartyNextDoor did it, do it the way I did it... Do it from where you're at... If you have the music, that's all it takes.” However, skepticism has emerged as to whether it is truly possible to rise to rap superstardom within the current Toronto scene. As Slava Pastuk noted in a 2015 Nazir article, the young Degrassi star only achieved success because promoter J. Prince flew him to Houston in order to meet Lil Wayne in 2008. As Lil Wayne mentored Drake, the young artist developed a substantial network across the United States, hopping from one city to the next as he gradually constructed a web of collaborators and connections. Now, as one of the most famous rappers in the business, Drake has reclaimed Toronto, continuously expressing pride in his hometown to the point of featuring the CN Tower on the cover of VIEWS. OVO Sound has similarly established themselves as the almighty tastemakers of the 6ix and have

worked hard to develop an image of apparent devotion to the local scene. However, in its current state of OVO control, Toronto seems unable to substantially support its rising stars.

Regent Park artist Mo-G is a prime example of mismanagement. In 2015, the Toronto rapper created the “Ginobili Dance,” a signature left-handed dance move first seen in his video for “Still [Smoke Dang].” Drake quickly discovered Mo-G and posted a video of the dance on Instagram. As Mo-G's popularity grew, Drake even mentioned the rapper on hit tracks like “Summer Sixteen” and “Jumpman,” and performed the Ginobili Dance in his “Energy” music video. However, Mo-G did not have kind words for the “6 God,” recently criticizing OVO founder and Drake's co-manager, Oliver El-Khalibi. In a fiery Instagram post, Mo-G asked, “Have you ever heard in the history of hip-hop a man who helps gives [sic] away his creativity and helps make billboard hits but doesn't get paid a dollar for it or one credit for it,” claiming in follow-up videos that “all [El-Khalibi] offered [him was] 500 dollars.” Mo-G stated that $500 could not even pay his mother's rent and labeled El-Khalibi a “culture vulture.” These allegations are the latest in a long string of local and international OVO co-signees that have failed to receive support from their label.

Yet, in May The Globe and Mail released an article praising Drake for his expansion of Toronto's music scene. The numerious points of contention seem to have been ignored, as the people of the 6ix continue to be enamored by the glory of Drake and his awe-inspiring presence. Perhaps this is endemic of the cultural divide within the city, as many reporters and promoters of Drake's Toronto remain blind to the struggles of lesser-known locals. All things considered, Drake can be seen continuously appearing on popular tracks, promoting his own brand initial feature, remix, or video, the signee will receive little sustained support or promotion from the label and its leader and will fade into obscurity. By doing so, OVO maintains the mirage that it is expanding Toronto's scene, and Drake can be seen continuously appearing on popular tracks, promoting his own brand at all times. This act of Drake-centrism began with the Weeknd, the former OVO artist from Scarborough. In a 2015 Rolling Stone interview written by Josh Eells, the R&B artist mentioned that he “gave up almost half of [his album House of Balloons]” to Drake’s 2011 critical success Take Care. Although the Weeknd has experienced considerable popularity in recent years, he revealed that “you never know what I would have done if this success wasn't in front of me now.” It seems the spotless tale of Drake's ascension has for years been piggybacking upon the work of other artists.

In a 2015 Nown article, the young Degrassi star only achieved success because promoter J. Prince flew him to Houston in order to meet Lil Wayne in 2008. As Lil Wayne mentored Drake, the young artist developed a substantial network across the United States, hopping from one city to the next as he gradually constructed a web of collaborators and connections. Now, as one of the most famous rappers in the business, Drake has reclaimed Toronto, continuously expressing pride in his hometown to the point of featuring the CN Tower on the cover of VIEWS. OVO Sound has similarly established themselves as the almighty tastemakers of the 6ix and have

OVO maintains the mirage that it is expanding Toronto's scene.
a conversation on how to craft new narratives

words by melissa vincent
photography by yannis guibinga
A
s artists, Bizzarh are refreshingly challenging to categorize. Comprising Jaz Aminata (aka Blak Matilda) and Teoni Amore (aka Aqua), the Toronto-based soulquestrían rap duo follows an artistic lineage that ranges from the afrosurrealism of Sun Ra and Octavia Butler to the neo-soul revival established by Lauryn Hill and Erykah Badu. Bizzarh’s music—draped in carefully selected cosmic influences—has led them to share a stage with Willow Smith, and rings of two artists that play only by rules that they have drawn themselves. It is an enticing alternative given the current musical landscape, which has called for an overhaul of traditional industry practices that mirrors the need for a similar transformation in political

In several ways, 2016 was the year that was dominated by the voices of women of colour proposing crucial and vibrant new narratives. Solange’s *A Seat at the Table* nearly eclipsed her sister’s call to arms and activism, while Princess Nokia and Amiata instead select to highlight the ways it is working for them. "There is an energy in the air in Toronto that breeds an optimism in meeting people and wanting to connect with others. I can have a group of friends with people from all walks of life and there’s this feeling of, ‘we’re all newbies here trying to hit the ground running and just make it,” Aminata describes. "It’s important to know that there are so many beams of light in Toronto; there are more than a handful of these people. To have the opportunity to connect with them is inspiring for our character development.”

"The most important part of collaborating is to allow the encounter to be completely organic,” says Aminata. "We are vocal artists and rely on our voices as instruments and we create a vibe together and that is always a revelation. We work with creators who can give us a book so we can put a text in. When we connect with are essentially creating different books." 

Both members admit that sometimes exploring every avenue requires a geographic shift. "The thing about Toronto is that you can work your ass off but you can barely feed Mom or pay off her mortgage and if you can’t do it,” Aminata muses. "A lot of things are pulling us to L.A.” Amore continues. "But it’s not as easy to find genuine people there because it’s such a grind. No one’s trying to relax and create, they’re trying to grind and create income.” But we’re always going to find a way. We’re not privileged but we’re hustlers at heart." 

"Success to me is giving the green light to others." 

"Redrawing the Boundaries" 

Growing up in the Black Creek neighborhood located near Jane and Lawrence, Aminata and Amore lived on the same block. As children, they made up dances; by their early teens, dancing had evolved into making music together. "I had a lot going on in my brain and I figured, why not rap," Aminata explains. "They found comfort in discovering artists that offered alternatives to the narrow perception that all black female musicians needed to be vocal powerhouses. "Getting into artists like J*Davey and Erykah Badu was cool, like I can do this too and I don’t have to be like your typical Whitney Houston, Mariah Carey, and Beyoncé kind of singer," Amore remembers. "Of course they’re amazing, but it was the realization that I don’t have to do that. It broke down certain boundaries for me and let me explore without having the expectations to sound a certain way.” 

Later on, they would swap music through MSN, developing at the same time a fascination for the real and imagined extraterrestrial forces around them as a means to further refine their sound. "We’ve always been into the surreal and there has always been an intangible shit is for us,” and part of what makes Aminata and Amore’s story so important to tell is that it that it feels both collective and intimate. In their own words, “we’re two black girls from Toronto,” an affirmation of identity that resonates with anyone who has used their past to anchor their future. In sculpting a vision for a new musical paradigm, Aminata and Amore have developed a quasi-guidebook that pulls from their past and present while anticipating the future. It is unequivocally on their own terms.

"Locating Spaces to Grow" 

Trying to establish a foothold in any city is difficult and it can be especially challenging in Toronto, which lacks the creative infrastructure of other major urban centers like Los Angeles or New York. In a time when the shuttering of DIY spaces and the need for more systemic diversity often dominate the conversation about our local music ecosystem, Amore and Aminata instead select to highlight the ways it is working for them. "There is an energy in the air in Toronto that breeds an optimism in meeting people and wanting to connect with others. I can have a group of friends with people from all walks of life and there’s this feeling of, ‘we’re all newbies here trying to hit the ground running and just make it,” Aminata describes. "It’s important to know that there are so many beams of light in Toronto; there are more than a handful of these people. To have the opportunity to connect with them is inspiring for our character development.”

For the duo, collaboration is a crucial part of both their artistic process and growth inside and outside the studio. "The most important part of collaborating is to allow the encounter to be completely organic,” says Aminata. "We are vocal artists and rely on our voices as instruments and we create a vibe together and that is always a revelation. We work with creators who can give us a book so we can put a text in. When we connect with are essentially creating different books." 

Both members admit that sometimes exploring every avenue requires a geographic shift. "The thing about Toronto is that you can work your ass off but you can barely feed Mom or pay off her mortgage and if you can’t do it,” Aminata muses. "A lot of things are pulling us to L.A.” Amore continues. "But it’s not as easy to find genuine people there because it’s such a grind. No one’s trying to relax and create, they’re trying to grind and create income.” But we’re always going to find a way. We’re not privileged but we’re hustlers at heart.” 

"Redefining (and Realigning) Success" 

According to Bizzarh, success can be measured through the ability to not only do things on their own terms but, more importantly, at their own pace. “It’s okay to fail. It’s okay to go back to work for a little bit and say I can’t afford to be a creative nomad right now. I actually need to eat. I need to do these things,” Aminata shares. "Intention is important. You’re not trying to enslave yourself for someone else’s company, you’re just trying to make it work for yourself. I’ve learned my lesson about setting things in stone. Being patient is super important but also not letting your pride get in the way is super important.”

An important part of Amiata and Teoni’s hard work involves envisioning a target for their success. “We’ve grown through developing our sound in addition to developing ourselves. Mutually, the end goal is intergenerational wealth,” Aminata says. “We are young, black females raised by single moms. The statistics say that our chances of creating intergenerational wealth is little to none. But that little is also 100% and with that we’re going to do a lot so little girls who look like us can look up and see us. That’s the end goal. Success to me is giving the green light to others. Too many of us have the red light. If it takes being strong as an entity, we’re gonna work on every avenue.”

Ultimately for the two women, their end goal extends beyond changing music spaces; they have their sights set on the world. “Reclaiming space is something that I think should be an affirmation for black folks,” Aminata states. “I’m here to reclaim space on an everyday notion. We don’t have to explicitly protest in our music when we explicitly protest by going out in public, by making a public appearance, by sitting at the front of the subway and walking around and being black and being female and holding our heads high. Being visible is a responsibility, going out and holding our head high is a responsibility. As much as we love the underground, we can bring this black weirdness to the foreground and be exactly who we are for the sake of visibility.” But like most rapidly rising artists, Jaz Aminata and Teoni Amore are still actively working towards their goals. It is a conscious effort, which we are for the sake of visibility. “But like most rapidly rising artists, Jaz Aminata and Teoni Amore are still actively working towards their goals. It is a conscious effort, which
had an argument with a friend recently about whether indie music as a genre was "white music" in the same way that hip-hop was "black music." He argued that indie music was tied to white urban culture and is one of the few origins of music that did not develop as a bastardization of black music. By contrast, genres like hip-hop and jazz can historically be traced back to black culture and black social movements. We agreed to disagree.

A casual understanding of indie music might regard it as "white music," which excludes artists of colour and listeners from "indie music." While the indie music scene can debate within itself about its accepted definition, perhaps this assertion is due to the underlying (and ongoing) history of institutional racism within the industry that supports the genre. The name itself—which can be superficially understood as music released independently or by an independent label—is not inherently tied to whiteness; hip-hop, electronic, and experimental classical music all have extensive histories of releasing independently. It is the institutions of the music industry—the radio stations, the music festivals, and the record labels—that have created and maintained this perception of not only what indie music is but who it is created for: young, white audiences.

It is not as if racialized bodies are not participating in indie music. There are countless indie musicians that identify as people of colour: Rostam Batmanglij from Vampire Weekend, Karen O from the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Nancy Whang from LCD Soundsystem, Kele Okereke from Bloc Party, Santigold, FKA Twigs, and many others. Toronto-specific PoC artists include A Tribe Called Red, Shad, Obihijou, Harrison, Yamantaka // Sonic Titan, Kaytranada, and Jazz Cartier.

Last year, when Noah Berlatsky of The New Republic published, “Why ‘Indie’ Music Is So Unbearably White,” his argument stemmed from the reality that people of colour are making indie music but yet somehow it is not being considered "indie." Instead it is being relegated to other genres. His central point hinges on what race signifies: "Genres like rock and indie are for many people defined by other genres. His central point hinges on what race signifies: "Genres like rock and indie are for many people defined by whiteness—that is, white skin becomes the genre marker, rather than the music itself."

The general conceptualizations of indie music have had difficulty opening up its traditional categories in order to include a more diverse range of artists who could be considered to embody an "indie spirit." Who can deny that the genre is defined solely for white audiences. If this continues, we risk being shut out of white culture and feel a sense of ownership rather than alienation when listening to "indie" music; that it is inappropriate to consider it as a creation solely for white audiences. Indie music is not inherently white but if major cultural producers continue to prioritize the music of mostly white artists, it will reinforce the opinion that indie is primarily for white people. If this continues, we risk being shut out of the conversation. On 2011's Metal Meets, Toronto indie band Obihijou released a song entitled "Baybayin," which is Tagalog—the Filipino language—means "one who returns home." It also refers to freight boxes full of goods that the members of the Filipino diaspora send back to their relatives in the Philippines. The band sings that these boxes carry home "the weight of a better life." It is a story that I relate to deeply as a Filipino immigrant who moved when I was three. It matters that people of colour are included in indie music because we all deserve to hear music that reflects who we are. What is the mission of indie institutions like Indie88 if they are not dedicating themselves to showcasing artists of colour to showcase their talent, the institutions of the music industry—the record labels, the radio stations, that have created and maintained this perception of not only what indie music is but who it is created for: young, white audiences.

Indie88 is arguably the most public face of indie music in the city of Toronto and has a significant following both on air and online. Indie88 was created with the following mission: "Popular. Obscure. Signed. Unsigned. We believe indie comes in all shapes and sizes." And yet, Indie88 has consistently failed to uphold these principles, especially when it comes to artists of colour. Of all of my hours spent driving around and listening to Indie88, the radio station often favours indie-rock/indie-folk bands like The Lumineers or Arkells. I have rarely, if ever, heard them play artists that identify as people of colour.

A Personal Essay about how institutions of music in Toronto have failed people of colour

Angelo Gio Mateo
THANKS FOR THIS MESSAGE

THROUGH BEING COOL: WHAT IS REALLY WRONG WITH EMO KIDS?

GRACE GUIMOND

The first page of results when you Google image search the word “emo”: a selection of very enthusiastic eyeliner, gravity-defying reverse-mullets, and screen grabs pulled from a Wilklow article: “How to be Emo.” The only music-related result is Black Veil Brides, an American glam metal band. Search “90s emo” instead and almost every result is an image of a band or from a show, without a selfie or makeup tutorial in sight (save for an August 2002 prototypical “I Am I Emo?” infographic that ran in Seventeen Magazine). Mainstream success is often posited as the culprit for emo’s spiral away from hardcore punk and into recycled 4chan material. However, the real reason that emo garnered such an intense amount of hate in the mid-2000s was not solely due to its mainstream popularity but rather its popularity within a much more contentious and complicated demographic: preteen and teenage girls.

Emo is a hard-to-define umbrella encompassing a variety of subgenres. First wave emo started in the late 1980s as a more emotionally-driven offshoot of the Washington hardcore punk scene, with bands like Rites of Spring pushing towards a more intensely introspective focus. Throughout the late 1980s to the early-and mid-1990s, second-wave emo remained fairly underground, building on the style of earlier emo bands in order to carve out a distinct niche within hardcore. The much-daried third wave of emo hit the mainstream in the early 2000s with poppy and radio-friendly bands like Jimmy Eat World, Brand New, and everything else on Much Music’s Big Shiny Tunes 5-10, which brought with it the genre’s universally pervasive “hate-to-love, love-to-hate attitude.” Ten years post-commercial apex, emo is “cool” again, with newer bands being labelled as fourth-wave emo—though most bands falling under this umbrella reject the label—and drawing on mostly midwest emo for inspiration (a subset of emo music popularized in the mid-1990s and characterized by softer vocals and twinkly guitar).

Emo has consistently struggled with its positioning of female identities both in the content of its lyrics and within the scene itself. During the first and second wave (and later), lyrics often adopted a traditional Madonna / whore dichotomy wherein women are either overly-glorified through role-assigning pedestalization or overly demonized as “out to get you sluts.” Emo’s mainstream debut in the shape of its third wave replicated this dichotomy more broadly through a misogynistic backlash that was quite different from other scenes’ “it’s mainstream so now it sucks” discourse. The real issue 1990s emo alumni had with the change in direction was the word emo had been deemed “outdated.” The real reason emo garnered such an intense amount of hate in the mid-2000s was not solely due to its mainstream popularity but rather its popularity within a much more contentious and complicated demographic: preteen and teenage girls.

Emo has consistently struggled with its positioning of female identities both in the content of its lyrics and within the scene itself. During the first and second wave (and later), lyrics often adopted a traditional Madonna / whore dichotomy wherein women are either overly-glorified through role-assigning pedestalization or overly demonized as “out to get you sluts.” Emo’s mainstream debut in the shape of its third wave replicated this dichotomy more broadly through a misogynistic backlash that was quite different from other scenes’ “it’s mainstream so now it sucks” discourse. The real issue 1990s emo alumni had with the change in direction was the word emo had been deemed “outdated.” The real reason emo garnered such an intense amount of hate in the mid-2000s was not solely due to its mainstream popularity but rather its popularity within a much more contentious and complicated demographic: preteen and teenage girls.

Emo has consistently struggled with its positioning of female identities both in the content of its lyrics and within the scene itself. During the first and second wave (and later), lyrics often adopted a traditional Madonna / whore dichotomy wherein women are either overly-glorified through role-assigning pedestalization or overly demonized as “out to get you sluts.” Emo’s mainstream debut in the shape of its third wave replicated this dichotomy more broadly through a misogynistic backlash that was quite different from other scenes’ “it’s mainstream so now it sucks” discourse. The real issue 1990s emo alumni had with the change in direction was the word emo had been deemed “outdated.” The real reason emo garnered such an intense amount of hate in the mid-2000s was not solely due to its mainstream popularity but rather its popularity within a much more contentious and complicated demographic: preteen and teenage girls.

Emo has consistently struggled with its positioning of female identities both in the content of its lyrics and within the scene itself. During the first and second wave (and later), lyrics often adopted a traditional Madonna / whore dichotomy wherein women are either overly-glorified through role-assigning pedestalization or overly demonized as “out to get you sluts.” Emo’s mainstream debut in the shape of its third wave replicated this dichotomy more broadly through a misogynistic backlash that was quite different from other scenes’ “it’s mainstream so now it sucks” discourse. The real issue 1990s emo alumni had with the change in direction was the word emo had been deemed “outdated.” The real reason emo garnered such an intense amount of hate in the mid-2000s was not solely due to its mainstream popularity but rather its popularity within a much more contentious and complicated demographic: preteen and teenage girls.

Emo has consistently struggled with its positioning of female identities both in the content of its lyrics and within the scene itself. During the first and second wave (and later), lyrics often adopted a traditional Madonna / whore dichotomy wherein women are either overly-glorified through role-assigning pedestalization or overly demonized as “out to get you sluts.” Emo’s mainstream debut in the shape of its third wave replicated this dichotomy more broadly through a misogynistic backlash that was quite different from other scenes’ “it’s mainstream so now it sucks” discourse. The real issue 1990s emo alumni had with the change in direction was the word emo had been deemed “outdated.” The real reason emo garnered such an intense amount of hate in the mid-2000s was not solely due to its mainstream popularity but rather its popularity within a much more contentious and complicated demographic: preteen and teenage girls.

Emo has consistently struggled with its positioning of female identities both in the content of its lyrics and within the scene itself. During the first and second wave (and later), lyrics often adopted a traditional Madonna / whore dichotomy wherein women are either overly-glorified through role-assigning pedestalization or overly demonized as “out to get you sluts.” Emo’s mainstream debut in the shape of its third wave replicated this dichotomy more broadly through a misogynistic backlash that was quite different from other scenes’ “it’s mainstream so now it sucks” discourse. The real issue 1990s emo alumni had with the change in direction was the word emo had been deemed “outdated.” The real reason emo garnered such an intense amount of hate in the mid-2000s was not solely due to its mainstream popularity but rather its popularity within a much more contentious and complicated demographic: preteen and teenage girls.

Emo has consistently struggled with its positioning of female identities both in the content of its lyrics and within the scene itself. During the first and second wave (and later), lyrics often adopted a traditional Madonna / whore dichotomy wherein women are either overly-glorified through role-assigning pedestalization or overly demonized as “out to get you sluts.” Emo’s mainstream debut in the shape of its third wave replicated this dichotomy more broadly through a misogynistic backlash that was quite different from other scenes’ “it’s mainstream so now it sucks” discourse. The real issue 1990s emo alumni had with the change in direction was the word emo had been deemed “outdated.” The real reason emo garnered such an intense amount of hate in the mid-2000s was not solely due to its mainstream popularity but rather its popularity within a much more contentious and complicated demographic: preteen and teenage girls.

Emo has consistently struggled with its positioning of female identities both in the content of its lyrics and within the scene itself. During the first and second wave (and later), lyrics often adopted a traditional Madonna / whore dichotomy wherein women are either overly-glorified through role-assigning pedestalization or overly demonized as “out to get you sluts.” Emo’s mainstream debut in the shape of its third wave replicated this dichotomy more broadly through a misogynistic backlash that was quite different from other scenes’ “it’s mainstream so now it sucks” discourse. The real issue 1990s emo alumni had with the change in direction was the word emo had been deemed “outdated.” The real reason emo garnered such an intense amount of hate in the mid-2000s was not solely due to its mainstream popularity but rather its popularity within a much more contentious and complicated demographic: preteen and teenage girls.

Emo has consistently struggled with its positioning of female identities both in the content of its lyrics and within the scene itself. During the first and second wave (and later), lyrics often adopted a traditional Madonna / whore dichotomy wherein women are either overly-glorified through role-assigning pedestalization or overly demonized as “out to get you sluts.” Emo’s mainstream debut in the shape of its third wave replicated this dichotomy more broadly through a misogynistic backlash that was quite different from other scenes’ “it’s mainstream so now it sucks” discourse. The real issue 1990s emo alumni had with the change in direction was the word emo had been deemed “outdated.” The real reason emo garnered such an intense amount of hate in the mid-2000s was not solely due to its mainstream popularity but rather its popularity within a much more contentious and complicated demographic: preteen and teenage girls.

The argument that eyeliner-wearing Alternative Press heartthrobs like Pete Wentz and Gerard Way wear makeup because girls think it is hot is inherently misogynistic. Male celebrities wearing makeup sends a message to preteen girls—whose femininity is often simultaneously propped up and criticized—that traditional performances of femininity are not inherently weak. Seeing their heroes wearing makeup while screaming on stage in front of thousands of fans is the stuff of inspirational dreams, not wet ones. Saying a musician performs femininity to serve heteronormative ends waters down girls’ music taste to, essentially, “they like it because they’re hot.” It effectively reproduces the trope that teenage girls do not and cannot like real music, which situated emo at the bottom of the pop culture hierarchy in the first place.

After a decade under the influence of peak “cheer-up, emo kid” culture, a fourth wave of emo, albeit contentiously, has emerged. To an untrained eye, the crowds at 2016 emo shows are strikingly normcore, with Hot Topic aesthetics and MSN handles left behind in 2006. The new wave (and overwhelming abundance) of midwest college-boy emo bands have garnered attention from websites like Pitchfork, which was vehemently denied to the three previous waves of emo bands. My favourite tweet from the Twitter account @WashedUpEmo sums up the new open acceptance of emo music well: “Pitchfork 1999: It’s an emo album, 2/10. Pitchfork 2016: Sounds like a 90s emo album, 9/10.” However, while the word emo does not hold the same connotations as it did ten years ago, the stigma persists. A final piece of anecdotal evidence: there is a Facebook Toronto emo music group that was created by a teen girl as a way to reminisce about our favourite 2000s MTV jams. A male member of a somewhat well-known Toronto emo band stepped in with a song from a fairly bland emo revival band captioned with, “everyone posting garbage 2003 mall rock needs to listen to this right now.” The garbage mall rock in question? A harmless handful of Fall Out Boy songs.
Despite the rise of “safe spaces” in alternative music scenes, complete inclusivity is still a long way off.

— Emma Kelly —

Growing up near Los Angeles, my friends and I made regular pilgrimages to The Smell, an all-ages venue which had hosted local bands such as FIDLAR, No Age, Vivian Girls, Health, and Bleached. The energy of the crowd was so young, so hip, and so weird. Looking around, I saw masses in dresses dancing alongside femmes with mustaches; everyone still had their Bernie Sanders pins on. It felt like at any moment the band playing on stage could swap their instruments with members of the audience selected at random and the show would not lose its momentum. We Growing up near Los Angeles, my friends and I made regular pilgrimages to The Smell, an all-ages venue which had hosted local bands such as FIDLAR, No Age, Vivian Girls, Health, and Bleached. The energy of the crowd was so young, so hip, and so weird. Looking around, I saw masses in dresses dancing alongside femmes with mustaches; everyone still had their Bernie Sanders pins on. It felt like at any moment the band playing on stage could swap their instruments with members of the audience selected at random and the show would not lose its momentum. We were a united front fighting the good fight against misogyny, racism, homophobia, climate change, heteronormativity, capitalism, and any other form of oppression; in short, the social conditions of the world we had inherited.

Reflecting back on the experience, I was almost always surrounded by a sea of white faces. The Smell is located in downtown Los Angeles which is one of the most racially diverse areas in the entire city. It straddles the edge of capitalism, and any other form of oppression; in short, the social conditions of the world we had inherited.

It is difficult to ignore the hypocrisy of this approach to safe and equitable music venues and a review of some of most high-profile attempts to ensure the accessibility of all venues highlights a crucial gap. In the last few years, several indie rock and punk bands have stepped up to create a space at their concerts where all can feel welcome. Several artists such as Joyce Manor, Dought, Code Orange, and Jeff Rosenstock have called out inappropriate audience behavior such as sexual harassment and overly aggressive moshing. Lauren Mayberry of Cherches, Britty Drake of Pig Sex, and Brianna Collins of Tiger's jaw have all penned statements about the sexism and homophobia they have witnessed on tour and how it will not be tolerated.

Although these are all meaningful advancements, the careful reader will note that the artists above focus on countering primarily gendered inequalities in music spaces rather than intersectional ones. There is no acknowledgment of the barriers that both audience members and musicians may face during a performance due to their race, ability, sexuality or economic position. It forces the question of whose interests are worthy of being advocated for, or rather, who has a voice in the conversation and who does not.

The limited attempt to widen the range of participation in alternative music scenes is not a new phenomenon. In the 2013 documentary The Punk Singer there is a clip of Kathleen Hanna pausing in the middle of a 1991 Bikini Kill performance to urge “all girls to the front,” a common practice for the band. She wants the women in the crowd to know their presence is not only acknowledged but prioritized. It is a big moment. While Hanna’s role in the riot grrrl movement is often heralded as one of early attempts to open up the punk scene, her statement also reproduces a cisnormative environment while actively obscures other identities.

Recognizing some of the past present shortfalls around the current state safe spaces opens up a valid critique of how much progress has actually occurred in alternative music scenes. In a 2016 New Magazine interview, Toronto singer-songwriter Lido Pimienta alluded to the reality she faces as a racialized woman.

It forces the question of whose interests are worthy of being advocated for, or rather, who has a voice in the conversation and who does not.

These examples are important interruptions and offer strategies for creating spaces that are more inclusive for all their participants. While there is no clear-cut or easy solution to creating safe spaces in music venues, participants should begin by questioning their position, privilege, and the physical accessibility of all the spaces they enter.
"I play some rock, produce electronic music, and...play jazz."

Grant Ulysses, an indie-rock gem, and Casual Closure, an electronic hip-hop experience, are both solo projects. As he taps the hardwood, Cole explains that Grant Ulysses the live band is itself separate from the "studio" project. The band only interprets select songs into a jazz." Most days are perfect days for me...""I sit on Cole's bedroom floor, waiting for him to finish taping a Beyoncé poster to the ceiling. I'm too shy to tell him to close his windows. The elephant tapestries above his mattress shiver in the brisk October air; his girlfriend's spider-plants shudder. As he...stems

"...everyday that I learn something is a good day." The musician entrepreneur and genius looks down at the rug and smirks.

"Most days are perfect days for me..."

"Any time you're spending working towards improving your musicianship is time well spent."

As a student, the next three years of his life are basically planned out. He likes to think of this time as a portion of his lifetime dedicated to studying. Of course, he concedes, spreading his arms apart in shrug, there is always the growing guilt: that the time spent working on Grant Ulysses should have been spent practicing jazz standards, and vice versa, when he's holed up in a music room and he has not done anything Solarflannel-related in a while. But regardless, Cole muses, practicing benefits all parts of musicianship. Striking that balance between studying music and engaging with the music scene is the real challenge. People who are the Paul Brothers (Jai Paul/A.K. Paul)?

Hailing from London's Raynes Lane, Jai Paul and Anup Kumar Paul have redefined both electronic and pop music with their unique 21st century sound. It all started in 2010 when Jai Paul released "BTSTU (demo)." The song quickly garnered attention—including from Drake and Beyoncé, both of whom sampled it—for its glitchy synth beat and affectationally distinct vocal harmonies. In 2013, a sixteen-track LP surfaced on Jai's Bandcamp before being, as he put it, "a leak whose Star Wars and Harry Potter sample and catchy synth beats would later earn it a spot on Pitchfork's "The 100 Best Albums of the Decade So Far (2010-2014)."

Who is Himanshu Suri? Himanshu Kuma Suri—better known as "Heems"—is a Punjabi-Indian rapper hailing from Queens, New York, and a member of both Das Racist, with Victor Vazquez and Ashok Kondabolu, and Swet Shop Boys with Riz Ahmed. Heems pairs witty lines and outlandish rhyme schemes with an "I don't give a fuck" flow and Bollywood-sampling beats, delivering a powerful punch every time he steps up to the mic. His lyrical content varies wildly, from gloating and joking to reflecting on his experiences in a post-9/11 New York. He is also always working—he just released the Swet Shop Boys’ album Cashmere, and new music and a possible FOX sitcom are in the works.

Who is Nav? Navraj Goraya, an up-and-coming Toronto rapper/producer/who's been recognized by the likes of Metro Boomin and members of XO and October's Very Own. As of October 2016, there is almost nothing but the music—a few tracks on Soundcloud under the name BeatsByNav. His mysterious demeanor is akin to The Weeknd's emergence. Like The Weeknd, Nav's production encapsulates the listener in a hazy, Sun City atmosphere; hard-hitting 808s are perfectly paired with his laid-back Greater Toronto Area accent and catchy choruses about love, girls, and Range Rovers. Mainstream success appears imminent for this young Rexdale artist, and soon maybe you too will be singing about your love for "L.A.A.-Uh."

Who is M.I.A.? Mathangi Arulpragasam, better known as M.I.A., is possibly the most prominent South Asian/Sri Lankan artist of our generation. She is a singer-songwriter, a producer, a fashion designer, a model, and an activist, and has been praised for her originality and creativity. Basically, M.I.A. does it all. Her music blends reggae, electronic beats, hip-hop, and Tamil film music, among other genres, into densely layered tracks that have the listener itching for more. Her charismatic voice is so icy that she could single-handedly reverse the melting of the glaciers. At 41, M.I.A. still is as cool as ever, proving to everyone that no one in the corner has swagger like her.

Essential Tracks: MIA—"Papar Planes," "Bad Girls," "Jimmy"

Essential Tracks: NAV—"Tell In Love," "Ups," Travis Scott—"Biebs In The Trap"

Essential Tracks: Das Racist—"Rapping 2 U," Heems—"Flag Shopping"

Essential Tracks: A.K. Paul has produced for the UK singer Nao and recently released "BTSTU (demo)." The song quickly garnered attention—including from Drake and Beyoncé, both of whom sampled it—for its glitchy synth beat and affectationally distinct vocal harmonies. In 2013, a sixteen-track LP surfaced on Jai's Bandcamp before being, as he put it, "a leak whose Star Wars and Harry Potter sample and catchy synth beats would later earn it a spot on Pitchfork's "The 100 Best Albums of the Decade So Far (2010-2014)."

Who is Himanshu Suri? Himanshu Kuma Suri—better known as "Heems"—is a Punjabi-Indian rapper hailing from Queens, New York, and a member of both Das Racist, with Victor Vazquez and Ashok Kondabolu, and Swet Shop Boys with Riz Ahmed. Heems pairs witty lines and outlandish rhyme schemes with an "I don't give a fuck" flow and Bollywood-sampling beats, delivering a powerful punch every time he steps up to the mic. His lyrical content varies wildly, from gloating and joking to reflecting on his experiences in a post-9/11 New York. He is also always working—he just released the Swet Shop Boys’ album Cashmere, and new music and a possible FOX sitcom are in the works.

Who is Nav? Navraj Goraya, an up-and-coming Toronto rapper/producer/who's been recognized by the likes of Metro Boomin and members of XO and October's Very Own. As of October 2016, there is almost nothing but the music—a few tracks on Soundcloud under the name BeatsByNav. His mysterious demeanor is akin to The Weeknd's emergence. Like The Weeknd, Nav's production encapsulates the listener in a hazy, Sun City atmosphere; hard-hitting 808s are perfectly paired with his laid-back Greater Toronto Area accent and catchy choruses about love, girls, and Range Rovers. Mainstream success appears imminent for this young Rexdale artist, and soon maybe you too will be singing about your love for "L.A.A.-Uh."

Who is M.I.A.? Mathangi Arulpragasam, better known as M.I.A., is possibly the most prominent South Asian/Sri Lankan artist of our generation. She is a singer-songwriter, a producer, a fashion designer, a model, and an activist, and has been praised for her originality and creativity. Basically, M.I.A. does it all. Her music blends reggae, electronic beats, hip-hop, and Tamil film music, among other genres, into densely layered tracks that have the listener itching for more. Her charismatic voice is so icy that she could single-handedly reverse the melting of the glaciers. At 41, M.I.A. still is as cool as ever, proving to everyone that no one in the corner has swagger like her.

Essential Tracks: MIA—"Papar Planes," "Bad Girls," "Jimmy"

Essential Tracks: NAV—"Tell In Love," "Ups," Travis Scott—"Biebs In The Trap"

Essential Tracks: Das Racist—"Rapping 2 U," Heems—"Flag Shopping"

Essential Tracks: A.K. Paul has produced for the UK singer Nao and recently released "BTSTU (demo)." The song quickly garnered attention—including from Drake and Beyoncé, both of whom sampled it—for its glitchy synth beat and affectationally distinct vocal harmonies. In 2013, a sixteen-track LP surfaced on Jai's Bandcamp before being, as he put it, "a leak whose Star Wars and Harry Potter sample and catchy synth beats would later earn it a spot on Pitchfork's "The 100 Best Albums of the Decade So Far (2010-2014)."

Who is Himanshu Suri? Himanshu Kuma Suri—better known as "Heems"—is a Punjabi-Indian rapper hailing from Queens, New York, and a member of both Das Racist, with Victor Vazquez and Ashok Kondabolu, and Swet Shop Boys with Riz Ahmed. Heems pairs witty lines and outlandish rhyme schemes with an "I don't give a fuck" flow and Bollywood-sampling beats, delivering a powerful punch every time he steps up to the mic. His lyrical content varies wildly, from gloating and joking to reflecting on his experiences in a post-9/11 New York. He is also always working—he just released the Swet Shop Boys’ album Cashmere, and new music and a possible FOX sitcom are in the works.

Essential Tracks: Das Racist—"Rapping 2 U," Heems—"Flag Shopping"
Today, live coding is a growing but still fairly underground music scene. Organizations such as TOPLAP, whose acronym means “Tools for the Proliferation of Live Algorithm Programming,” have emerged thanks to the internet, which has enabled new methods of music production. A global network of live coders has been established, thanks to the internet, which has facilitated the spread of individual programmer's tools and methods. Today, these artists are using live coding in order to push the boundaries of what can be done with electronic music production.

As the network of computational artists has progressed, they have begun to focus on spreading the artform and creating a movement. Live coding is a performance art in which performers write code designed to make sound in front of an audience. To get started, all you really need is a computer and performers write code designed to make sound in front of an audience. You have likely been to a club where a DJ performed from behind a laptop screen. Now imagine their screen being projected for all to see, with them typing away at the keyboard—modifying lines of code that change what you hear in real time. Live coding is a performance art in which programmers write code designed to make sound in front of an audience. To get started, all you really need is a computer and a selection of article and video profiles, as well as a Slack chat for communication amongst artists. It also has its own selection of article and video profiles, as well as a Slack chat for communication amongst artists. It also has its own manifesto, in which it demands “...access to the performer's mind, to the whole human instrument. [...] Show us your screens,” and says “Programs are instruments that can change themselves. [...] Algorithms are thoughts.” These definitions set the stage for performers to join with others doing similar work and talk about its methodology, meaning, and potential uses under a clearly defined concept.

Live coding is not just about using code in an unconventional way; it brings with it unique creative advantages. It allows the artist to create or manipulate software-based models of instruments, often in ways that would not be possible with physical instruments. Electronic music production software such as Ableton or Logic support similar digital instruments, but their graphical user interfaces create abstracted versions of already abstract models or instruments, which can cause loss of meaning and limit what the artist can do. Programming is a more direct way to tell a computer what to do, giving the artist a bigger and more powerful vocabulary with which to work, and in a sense converse with a machine—though it does have a steeper learning curve. Most live coding libraries and languages come with built-in software instruments that can be used with complete, automatic precision. Adjusting pitch, speed, softness, or any other property of a series of notes becomes simple. This allows for the creation of complex, precise, orchestral-sounding pieces that would otherwise be difficult or even impossible for humans to play. Modifying pre-made software models of instruments or creating entirely new ones expands the field of possible sound combinations even further.

Another unique aspect of live programming is that it allows for multiple sources of input, making it possible for the composer to be only one of several things influencing the behaviour of a program. A live programmer can write their code so that it takes input from sensors and uses that information to self-modify. This creates new feedback loops in addition to the ones inherent to performance. In a performance called Code LiveCode Live, Marije Baalman uses the sounds of her typing as input. The sounds are then modulated again by data from sensors in her laptop (the accelerometer, touchpad, camera, etc.) as well as the processes of the code itself (the memory and cpu usage); creating a program that behaves exactly as intended, but also in unpredictable ways not entirely within her control. The music output by the program is heard and interpreted by the programmer and the audience, and both reactions then influence the programmer's real-time modification of the self-modifying program, creating a loopy monstrousity of sound.

Live coding is a growing, experimental method of electronic music production. The unique ways in which a given language or library may represent a series of musical notes or time give rise to a new form of musical notation meant for a computer's interpretation, instead of a person's. Live coded composition is a performative exercise in music-making that results in electronic music pushing the boundaries of the conventional conceptions of artists, programmers, and music itself.
CRITIQUING THE SPACES OF CRITICISM IN MUSIC
predicting the future for musicians and music journalism in a new cultural era
Paul Ciurea

In the past decade, hyper-connected millennial music-lovers have harnessed the capacity of the internet to redefine two previously immutable areas of the music industry: music journalism and the sharing of new music. While music streaming services and communities like Bandcamp or Soundcloud have given artists a new platform for independently releasing their work, several online music publications have given artists a new platform for independently sharing of new music. While music streaming services and communities like Bandcamp or Soundcloud have given artists a new platform for independently releasing their work, several online music publications have given artists a new platform for independently sharing of new music. In developing a foundation for examining the potential that music has as a cultural and artistic phenomenon to discuss that is driven by a common desire of creative expression in both the format of journalism and the music making itself. These two influential mediums have the capacity to create cohesion and a sense of community, which is one of the ways in which music scenes work as social and cultural spaces. Active and engaged curatorial methods such as those of Chicago’s own Bitchfork festival—an independent and musician-run indie festival formerly existing within the city’s DIY scene—show us that it is possible to create spaces for music to thrive without sacrificing integrity as a consequence. Although fleeting, as Bitchfork only lasted for 4 years, it gave opportunities to artists unable to play shows due to the annual Pitchfork Music Festival. It was an opportunity for Chicago DIY musicians and freelance/ indie journalists to connect and for the artistic space to move forward about what is possible to revitalize and further actualize indie journalists to connect and for the artistic space to become possible to revitalize and further actualize

When valuable and critical journalism compromises its integrity, important envelope-pushing artists lose their visibility. When valuable and critical journalism compromises its integrity, important envelope-pushing artists lose their visibility. Truly independent sources of journalism do not have the same agenda as larger corporate platforms and will often assume the role of uptight music criticism. It is unreasonable to expect that a piece of art—particularly music, which is meant to reach out to people—should be treated as an infallible work of representation or expression. Although the band may have simply been advocating for their art, it can also open our eyes to an inherent arrogance on behalf of the musician. It is important for musicians to realize that upholding artistic integrity also means allowing one’s creation to stand on its own and letting it face exposure regardless of the response it receives from outside media. This notion of acting on the basis of integrity might be primarily personal for the artist; journalists and the field of journalism at large are responsible for upholding the identity (and integrity) of the establishment they are contributing to, which may exert a great deal of influence on their work. In October of 2015, Pitchfork Media was purchased by mass media company Conde Nast (a publisher that also owns Vogue, Vanity Fair, and many other popular magazines). In a 

The New York Times interview following the acquisition, Conde Nast’s chief digital officer, Fred Santarpia, stated that Pitchfork would bring “a very passionate audience of millennial males into [the Conde Nast] roster.” Pitchfork released a statement on the day of the acquisition assuring its readers of the integrity of its editorial voice and opinions; that Conde Nast shares “every aspect of [Pitchfork’s] focus,” and that it will “remain true to the ideals that have made it the most trusted voice in music.” Despite these claims, it remains impossible to ignore the way that corporate interest compromises its integrity of journalism, which has resulted in a blurring of the lines between journalism and marketing. Under sizeable bureaucratic influence, it is possible for music journalism to lose its impassioned, critical voice. Looking at the rise in music-related targeted advertisements on Pitchfork, it becomes difficult to trust in Pitchfork’s claims of music integrity when it has fallen into the arms of a business that shares popular culture consumerism through media influence.

When valuable and critical journalism compromises its integrity, important envelope-pushing artists lose their visibility. Truly independent sources of journalism do not have the same agenda as larger corporate platforms and will often assume the role of uptight music criticism. It is unreasonable to expect that a piece of art—particularly music, which is meant to reach out to people—should be treated as an infallible work of representation or expression. Although the band may have simply been advocating for their art, it can also open our eyes to an inherent arrogance on behalf of the musician. It is important for musicians to realize that upholding artistic integrity also means allowing one’s creation to stand on its own and letting it face exposure regardless of the response it receives from outside media. This notion of acting on the basis of integrity might be primarily personal for the artist; journalists and the field of journalism at large are responsible for upholding the identity (and integrity) of the establishment they are contributing to, which may exert a great deal of influence on their work. In October of 2015, Pitchfork Media was purchased by mass media company Conde Nast (a publisher that also owns Vogue, Vanity Fair, and many other popular magazines). In a 

The New York Times interview following the acquisition, Conde Nast’s chief digital officer, Fred Santarpia, stated that Pitchfork would bring “a very passionate audience of millennial males into [the Conde Nast] roster.” Pitchfork released a statement on the day of the acquisition assuring its readers of the integrity of its editorial voice and opinions; that Conde Nast shares “every aspect of [Pitchfork’s] focus,” and that it will “remain true to the ideals that have made it the most trusted voice in music.” Despite these claims, it remains impossible to ignore the way that corporate interest compromises its integrity of journalism, which has resulted in a blurring of the lines between journalism and marketing. Under sizeable bureaucratic influence, it is possible for music journalism to lose its impassioned, critical voice. Looking at the rise in music-related targeted advertisements on Pitchfork, it becomes difficult to trust in Pitchfork’s claims of music integrity when it has fallen into the arms of a business that shares popular culture consumerism through media influence.
Kanye West is once again protesting the award show machine, announcing back in 2016 that if Frank Ocean’s sophomore album Blond(e) was not nominated for a Grammy, West would boycott the show. While at first the move might sound conciliatory—is West threatening a boycott because he believes he can?—only he can decide which albums are worthy of a nomination?—the truth is that black artists boycotting the Grammys is not a new phenomenon, and for good reason. When it comes to music’s most prestigious awards, black artists seem to disproportionately lose. Mr. West himself is no stranger to remonstrating the award show circuit. Who can forget his infamous defence of Beyoncé’s “Single Ladies” music video after it lost to Taylor Swift at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards? For all his faults, West is one of the most vocal black celebrities when it comes to defending uncelebrated black artists. His stance is iconic, and unfortunately necessary.

It is surprising (or perhaps unsurprising) to learn that the Grammys, music’s most prestigious award, did not consider rap a viable genre until the late 1980s. The first rap Grammy, for “Best Rap Performance” was awarded in 1989 to The Frenchie Prince (Will Smith) and DJ Jazzy Jeff for their track, “Parents Just Don’t Understand.” While some saw the new award as a move towards a more inclusive and diverse ceremony, it did not play out that way. Although the Grammys had finally introduced the genre, it seemed to consistently struggle with how to navigate these rap-specific categories. In 2015, not a single rap album made the cut, Smith and DJ Jazzy Jeff boycotted the show, as did fellow nominees LL Cool J and Salt-n-Pepa. Smith described the lack of air-time as a “slap in the face,” and Salt-n-Pepa famously said of the Grammys: “If they don’t want us, we don’t want them.”

This rejection of the Grammy’s claim to objectivity has remained relevant to black artists primarily because the Grammys have shown little interest in acknowledging black genius. Nearly half of the “Best Rap Album” category have been awarded to white rappers. Macklemore (one, in 2014) has more “Best Rap Album” wins than 2Pac, The Notorious B.I.G., Rakim, Snoop Dogg, and Nas combined, and has as many wins as Jay Z (1999), Kendrick Lamar (2016), and Puff Daddy (1998). Eminem has six wins. Something is clearly wrong. Moreover, the non-rap-specific categories appear biased as well; since 1989, only twelve black artists have won. Things have not improved that much either. In 2015, not a single rap-specific Grammy was awarded during the televised portion of the ceremony. As Canadian rapper Cadence Weapon wrote for Now that year, “The Grammys have done anything they possibly could to avoid the relevant sound of black music that currently has a stranglehold on the Billboard charts.”

As Canadian rapper Cadence Weapon wrote for Now that year, “The Grammys have done anything they possibly could to avoid the relevant sound of black music that currently has a stranglehold on the Billboard charts.”

This rejection of the Grammys’ claim to objectivity has remained relevant to black artists primarily because the Grammys have shown little interest in acknowledging black genius.

Not all black artists are, like Kanye, trying to fight for a place within the system. Instead, many have criticized the Grammys’ worth entirely. Jay Z boycotted the show for years, telling MTV in 2002 that the Grammys were not giving “the rightful respect to hip-hop.” The late Phife Dawg of A Tribe Called Quest rapped: “I never let a statue tell me how nice I am.” in 1993’s “Award Tour.” West Coast legend Kurupt agreed, declaring, “I don’t need the white folks / I get ghetto Grammys” on 2010’s “Exsis.” Many artists agree that if the Grammys are not concerned with acknowledging the accomplishments of black artists, then perhaps black artists should not be concerned with winning Grammys. Frank Ocean, himself a Grammy winner, has expressed concern regarding his relationship to the award show. When asked about his potential nomination for Blond(e), Ocean expressed why he was also going to boycott the event. He told the New York Times that, despite winning two of the awards in 2013, the ceremony “doesn’t seem to be representing very well for people who come from where I come from.” Ocean stated that he would rather fight the system with a “Colin Kaepernick”-style moment than be forced to sit in the audience.

The Kaepernick comment in particular is telling, noting as it does the larger systemic problem. The Grammys are not the only platform where black people have to fight a little harder than their white counterparts for recognition or where they are forced to constantly grapple with how to navigate these systemic issues (do you remember last year’s trending topic, #OscarsSoWhite?). Unfortunately, many of the artists whoTwish to protest these shows are forced to boycott. There is an ever growing list of black musicians who miss out on well-deserved Grammy nominations and wins because protest and resistance seems be one of the only way real ways to criticize the inequality. In this system, black musicians are obligated to get loud like Kanye or step back like Ocean, or both. Either way, a certain degree of protest and labour is unfairly forced upon them.

New approaches have to be made when we consider the value placed on award ceremonies like the Grammys. Does Bob Marley’s failure to win a single Grammy make his music any less impactful? Does Becks’ win over Beyoncé for “Album of the Year” in 2015 make Beyoncé’s album any less worthy of praise? Of course not. But what can we do with the systems that continually fail to recognize these instances of black accomplishment? Should the Grammys, considering the bias they have shown, continue to claim any kind of objectivity in judging the year’s best work in music? For some, clearly the answer has been yes, but for many other artists, the answer is unclear. Artists and fans alike need to continually question the systems and awards they utilize to place value on the art they love and create. We all need to keep asking ourselves: why do we want a Grammy, anyway?

The Grammys are (hopefully) in danger of becoming obsolete if they continue to ignore and dismiss black artistry.
Since the early 20th century, traditional Chinese culture has undergone a series of changes, some characterized as Westernization, others due to the efforts of cultural preservation. Westernization dates back to the mid-19th century when Western ships crashed through the walls of the Chinese Qing Dynasty, marking the end of the last Chinese empire in history. Chinese thinkers began to re-examine Chinese culture, re-evaluating the role of traditional culture in relation to their newly embraced Western culture. The New Culture Movement from the 1900s to the 1920s, Chinese thinkers compared Chinese operas to Western operas, trying to reclassify the traditional genres according to the Western system altogether. This effort not only established a new framework and its thoughtful beauty is struggling to coexist with newer styles, in many cases becoming subservient to the electronic beat of contemporary Pop. Similarly, traditional musical elements in popular songs are losing their cultural richness. Traditional music’s historical and ideological engagement with themes such as integrity, honesty, loyalty, and the appraisal of great historical figures have been replaced almost exclusively by a focus on romantic love. For modern citizens, traditional music is becoming a fascinating ornamentation technique without any deeper meaning. What were once rich musical representations of ancient Chinese ideologies have become merely stylistic artifacts.

Yet, what is happening to music styles that have not been exposed to modern changes? With a wider range of options available to them, people seem to be choosing “Fighting the Typhoon”’s storytelling and complex playing techniques over the nostalgia of the 1700-year-old Hakka masterpiece, “Night Rain on the Tsiau-Leafed Window.” Young people are obsessed with Chinese-style popular songs but cannot name the five great genres of classical opera. Although people are exposed to a combination of modern and traditional music, their appreciation for and understanding of traditional ideologies do not seem to be increasing. For instance, a recent CCTV public service advertisement, there are only seven expert Guqin craftsmen left in China. However, where should we direct this accusation? Young generations have the freedom to choose which music styles they follow and it is totally reasonable for them to live with a modern ideology, pursuing the materialistic present world instead of the utopian traditional beliefs that inform Chinese traditional music. Should traditional music be blamed for not keeping up with the times and the influx of Western ideology? That does not seem correct either—it is part of the heart of Chinese civilization, and it must be preserved.

In the contemporary period, traditional Chinese music and instruments have undergone constant tinkering. In order to express the ideology of modern Chinese life, both the government and Chinese citizens are modifying the content and the style of traditional music. For example, new pieces about the Chinese Communist Revolution and the overthrow of the capitalist government are being made in the style of traditional operas, but these new works differ from the old ones not only in their content but also in their mode of expression. The traditional opera’s complex, symbolic makeup has been largely simplified, and the language used according to the Western system, debating whether or not they should abandon the traditional system altogether. This effort not only established a new perception of traditional Chinese music, but also marked the beginning of its accommodation to modern life.

In the modern world, traditional music is largely based within the popular culture. The changes have successfully drawn new artistic appreciation, but frequently without any effort to learn about the deeper cultural representation of these styles. A personal example: when I was recording a Guzheng album, my parents strongly suggested that I should play the newer, more popular styles, like Jay Chou’s melodies. Although people are exposed to a combination of modern and traditional music, their appreciation for and understanding of traditional ideologies do not seem to be increasing. For instance, a recent CCTV public service advertisement, there are only seven expert Guqin craftsmen left in China. However, where should we direct this accusation? Young generations have the freedom to choose which music styles they follow and it is totally reasonable for them to live with a modern ideology, pursuing the materialistic present world instead of the utopian traditional beliefs that inform Chinese traditional music. Should traditional music be blamed for not keeping up with the times and the influx of Western ideology? That does not seem correct either—it is part of the heart of Chinese civilization, and it must be preserved.

In the contemporary period, traditional Chinese music and instruments have undergone constant tinkering. In order to express the ideology of modern Chinese life, both the government and Chinese citizens are modifying the content and the style of traditional music. For example, new pieces about the Chinese Communist Revolution and the overthrow of the capitalist government are being made in the style of traditional operas, but these new works differ from the old ones not only in their content but also in their mode of expression. The traditional opera’s complex, symbolic makeup has been largely simplified, and the language used according to the Western system, debating whether or not they should abandon the traditional system altogether. This effort not only established a new perception of traditional Chinese music, but also marked

The worry is that traditional Chinese music is accommodating too much. The contemporary use of traditional music is largely based within the popular culture. The changes have successfully drawn new artistic appreciation, but frequently without any effort to learn about the deeper cultural representation of these styles. A personal example: when I was recording a Guzheng album, my parents strongly suggested that I should play the newer, more popular styles, like Jay Chou’s melodies. Although people are exposed to a combination of modern and traditional music, their appreciation for and understanding of traditional ideologies do not seem to be increasing. For instance, a recent CCTV public service advertisement, there are only seven expert Guqin craftsmen left in China. However, where should we direct this accusation? Young generations have the freedom to choose which music styles they follow and it is totally reasonable for them to live with a modern ideology, pursuing the materialistic present world instead of the utopian traditional beliefs that inform Chinese traditional music. Should traditional music be blamed for not keeping up with the times and the influx of Western ideology? That does not seem correct either—it is part of the heart of Chinese civilization, and it must be preserved.

In the contemporary period, traditional Chinese music and instruments have undergone constant tinkering. In order to express the ideology of modern Chinese life, both the government and Chinese citizens are modifying the content and the style of traditional music. For example, new pieces about the Chinese Communist Revolution and the overthrow of the capitalist government are being made in the style of traditional operas, but these new works differ from the old ones not only in their content but also in their mode of expression. The traditional opera’s complex, symbolic makeup has been largely simplified, and the language used according to the Western system, debating whether or not they should abandon the traditional system altogether. This effort not only established a new perception of traditional Chinese music, but also marked the beginning of its accommodation to modern life.

In the modern period, traditional Chinese music and instruments have undergone constant tinkering. In order to express the ideology of modern Chinese life, both the government and Chinese citizens are modifying the content and the style of traditional music. For example, new pieces about the Chinese Communist Revolution and the overthrow of the capitalist government are being made in the style of traditional operas, but these new works differ from the old ones not only in their content but also in their mode of expression. The traditional opera’s complex, symbolic makeup has been largely simplified, and the language used according to the Western system, debating whether or not they should abandon the traditional system altogether. This effort not only established a new perception of traditional Chinese music, but also marked

The worry is that traditional Chinese music is accommodating too much. The contemporary use of traditional music is largely based within the popular culture. The changes have successfully drawn new artistic appreciation, but frequently without any effort to learn about the deeper cultural representation of these styles. A personal example: when I was recording a Guzheng album, my parents strongly suggested that I should play the newer, more popular styles, like Jay Chou’s melodies. Although people are exposed to a combination of modern and traditional music, their appreciation for and understanding of traditional ideologies do not seem to be increasing. For instance, a recent CCTV public service advertisement, there are only seven expert Guqin craftsmen left in China. However, where should we direct this accusation? Young generations have the freedom to choose which music styles they follow and it is totally reasonable for them to live with a modern ideology, pursuing the materialistic present world instead of the utopian traditional beliefs that inform Chinese traditional music. Should traditional music be blamed for not keeping up with the times and the influx of Western ideology? That does not seem correct either—it is part of the heart of Chinese civilization, and it must be preserved.

In the contemporary period, traditional Chinese music and instruments have undergone constant tinkering. In order to express the ideology of modern Chinese life, both the government and Chinese citizens are modifying the content and the style of traditional music. For example, new pieces about the Chinese Communist Revolution and the overthrow of the capitalist government are being made in the style of traditional operas, but these new works differ from the old ones not only in their content but also in their mode of expression. The traditional opera’s complex, symbolic makeup has been largely simplified, and the language used according to the Western system, debating whether or not they should abandon the traditional system altogether. This effort not only established a new perception of traditional Chinese music, but also marked the beginning of its accommodation to modern life.

In the modern period, traditional Chinese music and instruments have undergone constant tinkering. In order to express the ideology of modern Chinese life, both the government and Chinese citizens are modifying the content and the style of traditional music. For example, new pieces about the Chinese Communist Revolution and the overthrow of the capitalist government are being made in the style of traditional operas, but these new works differ from the old ones not only in their content but also in their mode of expression. The traditional opera’s complex, symbolic makeup has been largely simplified, and the language used according to the Western system, debating whether or not they should abandon the traditional system altogether. This effort not only established a new perception of traditional Chinese music, but also marked
The evolution of grime has come full circle in the UK; however, here in North America we are hearing it for the first time. Grime is more than a genre; rather, a movement, born out of a self-contained London street music scene that blends genres like dancehall, reggae, and especially UK garage, a distinctive late-1990s electronic genre somewhat similar to American house music. Although grime shares many similarities with hip-hop, it is anything but, with a unique bass-heavy sound. Grime is also unique in its method of freestyle rapping, which relies heavily on the repetition of key phrases tied to its personal zeitgeist, such as references and responses to grime performances heard on a popular radio show hosted by the English DJ Tim Westwood. Grime as a genre was pushed to the underground, word-of-mouth raves. Any chance of seeing a live show depended on location, which needed to be within travelling distance of one of the radio stations. Any chance of seeing a live show depended on time—generally the early hours of the morning—and your postcode. Despite the regionalism, it is also a lifestyle that has begun to finally, unapologetically break in North America, well, postcodes. Despite the regionalism, it is also a lifestyle that has begun to finally, unapologetically break in North America, well, postcodes. Despite the regionalism, it is also a lifestyle that has begun to finally, unapologetically break in North America, well, postcodes.

Grime’s roots run deep within the underground London UK garage scene of the early 2000s. There, the electronic UK garage sound was adopted and stylized by the likes of Wiley and Dizzee Rascal, some of grime’s first MCs. In those days—and for most of the following decade—grime music was only broadcast on pirate radio stations. Any chance of seeing a live show depended on the time—generally the early hours of the morning—and your location, which needed to be within travelling distance of one of the underground, word-of-mouth raves. Fast forward to 2016: thanks to the work of trailblazers like Wiley, Dizzee Rascal, Skepta, and his brother JME, grime music is still lightweight, safe, compliant, fake, and a sell-out.

This move away from the creatively fertile early period and towards a more mainstream audience saw a period of upheaval for the genre. Both Skepta and Wiley traded in their more thoughtful, provoking rhymes, choosing instead to produce singles about their Rolexes. Although the two MCs had, like Rascal, certainly earned the right to flaunt success, the choices felt similarly strategic. Neither had achieved full stardom and grime itself remained an unknown, despite their years of brilliance. Still, the worry was that they were failing to remain true to their history, where they came from, and the revolutionary energy of the music; the things that made grime so important and exciting in the first place. The Rolexes singles, like Rascal’s crossover attempts, did not push grime, always a site of stunning innovation, forward. Instead, the MCs sounded, for the first time, like conventional mainstream rappers, a shift that could have potentially signalled a dramatic about-face for a traditionally nonconformist genre. If, at that point, grime had lost touch with its roots, its revivalization was completed by Skepta’s 2014 single “That’s Not Me,” featuring JME. The song is a return to unapologeticness, something Skepta and others had been trying to come to terms with during the years they spent attempting to balance authenticity and getting paid. JME’s feature on Wiley’s 2014 track, “From the Outside,” describes his struggle with the spectre of success: “Don’t wanna make tunes that are but/I make music for an acquired taste/ Started doing this thing cause I loved it/ Not to make tunes for the general public.” Grime, he argues here, might never be mainstream, but that would be missing the point: grime is a culture of counter-culture. Skepta and JME’s new attitude brought a spark to the music; the genre was pushing forward again, and a more organic success began to take shape. Skepta in particular has driven the charge, and has succeeded in breaking into the North American market on an unprecedented scale. The self-styled “King of Grime” has leveraged public friendships with stars such as Drake and Kanye West to command a large spotlight, and his renewed focus on keeping true to himself and his history has resonated, peaking (for the moment) with the release of his album Konnichiwa in 2016. Konnichiwa was a massive success, winning the Mercury Prize for the UK’s album of the year—the first grime album to do so since Dizzee Rascal’s groundbreaking Boy In Da Corner won in 2003—and resonating internationally with successful singles like “That’s Not Me” and “Shut Down.” The grime movement is very self-aware. In order to understand grime and what grime is about, you have to do is listen to the artists, who will not hesitate to tell you—boy, better know—everything that you need to know about what grime represents. The music and the lifestyle, the artists’ “asset,” is about remaining true to themselves, to grime, to the crew, and to where they come from. On “That’s Not Me,” Skepta chooses to throw his Gucci "Dance Wiv Me"—a performance with Florence + the Machine at the 2010 Brit Awards, and a verse on Jessie J’s 2013 single, “Wild.” For many, that sort of felt notable, especially considering the MC had come up by writing thoughtfully and articulately about life in the socially and economically hopeless East London, a far cry from “Dance Wiv Me.” Skepta has got a body to die for ... now it’s murder on the dance floor.” Rascal deserved any pop success he got, but some read the change in focus as a sign that the essence of grime was beginning to dissipate into everything that Grime had previously disavowed: being well-mannered, safe, compliant, fake, and a sell-out. If, at that point, grime had lost touch with its roots, its revivalization was completed by Skepta’s 2014 single “That’s Not Me,” featuring JME. The song is a return to unapologeticness, something Skepta and others had been trying to come to terms with during the years they spent attempting to balance authenticity and getting paid. JME’s feature on Wiley’s 2014 track, “From the Outside,” describes his struggle with the spectre of success: “Don’t wanna make tunes that are but/I make music for an acquired taste/ Started doing this thing cause I loved it/ Not to make tunes for the general public.” Grime, he argues here, might never be mainstream, but that would be missing the point: grime is a culture of counter-culture. Skepta and JME’s new attitude brought a spark to the music; the genre was pushing forward again, and a more organic success began to take shape. Skepta in particular has driven the charge, and has succeeded in breaking into the North American market on an unprecedented scale. The self-styled “King of Grime” has leveraged public friendships with stars such as Drake and Kanye West to command a large spotlight, and his renewed focus on keeping true to himself and his history has resonated, peaking (for the moment) with the release of his album Konnichiwa in 2016. Konnichiwa was a massive success, winning the Mercury Prize for the UK’s album of the year—the first grime album to do so since Dizzee Rascal’s groundbreaking Boy In Da Corner won in 2003—and resonating internationally with successful singles like “That’s Not Me” and “Shut Down.” The grime movement is very self-aware. In order to understand grime and what grime is about, you have to do is listen to the artists, who will not hesitate to tell you—boy, better know—everything that you need to know about what grime represents. The music and the lifestyle, the artists’ “asset,” is about remaining true to themselves, to grime, to the crew, and to where they come from. On “That’s Not Me,” Skepta chooses to throw his Gucci "Dance Wiv Me"—a performance with Florence + the Machine at the 2010 Brit Awards, and a verse on Jessie J’s 2013 single, “Wild.” For many, that sort of felt notable, especially considering the MC had come up by writing thoughtfully and articulately about life in the socially and economically hopeless East London, a far cry from “Dance Wiv Me.” Skepta has got a body to die for ... now it’s murder on the dance floor.” Rascal deserved any pop success he got, but some read the change in focus as a sign that the essence of grime was beginning to dissipate into everything that Grime had previously disavowed: being well-mannered, safe, compliant, fake, and a sell-out. If, at that point, grime had lost touch with its roots, its revivalization was completed by Skepta’s 2014 single “That’s Not Me,” featuring JME. The song is a return to unapologeticness, something Skepta and others had been trying to come to terms with during the years they spent attempting to balance authenticity and getting paid. JME’s feature on Wiley’s 2014 track, “From the Outside,” describes his struggle with the spectre of success: “Don’t wanna make tunes that are but/I make music for an acquired taste/ Started doing this thing cause I loved it/ Not to make tunes for the general public.” Grime, he argues here, might never be mainstream, but that would be missing the point: grime is a culture of counter-culture. Skepta and JME’s new attitude brought a spark to the music; the genre was pushing forward again, and a more organic success began to take shape. Skepta in particular has driven the charge, and has succeeded in breaking into the North American market on an unprecedented scale. The self-styled “King of Grime” has leveraged public friendships with stars such as Drake and Kanye West to command a large spotlight, and his renewed focus on keeping true to himself and his history has resonated, peaking (for the moment) with the release of his album Konnichiwa in 2016. Konnichiwa was a massive success, winning the Mercury Prize for the UK’s album of the year—the first grime album to do so since Dizzee Rascal’s groundbreaking Boy In Da Corner won in 2003—and resonating internationally with successful singles like “That’s Not Me” and “Shut Down.” The grime movement is very self-aware. In order to understand grime and what grime is about, you have to do is listen to the artists, who will not hesitate to tell you—boy, better know—everything that you need to know about what grime represents. The music and the lifestyle, the artists’ “asset,” is about remaining true to themselves, to grime, to the crew, and to where they come from. On “That’s Not Me,” Skepta chooses to throw his Gucci
A lover of wisdom through loving, Angel Olsen captures relationships with people who could be made out of light if only they would let their heart’s Wick catch fire. They are not free lovers; they are expectation’s slaves—expectation Olsen challenge- es when she dares her loves to under- stand what makes her a woman.

Her love: honest, free, eternally fu- elled by vulnerability; her sound: sown and grown.

She masters simple and honest stories told by vulnerability; her sound: her sonic maturation, make this ce- mamation of sounds and words, and distinct tones of experience. The Angel Olsen captures relationships that reveal just enough without surrendering his roots. The album functions as a story of his life, with various songs focusing on his relationships, friendships, and work. Through it all, you can feel the emotion that he puts into this music, leaving you with a lasting impression of the once Chicago high school dropout and now big-time star.

22, A MILLION
BON IVER
In 2016, the folk sensation who once locked himself up in a remote Wisconsin cabin finds himself down in the belly of the machine. His delicate, strained voice is fractured into multiplicity by vocoder ef- fects; the music glitches out as though your head- phone wires have snapped. What has not changed in the decade since For Emma? Those brashly emoting horns and his ex- ceptional lyrics, at the very brink of legibility: “A word about Gnosis: it ain’t gonna buy the groceries / Or middle-out locusts, or weigh to find.” Succulent with sonic play, 22, A Million warps you into desperate survival in a cybernetic wilderness tinged by apocalypse.

COLORING BOOK
CHANCE THE RAPPER
Few of 2016’s albums have come close to the standard that Coloring Book set in early May. Building on his success with 2013’s Acid Rap, Chance released an even better album that found a way to expand his sound into A-list territory without surrendering his roots. The album functions as a love story of his life, with various songs focusing on his relationships, friendships, and work. Through it all, you can feel the emotion that he puts into this music, leaving you with a lasting impression of the once Chicago high school dropout and now big-time star.

ATROCITY EXHIBITION
DANNY BROWN
After three years of self-imposed exile, Danny Brown re-emerges. Atrocity Exhibition is a dark, lyrically dense, and often hilarious journey through Detroit, poverty, drug addiction, and the rapper’s own psyche. Take “Downward Spiral,” the opener; in the span of two verses, Brown attempts threesomes, hears voices, grinds his teeth down to chiclets, and passes out in his bathrobe “Downward Spiral,” the opener; in the span of two verses, Brown attempts threesomes, hears voices, grinds his teeth down to chiclets, and passes out in his bathrobe. Within it, you can feel the emotion that he puts into this music, leaving you with a lasting impression of the once Chicago high school dropout and now big-time star.

ANTI RIHANNA
Before 2016, I did not consider myself to be very in- terested in Rihanna or her work—she was just another Pop giant. ANTI changed that—in the place of my dis- interest, it built a shrine. This album, to me, is uni- dually the soundtrack to this past year. Rihanna’s sultry, expressive voice, paired with haunting melodies and Dancehall influences, creates an atmosphere of inti- macy and honesty. ANTI is mesmerizing and seduc- tive: a galvanizing moment in her long career. This new energy sets ANTI far apart from her earlier ra- dical albums, making it feel almost rebellious. I am restless to see where this new attitude will take her next album.

EVERYTHING YOU’VE COME TO EXPECT
THE LAST SHADOW PUPPETS
The Arctic Monkeys’ Alex Turner and pop-rocker Miles Kane join forces again for their second LP as The Last Shadow Puppets. Everything You’ve Come To Expect (EYCTE) tackles a wide range of emotions, including love, lust, and regret, with the same silky wit and pointed lyrical style that have always set Turner in particular apart. Owen Pallett’s riveting string arrangement gives a cinematic edge to tracks like “Aviation” and “Sweet Dreams, TX,” though it helps to have two incredibly charismatic frontmen interacting seamlessly on stage. EYCTE is full of surprising moments, capturing everything that makes The Last Shadow Puppets stand out.

BEST ALBUMS
of 2016
Angelo Gio Mateo
Angelo is an undergraduate student studying International Relations and History. He’s a Filipino-Canadian boy who grew up in Mississauga. He loves talking about the Raptors, politics, and music. He hosts a podcast, “Shooting the Sh*t with Angelo Gio Mateo,” and writes about music for demo and the Newspaper. Follow his blog at angelogiomateo.ca/blog/ or his Twitter at @angelogiomateo.

Arman Adel
Arman thinks music is aight.

Christian Schoug
Christian is an English student and Co-Editor-in-Chief of Acta Victoriana.

Dayapartap "Daven" Boporai
Daven is a second-year student from Michigan who has no clue what he’s doing. He likes turtlenecks and window shopping on SSENSE for coats he can’t afford. Catch him listening to Tame Impala, Beach House, or Das Racist on any given day.

Emma Kelly
Emma is a first-year English major.

Grace Guimond
Cheap white.

Harry Myles
Harry is a second-year student majoring in International Relations and minoring in Political Science and History. After being a contributor last year, Harry is excited to now be a staff writer for demo. He is a fan of jazz, blues, hip-hop, R&B, and a bunch of other genres.

Isaac Fox
Isaac is a third-year student studying International Relations and History. Aside from writing for demo and drowned in schoolwork, he teachers Cuban Salsa, plays soccer, and makes tons of beats and remixes.

Kalina Nedelcheva
Kalina is a fourth-year student majoring in Books and Media Studies and Philosophy. Her hobbies include pizza, music, coffee-induced comas, and drawing until 3AM in the morning.

Paul Ciurea
Paul is a first-year undergraduate who loves music and writing. He listens to sad British post-punk music (amongst other stuff) and moopes about not being allowed into 19+ shows.

Rachel Evangeline Chiong
Rachel majors in Linguistics and is double minoring in Near and Middle Eastern Studies and East Asian Studies. This is the third year Degree Explorer is reminding her to regret her decision to do so, but she is a tough, small, iron-willed blossom.

Savana James
Savana is a fourth-year Book and Media Studies student who loves R&B music almost as much as she loves the Kardashians. When she’s not searching the internet for music with cool vibes she’s probably either writing down all her feelings or complaining.

Shaquilla Singh
Shaquilla is “chaotic neutral, like chilled out but w lots of emotions abt stuff,” according to one long-time friend. She verified the “chaotic neutral” alignment with a Buzzfeed quiz because she values Truth. She double majors in Computer Science and the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology.

Samantha Capaldi
Samantha is in her fourth-year as an English specialist with a minor in Creative Expression and Society. Like The Weeknd, she comes alive in the Fall time, and Boy Better Know she is daydreaming that she is at Glastonbury instead of studying.

Christian Schoug
Christian is an English student and Co-Editor-in-Chief of Acta Victoriana.
“HERE TO RECLAIM SPACE ON AN EVERYDAY NOTION.”

BLAK MATILDA
(BizZarh)