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Mind Playing Tricks On Me

" At night I can't sleep/I toss and turn/candlesticks in the dark/ visions of bodies being burned." These are the opening bars to Geto Boys "Mind Playing Tricks On Me" This song is a good example of the dark themes and internal feelings that are shared in artists music. Listening to music all day every day, I've noticed that a huge majority of albums that run through my queue include lyrics or even whole songs about the artists well being or mental health. From self-reflecting tracks like "U" off of Kendrick Lamar's 2015 album "To Pimp A Butterfly" to the suicidal fantasies of Notorious B.I.G's "Suicidal Thoughts" to the dark aggressive nature of DMX's debut album "It's Dark And Hell Is Hot" It makes me think do artists use their music as therapy? Thinking about this hit home for me since I write music and I can see the therapeutic side of it. In my experience, It's a creative funnel for your problems. Creative works are bi-products of problems and stresses in life. Since when made they don't make the problems go away they just encapsulate what you were feeling at that moment. Music is relative with time, Something you wrote a week ago could be completely different from what you think today, but those experiences will always be recorded. For some artists, music is that therapy couch they always wanted was too scared to sit on.

Diving deep into Scarface's lyrics you can the raw unfiltered reality that he portrays. Often criticized for glorifying the dark violent topics that he raps about, he makes a good point in saying "How do you glorify reality?" (Haper, Kimbery and Jackson, Hope) This dark pictures he paints in his music is the reality of the world he lives in. If you woke up every day to needles on the ground, sirens louder than a lion roar flying past, you would also create some dark content. If we think about it it's only dirty and grimy to those who think of themselves as clean. Perspective is key so if you have one story about a certain subject or lifestyle then you will judge other creations off of that. It's never the peers of the individual that rebel and criticizes the music. It's the ones who can't relate who fight back. That connection becomes stronger between artists and a fan that is going through the same thing. As a consumer, I have been guilty of being a bad mood and popping on a song or two that relate to the struggle I'm going through. As humans, we love being together so finding songs that feel like you could of wrote it means the world. It makes you feel less alone knowing that you're not the only one. Especially when you hear lyrics like "loving you is complicated." This phrase is repeated in the intro to Kendrick's letter to himself "U." The instrumentation on this song sounds like a jazz band falling into madness. It gives an ominous tone that fits well with the piercing lyrics that go over the top. This song is Kendrick talking to himself in a drunken stupor. Yelling at himself for some of the wrongs he has committed. Making it complicated to love himself in the process. It's an emotional rollercoaster that shows the insides of his character and the insecurities that he has. Asking himself why did he let himself live this long? He put all his feelings and emotions on a track instead of going to a therapist, why? Is it because of the time commitment, is it the idea of paying someone to listen to you, or was that creating something a visceral and raw as that gives

you time to reflect and heal with yourself? Finding the right words not worrying what people think because no one is around. It's just you, paper and a pen. We also see this flood of thought in the Biggie track "Suicidal Thoughts." He writes about if he were to die he would rather go to hell instead of heaven with the "goodie goodies." Throughout this suicide note, he goes on to say how horrible of a person he is and that he doesn't belong in the lavish pure place like heaven. Even contemplating if his own mother would even care about him dying, "I wonder If I die/Would tears come to her eyes." This all climaxes to him figuratively taking is own life with the sound of a gunshot and a body hitting the floor. This is an example of a mind space that is prepared for what is coming and wants to get it over with. He doesn't see himself has a hero at all. He sees himself as a villain that ruins lives. So why not take one life to save others?

Another piece in artist taking therapy is the religion aspect. We see this clearly in the song "The Convo" off of DMX's 1998 album "It's Dark And Hell Is Hot" This song is DMX having conversations with god on his situation and why he feels and thinks the messed up things he does. Throughout his career, DMX has been very spiritual he also has been open about his bipolar disorder and problems with narcotics. In this song, He gives it up to the king with a heart to heart. He is filled with anger about is hard times but is also grateful for how many times the Lord has saved him from death. Sitting down and having a talk with God is probably the definition of therapy. DMX just decided to put it on wax for the whole world to see. Putting feeling out to the public is a reliever that can't be described. I guess It's like throwing your problems out into deep space where they just float away.

The last example I would like to share is Kid Cudi's infamous track "Day 'N' Nite" From His 2008 Project "Man On The Moon." Kid Cudi has been very open and public about his

mental health in a 2018 interview on Red Table Talk he said, "For a long time, I was not happy when I woke up in the morning… Just being like, why don't I feel okay? I thought maybe it was stress. At that point, I was doing an album every year, so I thought maybe I was overdoing it and I needed to take a break. It took me a minute to realize there was something going wrong with me."

(Saponara,Michael) He portrays these feelings In his music, especially in this song. I feel this encapsulates the feeling of a happy popish song as a cover or a blindfold for the sad themes beneath it. With lyrics like “I toss and turn, I keep stress in my mind (mind)/ I look for peace but see I don’t attain” and “ Madness the magnet keeps attracting me.” All these lyrics are behind a hard-hitting spacey beat that peaked at #5 on Billboard's Hot 100. This popularity shows that people have the same feelings that artists poetry in their music and they are searching for an avenue to get their feelings out. Kid Cudi’s discography is filled with songs like Day N Nite filled with his mental health problems and troubles with the world. He opened the gates for singing out your feelings over hip hop production. He has given an outlet for many young MC’s to take his place and talk about their states of mind.

Throughout my research on examples of therapy in the music, I have definitely seen and heard it all. As storytellers, we share not just for the audience but also ourselves. It’s an outlet that gives power to the feeling that we possess. Ignites a sense of comfort putting certain emotion in a capsule in which we call music. We’re connected to the fact that we’re all human. Not one of us is the same but we all go through the same troubles. The same heartbreaks, and insecurities, and complications. To network that all over the world to show that you are not alone is a powerful thing. So yes, artist uses music for therapy. I would put it down as group therapy since

we all get to experience the healing properties of the music that is produced. A community experience that is shown when you walk into an artist's show. You'll hear fans say "so and so saved my life," or "If it wasn't for them I wouldn't be here." It seems like an oxymoron but these dark morbid tales bring out the light in people. Gives them a hand out of a hole they thought they were going to stay in for the rest of their lives. Not knowing if anyone else was with them. The next time you turn some music on listen to them, and I don't mean cleaning up or writing an essay actual listen. Discover the story behind the words. You can learn from others' mistakes. Take the path that the artist which they could have seen for themselves. You might find the light you need to face the trials and tribulations that we face on a daily basis. Prepared for whatever the world has the throw at your face. Musicians will keep on pouring out their out hearts and souls until the end of time. Life is too crazy not to write about and document for others to see. It's important to know when my minds playing tricks on me.

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