

## **A Love Letter to the Artists Who Raised Us**

**Those artists who took you through your teenage years? Yeah, they're pretty special.**

There are so many artists I look up to that I could never name them all properly. Whenever someone asks me who my favourite artist is, I usually just look at them blankly for a moment, not because I do not have an answer, but because I have too many to name. It has never just been one person for me; it has always been a collection of them. Each one had an important part at different times in my life.

Some stayed for a long time, and some are still staying even now, becoming constants I return to again and again. Others appeared briefly, and although I may not listen to them as often anymore, they still left something meaningful behind, whether it was a lyric that stuck with me or a moment tied to the song that remains in my memory. I find that beautiful – how someone can create something without ever truly realising just how many people will find it, or when, or why it will matter the most to them.

There are even artists whose names might not immediately come to mind, but whose songs resurface unexpectedly, and I will recognise the melody in a few seconds. It is during times like these that make me realise that impact is not always direct or in your face; it can be subtle. There are also the artists who were recommended to me through my family or shared by friends in passing, and even if those artists did not always impact me in the same personal way they did with them, they still matter to me. They helped me understand my family and friends a little more, and through them, I was not just listening to music, but pieces of other people's worlds.

I think this is precisely why I can never just choose one, three, or five artists whom I love and admire, because each artist represents a different version of who I am as a person. To pick a favourite would feel as if I am neglecting parts of my life, no matter how dramatic that sounds. So rather than trying to narrow it down to a singular artist, I think it makes more sense to acknowledge everyone in my attempt at saying something I have carried with me for a long time.

Growing up, there was always this underlying question in the back of my mind about whether anyone else out there felt the same way I did.

It was not always at the forefront of my thoughts and not something I actively dwelled on, but it did linger all the same. It was kind of like a soft hum of a fan in the background, which

could not be switched off. I often found myself wondering whether or not the things I was going through were shared or if I was the only one experiencing them, especially the moments when the world felt a little too big at times, and I realised just how small I felt within it. It is a strange thing, feeling both surrounded by people and alone at the same time. It felt as if there was a layer between me and others.

I never had the words to describe how I felt, but I knew that something felt out of place, nevertheless.

Because of the fact I did not understand it, I never talked about it with others. It felt way too complicated, and I was afraid others would not have gotten what I was trying to say, so I kept it to myself and learned how to sit with things internally and to process everything alone. This is where you come in.

The music was always there: during the long car rides, when I was doing my homework, and even while grocery shopping. I may have heard the songs, but I never listened to the lyrics until over time, when a switch flipped, and I started fully listening to the lyrics. For the first time, I was hearing someone articulate feelings I had not yet figured out how to name.

It felt comforting to realise that someone else had felt something so similar to me that they had managed to turn it into something tangible. It made me feel seen in a way I had not quite experienced before. I quickly started making playlists during these moments, and at first, it was fairly simple – collections of songs I liked, thrown together without much thought. But over time, they became more specific. I began to notice that certain songs felt right for certain moods and moments. At times, there were the more specific ones – the oddly precise playlists that only made sense to me.

Now, if I am being honest, the number of playlists I have is slightly embarrassing and a bit alarming, but somehow, your songs find their way into nearly all of them. It is amazing how your songs could fit into so many different situations, no matter how downright specific they may be, and how just one song can feel entirely different depending on the moment you hear it. It just shows that your work has managed to stretch across so many different parts of my life.

There are also the nights when I cannot fall asleep, where my body is tired, but my mind refuses to follow. On those nights, I find myself putting on your music, and although it may not be the cure to help me actually fall asleep, it does slow down my thoughts, which are usually

spiraling. Even if sleep never does come, there is at least some peace that my mind could finally rest.

Of course, music cannot replace real people or the real connections I have around me, but it does appear in those moments of in-between when I am alone with my thoughts, and I need something to help keep me grounded. As I grew older, the connection deepened. Songs I had listened to casually suddenly had a new meaning to me, and it felt as if the music was growing alongside me, waiting for me to catch up. There is almost something strange about that fact: how art remains the same, but means something different depending on when you encounter it.

Through these moments, however, is when I start to understand a bit more. Looking back now, I can see how present you were throughout so many different parts of my life. Life is not only made up of big, defining moments, but small ones as well, the ones that pass us by quickly, and it is within those moments in which your work has meant the most to me.

And in the end, it might sound a bit cheesy to say, but there truly are not enough words to thank all of you who, in so many ways, helped raise me – and perhaps, all of your fans. Not physically, of course, but in all the ways that matter just as much. In the way you helped me grow, process, and become the person I am today. You have been there through the many ups and downs and in the background of ordinary things when nothing significant was happening, offering a sort of steady, reassuring presence.

There is a real possibility that I may never meet all of you to tell you in person how much you mean to me, nor will you probably see it through the internet, because it is so vast and there are other countless people out there, there is something meaningful – and does not hurt in the slightest – in saying it anyway: thank you. Thank you from me. And, I think it is fair to say, thank you from all of us.

And even after all of this, it still feels as if I have only managed to scratch the top of the surface.

This letter does not really capture the full extent of the appreciation, love, and gratitude I have and hold for these artists. If anything, it honestly feels like a simplified version of something more complex. There are feelings which are at times deeper than words, and this is one of those times.

Because how do you actually fully explain what it means to be shaped, even if it is in a small way, by people whom you never met, and how do you measure the sheer impact that something has had on your life?

There are moments I did not mention and entire chapters of my life tied to songs I would not know how to begin explaining. Some lyrics meant everything at one point in time, and then changed meaning later, and songs that stayed the same but somehow grew alongside me anyway. And even then, I know there will be new songs and new artists that would unexpectedly find their way into my life and stay. The story will keep on going and going. There is no real ending to these types of things.

And because of this, perhaps this piece is meant to be incomplete. I know I will look back at this and realise there was even more I could have said, but even if this does not fully hold everything I truly feel, I hope it carries at least a small portion of it.

Thank you once again.