

Dashboard Confessional - The Unlikeliest Rock Star

National Standards: 7-8, 10-11

Emo music is a subgenre of punk rock, indie rock, and alternative rock music defined by its heavy emotional expression. Part of the so-called post-hardcore band scene, emo artists delve into songs with more substance and feeling. Pioneering 80's emo bands include My Chemical Romance, From First to Last, Fall Out Boy, Jawbreaker, and Dashboard Confessional. Dashboard is fronted by Chris Carrabba, who serves as its primary vocalist and songwriter. Carrabba started out writing music for his own interests, playing it only for friends, eventually releasing music whose honesty and emotional content resonated with, and attracted a large fan base. 20 years later, Dashboard is popular today.

Prepare

Have students watch performances of Dashboard Confessional. Since the band has been around for decades, it's easy to find videos of Carrabba and crew in action. Have students pick their favorite performances from the 2000s, 2010s and today. How has the band's live show changed over the years?

Key points in the article:

- Chris Carrabba worked at his craft before "making it," and he attended Florida Atlantic University, studying to be an educator. He eventually became a credentialed teacher.
- Dashboard Confessional's first album was 2000's *The Swiss Army Romance*, a collection of songs recorded primarily using only Carrabba's voice and acoustic guitar. The album really shows off Carrabba's ability to emote and connect with listeners.
- Carrabba says that, for him, writing is a form of catharsis. He didn't even think anybody would hear the songs on his first release and used their creation as a form of expression. Many successful artists also see music as an outlet and cathartic experience.

Begin

Review vocabulary words from the article:

- CATHARSIS: a way to express pent-up emotions.
- UNDERPINNING: a solid foundation to support or strengthen. In this case, the song.
- AUTHENTICITY: quality of being authentic and your true self.

- OBLIGE: Do as someone asks or desires.
- PENCHANT: a strong liking for something or tendency to do something or act a certain way.
- INNOVATION: creating a new idea, method or product.

Discuss

Have students pick out their favorite Dashboard Confessional songs and explain why they connect with those tracks. How important is "feel" for a band like Dashboard Confessional as opposed to one that focuses on other musical qualities? What makes Dashboard Confessional stand out in a sea of modern rock 'n' roll bands?

Questions

1. Who gave Chris Carrabba his first guitar?
2. Name some of Chris Carrabba's early bands.
3. In what city did Chris Carrabba cut his teeth performing in local bands?
4. Where did Chris Carrabba attend college?
5. What was the name of Dashboard Confessional's first album, and when was it released?
6. What company does Dashboard Confessional have a distribution deal with?

Answers

1. His uncle.
2. The Vacant Andy's, The Agency, Further Seems Forever.
3. Boca Raton, Florida.
4. Florida Atlantic University
5. *The Swiss Army Romance* (2000)
6. AWAL, a subsidiary of Sony Music Entertainment.

Expand

Have students sing or perform one of Dashboard Confessional's songs. Since many, if not all, of these songs originated on acoustic guitar, they translate well in that setting. You may also have students look up cover versions of Dashboard Confessional's songs to see how others have interpreted the band's music.