

**MUSIC, EMOTION & POPULAR CULTURE**

**AN EXPLORATION INTO HOW MUSIC IS CREATED AND PERCEIVED BY  
INDIVIDUALS AND HOW IT CAN INFLUENCE THEIR EMOTIONAL RESPONSES  
IN POPULAR CULTURE TODAY**

by

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## **Abstract**

Music is a core part of our everyday lives and culture. It is something that cannot be given one definition by words alone; it is indefinable. Music plays a significant role in stimulating emotion-related responses such as physiological, behavioural as well as psychological (Balkwill et al., 1999, p. 78) It has close ties to our emotions, memories and personality traits.

Self-reported studies reveal that reasons for listening to music are to pass time, regulate emotion, connect with peers, create an atmosphere, concentrate, increase physiological arousal and convey an image to others. Equivalently, music can be considered a way to reveal someone's identity and broadcast information about themselves to others; based on their favourite songs. Music provides a medium for self-exploration where individuals are able to reflect on who they are, where they came from, and whom they aspire to be (Lonsdale & North, 2011)

Results showed that by large, young people use music more for emotion regulation and self-expression than do older adults (Lonsdale & North, 2011)

This project will examine how music is created to impact individuals in the age of pop culture through socio-demographic, psychological and behavioural factors. Through a diverse journalistic approach, each article will take on a different form of journalism to explore how individuals experience and obtain music in everyday life in the world of pop culture.

Each story demonstrates how ambiguous music is. Music is absorbed differently depending on the individual due to a number of factors that will be investigated further in this portfolio.

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## Album Review

Composers purposefully manipulate the various musical properties in order to evoke specific emotional or affective responses in listeners. Appropriate use of musical elements contributes to inducing various emotions in listeners by arousing different levels of activation and emotional valence (Chong, 2013)

### Over It by Summer Walker

**Figure 1**



*Note. Image from Youtube.*

Summer Walker's hot pink *Over It* production plays out like a phone call with your best friend, a lovesick journal or a very chaotic melodrama. Raw, messy and human. One minute the narrator is unfaithful, the next she is head over heels in love and then later promiscuous. Summer Walker explores every angle of relationships to the bone. She is unashamed, unapologetic and vulnerable, but she's also carefree, fun and sexy.

This production turns from love to anger to frustration in a flash, it doesn't get more real than that. We are taken through every human emotion possible.

Listening to *Over It*, you trace back to all your past relationship experiences, or the ones you are currently in. She makes you feel that everything we are going through, and feeling, is okay and completely normal. Whether that be a lustful situation or a toxic ex you cannot keep drunk calling. The fourth track on the production, 'Drunk Dialling LODT' is dedicated to her boyfriend at the time and producer London on da Track. Walker tries to talk herself out of drunk texting him at 3:34 am and emphasises how hard it is to not drunk call that person when you are intoxicated. She repeats "Too much Patron'll have you calling his phone." Towards the end of the two-minute track, Summer covers Lenny Williams 'Because I Love You' adding a soulful 80's vibe to the single. Or how about how tired you are of relationships in society that you consider becoming promiscuous, which we hear in Walker and Party

Next Door's velvety collaboration 'Just Might.' Exhausted by relationships, Summer exasperates her frustration with how relationships are going for her and softly echoes that she 'Just might be a hoe.' She emphasizes how she might gain more from a sugar daddy or a drug dealer, rather than trying to find another genuine companion. She then goes on to call love a 'losing game' whilst cheated-on Party Next Door adds a male perspective to the foggy instrumental. We can hear how exhausted Summer is in this track to the point where we can physically feel her every emotion.

*Over It*, emulates the colour pink. It portrays everything to do with femininity, love, romance, and affection; due to the cutesy girly tracks, she adds to the production. This aura is also presented on the album cover, everything the album represents. We hear this aura, especially on 'Tonight.' Summer expresses how excited she is for her man to get home; she has been working a lot on tour so she cannot wait to get intimate with her significant other. She wants to make up for lost time and enjoy her and her partner's bodies. 'Tonight,' is a sexy, sensual, and lustful song, which reminds you how head over heels you are for someone you are crushing on when you are listening to it.

*Anna Mae* is in the second half of the album and includes heavy references from Tina Turner's biopic 'What's Love Got to Do with It' Summer subtly sings about her and London who are both unfaithful to their partners. They've "Made a couple jokes about fuckin' yeah, might have kissed a few times but never made a move on no cuff shit." Everything missing in their relationships is what they find in each other, they would rather have their cake and eat it too. They want to but have not gone the full way in pursuing each other because she mentions to London whom she is singing to, "You know my nigga don't play shit." Her current boyfriend is not one to play with, so she suggests that they continue keeping their relationship a secret and just deal with the consequences they'll later face. They aren't meant to be together but cannot help themselves. This song is beautifully sung over a besotted instrumental which makes you forget Walker is talking about infidelity. This is definitely my favourite song on the album. This is the type of song you do not want to relate to, but you do. It is commendable knowing that Summer is not afraid to speak on the topic of cheating, especially coming from the woman that is participating in it.

Despite Walker sharing with listeners some of the downsides to being in love, we also see her vulnerable side, and parts where she is not afraid to express how deeply in love she is. 'Nobody Else' is a song that so effortlessly captures Summer's emotion, melodies and essence over a piano played by London on Da Track. Summer declares her love for her partner and appreciates how loving, trusting, and loyal he is. She has the "Right amount of love, right amount of trust, right amount of dick." She does not know why he loves her but trusts him anyway. She is so deeply in love that she states, "God, I feel it in my chest at night." We can hear how in love she is through her melodic tone and raw emotions coming through on this track. This song was perfectly produced and crafted. When you know you have felt this way before, it is easy to relate to the vulnerability and emotions Summer is professing in this song. The outro to 'Nobody Else' is Summer softly repeating "Never fall out of love with you." As opposed to 'Nobody Else,' tracks like 'Me' and 'I'll Kill You', are the same idea, instead Summer professes her love for her partner, but with a different spin. Same context, different delivery. 'Me' is a moody track in the middle of the

album, in which Summer murkily communicates how crazy she feels when feeling hurt and heartbroken over a dude. She communicates how he brings out the worst in her to the point where she wants to go into her trunk and pull out a gun on him. She wants this guy to be her “Last fuck” and “Last love.” She’s over relationships and wants to focus on herself before she ends up killing him hence the title “Me.”

‘I’ll Kill You’ is a similar vibe, a twisted track with angelic voiced Jhene Aiko on the song. The pair threaten to kill any girl who comes near their men. They’ll go to hell or jail about their boyfriends, to protect their relationship. They have waited so long for a love like this that they do not want any female or anything else to ruin it. The lyrics play out like a violent horror movie but you forget this because of how angelic the pairs’ voices are. Summer can make a song about murdering someone, sound like a lullaby, which is what you must commend her for; Summer Walker reminds her fans that it is completely normal to feel the way we do as women, which is why she is the voice of the modern woman.

In a few studies that assessed emotion through music, the evidence is clear that music can effectively elicit a variety of positive emotions as well as negative emotions. Further studies also show that musicians manipulated particular features of music to communicate different emotions and that the configuration of musical features significantly influenced which emotions listeners perceived in the music. Such research is important because it confirms the notion that music expresses emotion and sheds light on how emotion is communicated through music, but it does not address whether music actually evokes feelings in listeners. There is evidence that the emotions perceived in music are often emotions the composer or performer intended to communicate. (Juslin, 2000) This is just the emotion Summer Walker wanted.

**Figure 2**



*Note. Image from Genius Media Group Inc.*

Figure 2 is the second album cover for *Over It*. This image perfectly illustrates this album and the songs surrounding it. You can see that it is about seeking advice from a close friend about all the ups and downs in your relationship. It's all about putting yourself first, indulging in some self-care but deep down in your heart you know you are waiting for that call from him.

### Feature Article

#### **Jeen-Yuhs: A Kanye Trilogy**

##### **Figure 3**



*Note. Image from The Guardian.*

**“I used this album as rehabilitation... this album gave me life; it was kind of like my angel that helped heal me... it revived my spirits.” – Kanye West.**

*Jeen-Yuhs: A Kanye Trilogy* follows us through the complexities of Kanye West's almost 30-year career; as a producer, rapper, entrepreneur and arguable fashion icon. The three-part docuseries captures Kanye's humble beginnings from desperately showing the world he is more than just a guy who makes beats for rappers, to dropping his most successful debut album to date; *The College Dropout*. *Jeen-Yuhs* also follows Kanye's latest successes and controversies surrounding his career.

*Jeen-Yuhs* is quite a heart-breaking watch, its overall ambience is old tapes, almost as though we're watching a collection of home videos, which humanizes Kanye a whole lot. Despite the uproar and countless controversies surrounding Kanye's



name, from making outrageous statements on the internet, never being caught smiling on camera and being called crazy by the world, this docuseries allows viewers to remember why Kanye deserves every last success he has gained and why he is a creative genius.

Coodie, an old friend of Kanye, records every moment of Kanye's career from the late nineties to the early two-thousands. Coodie and Kanye's late mother Donda, were the only people who saw potential in the Chicago artist. Donda knew every word to Kanye's raps including his high school talent shows; she was truly his biggest fan. Through Coodie's footage, Kanye is free and vulnerable. It is baffling witnessing Kanye as the annoying boy that hangs around the older kids who only sticks around in case, they need a favour. In this particular case, Kanye was only useful for making beats for big rappers in the game, such as Jay Z and a few other artists from the *Roc-a-Fella* label. It seemed almost impossible to well-known rappers and big labels, that he could become anything else other than a producer. Knowing who Kanye is today and the name he has built for himself, his past behaviour and manic outbursts seem almost totally acceptable.

The first two parts of the docuseries give us raw and uncut footage of Kanye keenly crafting, what later turned out to be some of his greatest songs of all time. Coodie's point of view allows us to see how at peace and happy Kanye is when he is creating music.

However, a reoccurring theme throughout is Kanye desperately trying to manifest his career as an artist. He knows he is just as good as what he says he is, but he just needed to desperately prove himself as a rapper to some of the biggest names at *Roc-a-Fella*, including Jay-Z. Despite bangers such as *All Falls Down* stored in Kanye's pocket waiting for the world to hear, Ye is still gathered as a joke as he bounces from *Roc-a-Fella* offices repeatedly being denied a record deal. Watching Kanye at this point makes you edge towards your seat because it feels cringe-worthy coming to terms that Kanye West was once overlooked and by the narrowest of margins, taken seriously. It almost doesn't faze Kanye, he is still hungry and fully aware of his talent, knowing he is about to be one of the greats if only someone gave him a chance. He wasn't wrong.

Watching *act ii: PURPOSE*, you realise that Kanye is the only rapper recognised in most of the footage apart from Jay Z. Half the people who doubted Kanye's abilities, are nowhere near as successful as Kanye today. It is a bittersweet watch to see how much Kanye believes in himself, even after being shut down constantly. However, it is later warming being able to see that he made his breakthrough as a musician, proving everyone who doubted him wrong. Every time someone was perplexed at the fact that Kanye was followed around with a camera, as he wasn't interesting enough to be documented, Kanye would humbly let them know "That camera is for a documentary on me." He was never taken back, defensive or irritated, he just wanted to be seen as great. He was defenceless.

Popular moments from *Jeen-Yuhs* that grabbed social media's attention were the making of four of *The College Dropout's* spotlight singles: *Through the Wire*, *Jesus Walks*, *Slow Jamz* and *All Fall Down*. Kanye played *All Falls Down* at the *Roc-a-Fella* office, which received little to no acknowledgement, *Roc-a-Fella* delayed the music video for *Jesus Walks* as they were still struggling to see him as anything but

a producer, Kanye precariously recorded *Through the Wire* with his mouth wired shut after a life-changing car accident and *Slow Jamz* was just an amazing song in the making ready for the world to hear.

*Jeen-Yuhs* successfully allowed us to revisit the pivotal moments in Kanye's life that remind us of why he was such a lifelong and loyal fanbase. Despite Kanye's questionable acts over the last decade, Coodie's camera footage takes us back to why people fell in love with Kanye in the first place and why he deserves every bit of success he has received. Despite his controversies from concert outbursts, wearing 'Make America Great Again' hats, and snatching VMA's at award shows, *Jeen-Yuhs* does a great job at humanizing Kanye and sympathising with him and his journey.

### Feature Article

#### **Music and Emotion: An Interview with Daniel Mullensiefen**

**Figure 4**



*Note. Image from WAMC Northeast Public Radio.*

How many times have listened to a piece of music that painted the exact emotion you were feeling at that very moment, or an emotion you didn't even know you felt until you heard a particular song? Well experts say music is often used in a constructive manner, to express emotion through composition and performance, or to evoke or regulate an emotional state through listening. Furthermore, it has been stated that one factor of potential influence with musical emotion decoding is emotional intelligence, the ability to categorize, express and regulate one's emotions, as well as those of others.

In an insightful discussion, music expert and psychologist Dr Daniel Mullensiefen reveals how he initiated his musicology studies around his love for music growing up. "I started studying musicology first, I actually come from the music side so I'm not a psychologist by trade." "I think like everyone who starts playing instruments and considering doing music as a career, I was listening to a lot of music in my teen years. This is how this relationship with music formed and how I became to know that music is really part of my life and identity. It also gave me the motivation to study it academically."

Dr Mullensiefen continued to speak on his experiences around musical perception and what he loves most about musicology. "I think my favourite part is thinking of experiments that reveal something new about how we process music and how we experience music, things like discovering a new side to it. For example, with my master's students, we designed an experiment where we asked people to raise musical performances of the same piece and called it the repeated recording illusion." Dr Mullensiefen conducted a study where people heard the same piece of music, which played out as a different performance three times. He elaborated and explained that "People had to say which one they liked better and gave reasons. People told us a lot of different things and everyone had their own reasons and so forth. Interestingly, we gave them the exact same recording. 75% of people didn't notice that they were given the same pieces, which is why music is something created in our minds. It shows us that it's not just physical vibrations, but we make music and the perception process."

Furthermore, Dr Mullensiefen discussed the reasons why he delved into music and emotion and why it is important to him. Music is such a broad subject, however, the music expert decided music and emotion was an important theme to examine and create a number of experiments behind it. "Emotion is the primary thing to motivate us into music, if there wasn't anything emotional about music then we wouldn't get emotional rewards from it. I think most people wouldn't engage with it; it is why engage with it at all." "The pain, effort and time to learn music and play an instrument, is only because we get something back emotionally from it. I just wanted to find out why that is and whether the emotional mechanisms are somehow tied to other psychological factors for example personality and other psychological traits such as motivation and whether all people perceive emotions in the same way or people have their specific individual differences. Recognising and decoding emotions is what led us to develop this test of emotional recognition in music."

Dr Mullensiefen shed light on his favourite study which was titled 'Repeated Recording Illusion' "We trick people into believing they hear different performances but they actually hear the same performance. This is very revealing. It tells you something about how we perceive music. It doesn't help if you are a great musician and have a lot of talent you still get this illusion, maybe even stronger. Our minds are more able to make stories about music, even if it isn't physical. There was also a big study on the musicality of non-musicians, which we conducted with BBC in 2014. We were able to give people a questionnaire which was self-reported, on the amount of musical training they had and the types of musical behaviour they do in their everyday lives. We also had four different listening tests and participants had to solve different musical tasks. The idea was to compare on one hand people who

were self-reported and see whether that would match up with their performance on the objectives. This big study had 150,000 participants which led to other studies which were developed with some further tests to make them better.”

The big question was the key factors that were noticeable in the hundreds of experiments conducted around musical perception, evoking emotion in music and behavioural traits. Two of the factors that stuck out to the musicologist were openness to experience and extroversion. Extroversion is a trait in people who are described to be, outgoing, action-orientated, expressive and typically enjoy spending time with others and working in teams. “The higher you are with openness to experience, the more often you are curious about music. These two go together with engaging with music. Often musical ability is higher with extroversion, introverts can also love music and music can help them with emotional balance. Nevertheless, these two traits come up quite often but it really depends on population and culture which can lead to different results.”

Dr Daniel Mullensiefen ended the discussion with exciting news about a study he is yet to publish. “One project we’re currently working on goes hand in hand with the audio branding world. We are finding out the characteristics of music that match brands and whether you can find out beforehand, in an optimal way which would be the brand would be the most effective. We are focusing on music that brings out positive attributes from this brand and further databases.”

### **News Article**

#### **Beat It by Michael Jackson turns 40**

**Figure 5**



*Note. Image from Tumblr.*

This year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Michael Jackson's hit single *Beat It*. *Beat It* was a major game-changer in pop-rock history. *Beat It* was the third single released on Michael Jackson's mega-selling, sixth studio album *Thriller*, which remains one of the best-selling albums of all time. A song quite different from Jackson's usual discography, Producer Quincy Jones encouraged Michael to include a rock song on the album, the type of song Michael would purchase if he wanted to listen to rock music himself. To this day, Jackson's *Beat It* has been praised as one of the most successful, recognised and awarded songs in the history of pop music. It was the moment where pop music and hard rock, perfectly fused together, which created an unforgettable moment in pop culture. Both the song and music video had a large impact on pop culture and the future of R&B rock.

*Beat It* landed itself on the Billboard Hot 100 for three weeks and was ranked number 5 on Billboard. Not only that but it was also certified 5x platinum on Billboard and sold 7 million copies worldwide. It spent a record-breaking 37 weeks at number one and became the blueprint for every album that followed.

It can be argued that legendary guitarist, Eddie Van Halen, helped *Beat It* become the classic record that it is today. Van Halen's exhilarating guitar solo transformed the pop record, which was only recorded in 20 minutes.

In an exclusive interview on 'Piers Morgan Live' on CNN, Van Halen discussed how the pop-rock single came together and how he added his famous guitar solo on the track. "I did it as a favour you know. I didn't ask for anything, it was about 20 minutes out of my life." The Rockstar recorded his guitar solo for free, which stans still struggle to come to terms with, due to the huge impact it had on the song. However, Van Halen's bandmates were not keen on the idea as their policy was to not do things outside of the band at the time. "Everyone was out of town, so I had no one to ask, and I swear to God who's gonna know if I play on this black kids record." Eddie further explained how he rearranged the song, as there were no chord changes. "Michael came in and I said I hope you don't mind I changed your song. He listens and he goes no, I really like that high fast stuff you do. That was it, took about 20 minutes of my life."

Eddie Van Halen was not the only phenomenon to make a brilliant impact on *Beat It*. American guitarist Steve Lukather was also invited by Quincy Jones alongside Van Halen, to transform Michael's record. Lukather discusses his involvement on *Beat It* on 'Musicians Hall of Fame & Museum' "Quincy goes, you gotta save me, you gotta save me on this." "It was my turn, it was like okay Eddie's playing on it, so I got the Marshalls, and I played the guitar riff first and we quadrupled and made it big." However, Quincy was reluctant with Lukather's guitar riff at first, his concerns were making sure *Beat It* successfully played on every radio station there was. "And so, I did all that, we sent it to Quincy, he goes I love it except the guitars are too heavy I got to get this on R&B radio, pop radio and rock radio." Instead of quadrupling the guitar riff, Jones guided Lukather into doubling the guitar riff instead; low and behold, the timeless record was created. "They loved it, so Quincy goes come on down with Michael he wants to add a couple of these other riffs ... that was all that night." "They gave me a couple directions, so I go and try it again, Michael starts dancing around a little bit, I knew I was good, like that's great so let's double that part, and that's the record."

Mixing heavy metal with R&B was something that had never been done before, especially in the mainstream pop world. *Beat It* reached both black and white audiences, which took Jackson to a whopping level of superstardom. He became the first black artist to receive airplay on major platforms such as MTV, which changed pop culture forever. *Beat It* will forever be remembered for its radiance and the bar it raised for music today. It is truly a timeless record.



**Six Records and a Deserted Island –**

<https://wp.coventry.domains/lynettekalanzi/>

**Figure 6**



*Note. Image from Globelink International.*

***Out of the millions of recorded songs in the world, there's always a handful of songs that are personal to you. Whether it be a song that soothes you, an endorphin trigger or a song that takes you back to a point in your life where you were at your happiest. This blog post is inspired by Radio 4's Desert Island Discs which led me to ask a group of individuals with different musical preferences and social backgrounds, what six songs they would take with them on a deserted island, and the reason behind their choices.***

Here is a track list from each individual along with their reason for their choice of song, with some honourable mentions:

**Peace Olatunji-Kasali, 20, Marketing Student**

**1. Future – Tricks on Me**

"I chose this song because it was the first song I ever listened to when I got my Air Pods. I think this is truly one of my favourite songs ever because when I listen to it, it brings me back to a good memory, which is buying the Air Pods that I saved up so long for and finally being ecstatic that I bought them."

**2. Bri Babineaux – Make Me Over**

"This is a gospel song, one of my favourite gospel songs. I recently found out about it and the song resonates with me. It reminds me that God is always there with me, every step of the way. He is certain and trustworthy. When I make a

mistake, when I sin, he is always there to make me over. This will also be a good song to listen to on a deserted island because I think it will keep me sane."

**3. Mariah Carey – All I Want for Christmas**

"I think the reason why I chose this song is quite self-explanatory. For me, when I play this song, I'm reminded of Christmas and everything to do with it. Christmas decorations, family, gifts, Jesus, love and snow. It is an overwhelming feeling of love and I love feeling that way. When this song plays around Christmas, I love the vibe that it excludes, for me it is a classic!"

**4. Party Next Door – Don't Run**

"This is one of my favourite songs by him. When I listen to this song, I feel calm and mellow. Everything calms down for 4 minutes. The beat is also peaceful, there's no rush to finish the song and that is what I love about it."

**5. Destiny's Child – Cater 2 U**

"This song honestly reminds me that there is love out there that is so strong and deep that would want to make you cater to your other half. It is such a beautiful song. It can bring out so many emotions in a person, which is a beautiful thing honestly. Also, their voices are a delight to listen to."

**6. Wizkid – Wiz Party**

"Finally, this is a song I chose because it is such a fun song, with a fun beat. It literally reminds me of those African hall parties I used to attend when I was younger. They were so much fun, that was when life was carefree, fun and stress-free. I would love to relive the moment I heard this song I heard for the first time and on a deserted island, you need a lively song that will get you dancing."

**Daniel Obeng, 31, Barber**

**1. 50 Cent – Get Rich or Die Trying**

"The reason I would have this on the island is because it'll help me focus on survival, in terms of making the most of a tight situation."

**2. Marvin Sapp – Never Would Have Made It**

"A gospel song is key because without God nothing is impossible. I need to be reminded daily that God is the source of life and the only person that'll help me out of any situation. At the same time, I'd have joy knowing God is with me always."

**3. Wizkid – Made in Lagos (Album)**

"I need some sort of pleasure, in terms of enjoyment. Wizkid has some bangers that will get me in the mood for that, especially if I'm on a deserted island."

**4. Ghetts – Conflicts of Interest (Album)**

"This will give me someone to talk to. Sometimes I go through a thought process of reasoning. I like to think and ask questions about certain things. Being on an island, I need to know how I'll get through the day and live to the next. With this album, I'll be able to think and direct my thoughts to God."



**5. *Rema – Dumebi***

“This is part of my positive enjoyment sessions. This is what I need.”

**6. *JAE5 – Dimensions***

“This song will help me to stay positive, knowing that I’m on top and have nothing to worry about. Again, it’ll lead me to enjoyment and praising God.”

**Lorraine Nalukwago, 21, Marketing Student**

**1. *Rick Ross ft Christette Michele & Drake – Aston Martin Music***

“I would take this song with me to listen to on a desert island because it calms me down, no matter what mood I’m in, whether I’m happy or sad, this is one of the first songs I play to get the mood going. Only good memories are related to this song for me, hence why I play it when I want to isolate from the world or if I’m just genuinely feeling good.”

**2. *Lil Baby ft Gunna – Money Forever***

“With this song I found more of a connection with the lyrics more than anything else. I use the lyrics as a form of manifestation as I see myself being the person Lil Baby says that he wants to become in the song. This is a high vibrational song to me and I find that I like to listen to songs that motivate me.”

**3. *Meek Mill – I’m A Boss***

“With this song, it increases my endorphins. This is the kind of song I listen to when I’m at the gym or when I’m going for a run. When I’m down it makes me feel good every single time, it gets me back to the mood I’m meant to be in. It gets me really pumped.”

**4. *French Montana – Ball Drop***

“This is a song I listen to when I’m going through things, especially with friendships. I resonate with it throughout the year. When I’m feeling emotional or going through different stages in my life, this is the song I turn to. It motivates me to have different people around me.”

**5. *Chronic Law – Fall in Love***

“I listen to this song when I’m in a really soppy mood. I like listening to it in summer time because it’s a real feel-good song. As soppy as it sounds, I hope I can relate to this song this song one day and be in love as well, a real spirit changer.”

**6. *Future – When I Think About It***

“Lastly, I had to add Future of course. I would like to relate this song one day, most of the songs I chose are either songs I relate to currently or songs I hope to relate to one day, a song to motivate me in a way.”

**Nancy Tam, 31, Digital Marketing Director**

1. **Aaliyah – At Your Best (You Are Love) – Gangstar Child Remix**  
“Reminds me of my parents wedding time for some reason.”
2. **Toni Braxton – Breathe Again**  
“This is just one of my favourite songs ever!”
3. **P!nk – Most Girls**  
“Takes me back to my pre-teen days, I have to bring this song with me!”
4. **Usher – My Boo**  
“This is another one of my favourite songs!”
5. **Ralph Tresvant – Sensitivity**  
“My parents would always play this in the car, I love the memories I have around this song!”
6. **Kanye West – Good Life**  
“This song reminds me of me and my girls when I had just left year 13.”

**Laura Kalanzi, 28, Occupational Therapist**

1. **Destra Garcia – I Dare You**  
“This song started my love for Soca. My parents listened to old school Soca but my brother introduced me to this song and I’ve loved Soca and Carnival ever since.”
2. **Destiny’s Child – So Good**  
“Reminds me of secondary school, screaming this down the hallway with my girls. I used to think about singing it to the teachers that said we were going to get up to no good when we left school.”
3. **Beyonce – Before I Let Go**  
“I think this song came out when I was at a low time and it really lifted my mood. Whenever I feel down, upset or on my period. This song makes me feel really happy.”
4. **Rick Ross – Aston Martin Music**  
“I had just moved to Slough and passed my driving test. I was looking forward to going to uni. This song just made me (and still does) make me feel like a boss b\*\*\*\* whenever I hear it. I just have to repeat it!”
5. **Jazmine Sullivan – Girl Like Me**  
“This song is me and I am the song. It’s a true representation of this generation and the pressures we feel to mirror what we see online.”
6. **Drake – Take Care (Album)**  
“I love every single thing about this album, Drake used to be, and still is one of my favourite artists ever.”

### **Leila Naiga, 32, Mental Health Practitioner**

**1. *Destiny's Child – No No No Pt 2***

"This reminds me of primary school memories and playground dance routines."

**2. *Beyonce – Déjà Vu***

"This song reminds me of college days and doing the exact same dance routine in my bedroom."

**3. *Beyonce – Single Days***

"Single ladies reminds me of the people I used to work with when I was a waitress. We had a really great relationship in and outside of work, good vibes always! They used to always ask me to do the routine and they never stopped cheering me on! Therefore, this song will be used to boost my confidence and willpower to survive."

**4. *Jagged Edge. – JE (Album)***

"This album gives me a mellow feel. It's a feel-good album and it soothes me when I listen to it."

**5. *Fred Hammond – No Weapon***

"This is my wedding song. This was the happiest moment with my husband. It will uplift my mood and the will to live."

**6. *Bisa Kdei – Mansa***

"This was my traditional wedding song; it was such a great moment. My family were involved and it reminds me of them, this will help me to remember them."

### **Annette Kaggwa, 53, Prison Nurse**

**1. *Madonna – Holiday***

"Madonna was everyone's idol growing up in Uganda. She was my personal idol when I was in secondary school and I just loved her."

**2. *Gloria Estefan – Don't Wanna Lose You***

"This was my first dance song when I got engaged at my daughters' christenings, the memories around this song are very dear to my heart."

**3. *Michael Jackson – Thriller***

"I listened to this song a lot when I was pregnant with my first child. I really enjoyed this song at the time and it is still very timeless in my opinion."

**4. *Whitney Houston – I Have Nothing***

"A dear friend of ours died and she chose this song to play her funeral. It's a very emotional song for me."

**5. *Atlantic Starr – Secret Lovers***

"This song reminds me of the 80s, music was the best around this time."

**6. Amy Winehouse – Valerie**

“This was the first song that introduced me to Amy Winehouse, I really enjoyed the song when I first heard it and I fell in love with her ever since.”

**SK, 21, Finance Economics Student**

**1. Nines - Money on My Mind**

“This is my favourite song of all time, it’s inspirational and it will definitely be played at my funeral. It incorporates so much, especially motivation. If you put this song on in the morning there’s no way you can’t get to it. It starts your day right.”

**2. Nines – Nothing Still Hasn’t Happened**

“This song is a chilled vibe but it’s meaningful. It gives me the same vibes as the first one.”

**3. Lil Baby – Freestyle**

“Freestyle is the epiphany of good vibes, it’s a nice sing-along, you can boogie to it and overall, it’s just good vibes.”

**4. YoungBoy Never Broke Again – All In**

“That’s that deep stuff, if you give me one hundred, I’ll give you one hundred back, it’s just about the principles of life; friendships, morals and relationships.”

**5. Born Trappy – All Hours**

“This is the best song to wake up to. It’s about pain and motivation and I enjoy the flow. Overall, It’s a great song with good vibes once again.”

**6. EST Gee – Lick Back**

“This song gets you pumped, especially when you’re speeding down the motorway or in the gym. He’s just too cool.”

**Reflective Essay and Literature Review**

To assure I conducted an adequate portfolio, I did a substantial amount of background reading and research. As my portfolio incorporates a range of journalistic articles, this literature review will consist of journal articles, documentaries, albums and radio broadcast programmes.

When deciding the theme and topic I wanted my portfolio to be based on, I had to be cognizant that it was a topic that not only I consider timeless, but other readers would too. I wanted to ensure that my portfolio had the quality and ability to be readable and relatable, years from now. Pop Culture is something I am very passionate about, I thoroughly enjoy being up to date in the world of media, especially in the entertainment world. However, I wanted to give Music and Pop Culture a deeper meaning in my portfolio, that being a sentimental one. I made certain, that my portfolio was entertaining, yet insightful. Considering I aspire for a

job in Public Relations and Production, I knew writing about Music, Pop Culture and Emotion would be good practice for me for my future career. Lastly, I wanted my collection of articles to replicate a blog website, with a little bit of everything.

Considering I had to come up with a range of journalistic articles, reach out to interviewees and conduct primary and secondary research in under four months, I had to conduct a strict timeframe and an efficient plan throughout the process. One of the earliest tasks I faced was writing down a list of candidates I wanted to consider for an interview. I found reaching out to participants for an interview to be the most difficult and disheartening part of my project process. I reached out to a number of different people whom I wanted to be part of my portfolio. Altogether, I emailed roughly 20 candidates, that being nursing homes, radio hosts, musical artists, presenters, musical therapists and DJs, I didn't receive a single response. I spent days making sure I conducted the perfect email so I was able to conduct some interviews for my project. I went as far as researching email templates and googling the perfect words to include. I was very taken back, which knocked down my confidence greatly, especially knowing that I did not have a lot of time to write up this project.

During the time of my disappointment, I kept in the back of my mind that I had been preparing for this degree for almost 3 years and giving up wasn't worth it. I then switched my focus to reaching out to nursing homes. At this point in time, I knew I wanted to write an album and documentary review; however, I needed an article interviewing the elderly about music in a nursing home on top of this. I have always been intrigued about how the elderly experienced music in the past and what it meant to them, especially during the war and similar global crises. I then began emailing nursing homes that engage in musical activities for their residents. I first emailed nursing homes in the West Midlands, unfortunately, I still received no response. I went as far as asking my personal tutor Claire Buchanan for a formal letter to prove that I was a student who was desperate to receive an interview with elderly residents. Unfortunately, I began running out of options. My frustration increased as the deadline for the portfolio was getting closer and closer. I came to the conclusion that emailing was not the correct approach, so I began to call nursing homes that were local to me. Nursing homes in my area began to answer my calls, which gave me hope and motivation again. Sadly, although I was promised an opportunity to speak to residents' face to face about music, I did not receive any calls back. This was the moment I knew I needed to let it go, and turn my focus on conducting other articles. I was still in the writing process of my album and documentary review in midst of awaiting phone calls and email responses, I used my initiative and multitasked my way through the process, all whilst coming up with other ideas for articles. This is something a truly dedicated journalist would do, and I did exactly that.

Additionally, I wanted to add a psychological approach to my portfolio, to strengthen my thesis on music and emotion. I wanted to receive a qualified perspective to secure my project and implement psychological evidence from a professional. I thereby went to extensive lengths to find a study that fit my portfolio perfectly. After a long search, I discovered two studies by Daniel Mullensiefen, an expert in music psychology. His main study focuses are music perception and musical abilities. The two studies that captured my attention were *The Musical Discrimination: A New*

*Measure for Assessing the Ability to Discriminate Emotions in Music and Associations Between Musical Preferences and Personality in Female Secondary School Students.* I found these studies to be relevant as my overall subject matter is to probe deeper into musical perception and the connections between music and socio-demographic characteristics. I was able to successfully conduct an interview with Daniel Mullensiefen, where he discussed what prompted him to direct his research on music and psychology, his favourite studies that he has published, music and its importance and finally what music means to him personally. It was a very insightful interview and commendable, which boosted my confidence massively as I struggled with getting interviews throughout the process.

Blumer & Katz's Uses and Gratifications Theory explores the needs people have when they use certain types of media, and the gratifications they gain from it. (McQuail et al., 1972) explain that the audience is conceived of as active i.e., an important part of mass media use is assumed to be goal-directed. This theory became relevant to my portfolio as I explain the different reasons for music use, the emotional impact and the importance it has on different individuals.

In addition to this, the media effects model views individuals as passive consumers of media content, the uses and gratifications model regard individuals as active agents, as stated previous, who seek out or avoid particular content. The basic assumptions underlying this paradigm are that there are individual differences in media preferences and that people consume media to fulfil basic needs. The uses and gratifications model is essentially an individual differences approach in that it seeks to identify the motives and traits that underlie people's reasons for listening to music (Rentfrow, 2012)

However, (McQuail et al., 1972) assumption may be contrasted with (Bogart, 1965) thesis to the effect that most media experiences represent pastime rather than purposeful activity, very often chance circumstances within the range of availabilities rather than the expression of psychological motivation or need. Bogarts' theory does not support my project, as music has a lot of psychological meaning behind it as well as motivation. Music is known to induce emotional expression, tension release, motivation and creativity. Music is not meaningless; it is very purposeful in many ways.

The use of fictional and other media materials for personal preference may spring from a need for self-esteem, social utility functions may be traced to the need for affiliation and escape functions may be related to the need to release tension and reduce anxiety (McQuail et al., 1972).

Another factor I had to keep in mind whilst writing my project was making sure my articles were connected in some way, despite being of different genres. My articles approach music in different ways. Including, the creative process behind music, music being an expresser and how music is created to be related to. As well as what people's musical preferences say about them and general news about trending pop culture stories

Once I made the decision that I will base my portfolio surrounding the topics of music, the first piece of production that struck me was Summer Walker's album *Over*

*It*. Not only is Summer Walker my favourite musical artist, but she also has the ability to tell a story through her music, which a lot of people going through similar experiences can relate to. As explained in the portfolio abstract, music is ambiguous, meaning that people interpret it differently. With that being said, I found this album to be relevant due to the fact that *Over It* tells a story, which gives outsiders an opportunity to connect with Summer on a more personal level and resonate with her past fame. Before this album was debuted, Summer Walker consistently received backlash and negative comments from the media regarding her inability to live up to the vivacious personality she flaunts online, coming across as bland and untalkative in interviews, as well as a few controversial statements online. She has previously been known to act very boring and quiet when she is caught at public appearances. Summer later revealed that she suffers from crippling social anxiety, which she educated her millions of followers on. Music is a character trait in itself, it reveals who you are as a person whether you are creating or listening to it. All things considered, Summer Walker evokes her feelings and her stories through her albums. Her music allows her to resonate with fans, and give listeners more of an understanding of her character, which she struggles to do in person. Music may contain small hints about a musician and give away what they are truly feeling through their craft. Where someone struggles to communicate through verbal communication, it can be done through music. *Over It* is a combination of Summer Walker's experiences in relationships, her inner thoughts, a spiral of emotions and a lot of relatable situations women can relate to. In conclusion, I wanted to open up my portfolio with this album review to strengthen my statement about music being indefinable by just words alone.

Although *Over It* is an album that is over a year old, I wanted my portfolio to include material that was current as Journalism is all about keeping up to date with current affairs and reporting the most spoken about topics on the internet. Around the time I was deciding what else to incorporate into my portfolio, Kanye West's documentary series *Jeen-Yuhs* couldn't have come at a more perfect time. It was current, positively perceived and at the time the most talked-about documentary on Netflix, making up for his negative headlines widespread across social media. *Jeen-Yuhs* was the moment society remembered why Kanye had the nation in the palm of their hands once upon a time. Not only that, rather than taking Kanye's discography for what it is, like what we do with most artists, *Jeen-Yuhs* took us through the creative process visually, through a raw and vulnerable lens. To take a review in a different direction, this documentary allowed me to write about music in greater depth. It allowed me to corroborate evidence written in my abstract. Supporting this statement, *Jeen-Yuhs* incorporated the creative process musicians go through when producing euphonious art. This documentary gave me a greater awareness of how important music is to artists and how it is more than just a career. I was able to witness Kanye in a vulnerable light. I observed the lengths he went to, to be acknowledged by the industry and how music changed his life completely. He was considered a simpleton until his craft was taken into consideration. This was the moment I decided to include this series in my portfolio because it allowed me to back up my hypothesis about music, which is music being something used to evoke emotion and communicate. Where Kanye's vision wasn't heard or acknowledged, his music was able to speak for him. Music isn't just something you hear; it changes your perspective about the world and people. In addition to this, I was able to witness *The College Dropout* change the culture for music in the docuseries, which is vital in

my portfolio as I mention that music can have a large impact on culture, which this documentary displayed.

'The Media is the Message' theory can be considered relevant to the Kanye West Documentary. McLuhan's theory surrounds the idea that the way we receive and send information is more important than the message itself (McLuhan, 1964). In this case, after several controversial outbursts and a number of negative news headlines circling Kanye West's name, it only took a three-part Documentary for media viewers to sympathise with the musician, resulting in the rapper becoming Hip Hop's hero decades later.

Finally, I wanted to showcase my journalism skills and allow my articles to have a different feel with each read. One of them taking a more personal tone. I added a personal blog with inspiration from *Desert Island Discs*, a radio broadcast programme on Channel 4. *Desert Island Discs* takes the approach of guests, mostly well-known figures, being asked to choose eight discs, a book and a luxury to take with them on a desert island. Guests then explain their choices and discuss key moments in their lives, people, and events that have influenced and brought them to where they are today. I thought it would be interesting to reach out to people, and hear what songs they would take with them on a desert island and their personal reasoning behind them. This allowed me to get more personal and gain some knowledge about each individual's personality. I wrote this as a personal blog, which I thought was a great addition to my portfolio, due to the fact I was able to hear directly, what music means to a selection of individuals; this gave my portfolio a warm, yet mesmeric approach.



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