

Online Encounter #1: Deserted Island Playlist

Class: MUSC-3030

Professor: Dr. Olson

Written by: Stephen Beckstrand

In the scenario that I am to be stranded on an island with the entire discography of a band or artist of my choice, I would almost certainly choose Breaking Benjamin. While being one of my favorite bands since my days of attending middle school and remaining a staple in music library since, I would also benefit from the fact that Breaking Benjamin has released a significant amount of music which adds some variation and ability to fill the lonely hours. The band represents a significant part in my life for me as it was a favorite among many that helped me through my adolescence and they were part of a music selection that aided to a connection with some of my best friends.

The first song of theirs I would listen to is 'Diary of Jane'. Like with many others, I am sure, I was introduced to the band through this song. I remember first hearing the acoustic version as my old brother was playing it in his room. A short time later, my family had gifted me a first generation iPod nano for my 13th birthday and I was incredibly excited to expand my available library of music as prior to this I had a CD player with only a couple CDs which my brother had gifted to me when he purchased an iPod of his own. At any rate, once I received my iPod, I immediately approached my brother about adding some music. I first asked about Diary of Jane but did not know the name of the band who played it or even the name of the song. I vaguely mentioned 'Something about Jane?'. He knew which song I was referring to and started playing the official studio recorded version of the song. Prior to this I had only heard the acoustic version and was dazed by how much I liked this harder hitting version of the song. I consider this song to be the part of a phase of when I was defining my preference for music. Even today it is one of the only songs that I never have an urge to skip when it plays. It seems to fit any mood I am in. It's one of those songs that despite being almost three and a half minutes long, it feels like less than a minute. I like a lot of music, but I have always been able to claim with little doubt that this is my favorite song to listen to.

The second song I would listen to is "Failure". This single from their 'Dark Before Dawn' album came out in 2015, six years after the release of their last album and three years since I had graduated from high school. At this point in my life I was feeling a bit disconnected from a social life established during school. Both of my best friends from school had moved to cities several hours away and most of my correspondence was with coworkers and my family at this point. I shared a connection with my friends through music and would constantly talk to them about new music being released by our favorite bands. Me and my friend even learned guitar together. By the time this song had come out I had heard rumors of the band returning, though with some new members but I had not been following this news closely as I had not expected them to return. I woke up to one of my friends from school sharing this song with me and I immediately connected with it and the memory is a bright spot for me as it brought me back to the days of talking about music with my friends.

The third song I would listen to is 'Blow Me Away'. The song was written in the same period that they released their first album and I think balances the selection of the three songs as it highlights songs from different periods of their music production. The instrumental version of this song was included in the soundtrack of the video game *Halo 2*, this is significant in that I was excited to see a song from a band I liked in a video game I also played, but also in that I spent many hours connecting with my brother while playing this game, especially during a period where he was injured and was in bed for several weeks.

While reflecting on the songs I am coming to realize that my connection with them is not with the lyrics or message conveyed by the songs, but rather how they correlate with different parts of my life and memories with those I care about. I really do enjoy the music, and again, consider them to be one of my favorites, if not my overall favorite. Although, I will say that I had half a mind to choose the band Chevelle and they were not a far off second. In the end, I had to go with Breaking Benjamin due to how much their music has been involved in transitional periods of my life, and due to the way the music makes me feel when I listen to it. It connects me with memories of my past.

Word Count: 875