

STUDENT LIFE

The Pop List: Top ten one-hit wonders of the '90s

By Sean Mihlo
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I grew up in the '90s. The decade defined how I lived then, and it's still defining the music that I listen to now. Thanks to the Internet, there's so much, dare I say *too* much, music floating around today -- on blogs, MySpace and other websites. When I was growing up, the modern-day Internet was in its infancy -- you found new music through magazines, mix tapes and the radio, the latter of which I found most beneficial. I'd divvy my time between alternative radio and top-40-hits-of-the-'80s-and-'90s radio. My taste in music now is so diverse thanks to this dichotomy, and the following songs helped to define what I liked growing up, and what I like now. These songs inspired change and reaction in the '90s, and ultimately contribute, however lame they may seem now, to pop music's largely-encompassing canon.

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Chumbawamba
"Tubthumping"
1997

Every Friday in my fifth grade language arts class, our teacher allowed one student to bring in any CD of his/her choosing. One week, my best friend at the time, Donnie, brought in Chumbawamba's *Tubthumper*, the band's triple platinum major label debut and the album from which "Tubthumping" was released; I shook my head in embarrassment. Inside, however, I was riddled with excitement, anxious to hear the song with the funny title. Known as an genre-bending, anarchist band in their native England, Chumbawamba will forever be known in the States as the oddly-named band with the song that no one knows what it's about. While the title suggests some sort of political connotation (a tubthumper is a politician in England), the song, to the naked ear, is memorable for its chant-worthy and mouth-watering lyrics: "I get knocked down / But I get up again / You're never gonna keep me down." "He drinks a whisky drink / He drinks a vodka drink / He drinks a lager drink / He drinks a cider drink..." Speaking of, I think I'd actually have to get really, really drunk to listen to this song again.

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The Proclaimers
"I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)"
1993

Instantaneously recognizable by the initial lone guitar strum and high-hat taps, "I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)" catapulted The Proclaimers straight to the top of the U.S. Billboard charts. Known for their accentuated harmonies and Scottish accents, The Proclaimers, comprised of identical twin brothers Charlie and Craig Reid, first hit their stride overseas in the late '80s, but it wasn't until "I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)," which appeared on 1993's *Benny and Joon* soundtrack, that the band was able to break through to the U.S. The song, about a man's devotion to a woman and the lengths he's willing to go to show his love, is perhaps best known for, if not it's chorus, the quirky post-chorus ramblings. Nearly 15 years later, The Proclaimers and its only U.S. hit continue to be popular with American fans: In April of this year, the band appeared and performed "I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)" on an episode of the cartoon *Family Guy*.

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Meredith Brooks
"Bitch"
1997

Oh my gosh. A swear word? On the radio?! To this, Meredith Brooks said, Hell to the yes. My mom would always yell at me if I swore in front of her. When "Bitch" was released, I finally felt I had the freedom to swear all the time. Hey, if someone says it on the radio, I can say it to my mom, right? Well, no, but it was still pretty cool to hear cursing on the FM during the car ride to school in the mornings. Initially, Brooks, who was 39-years-old when her debut album *Blurring the Edges* came out, didn't have enough cash to record "Bitch," but a friend chipped in and the rest is history. Released during the height of '90s female alternative rock, "Bitch" gave Brooks the opportunity to capitalize on the success of other artists like Alanis Morissette. The pay-off was big: "Bitch" hit #1 on Billboard's Top 40 Mainstream chart. While the song itself attempts to break down exactly what the word "bitch" means, and whether it's good or bad to be called it, "Bitch" is ultimately remembered for stirring up the airwaves with its water cooler title. And I still feel weird cursing in front of my mother. Great, thanks Meredith Brooks.

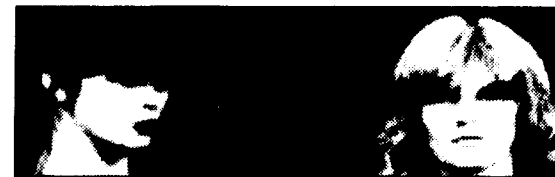
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Deee-lite
"Groove Is In the Heart"
1990

On the brink of a new year and decade, New York City-based house music mashers Deee-lite released one of pop music's most bubbly, kooky and vivacious dance numbers ever, "Groove Is In the Heart." The song blends elements of disco, funk (legendary funk bassist Bootsy Collins plays on the song and appears in the accompanying video) and rap (A Tribe Called Quest's Q-Tip lends a few rhymes to the song), as well as a string of record samples which help set the booty-shaking backbeat. Led by the cutesy speak-sung vocals of Lady Miss Kier and featuring Jungle DJ Towa Tei and Super DJ Dmitri (hey, it was the early '90s -- give 'em a break), Deee-lite was short-lived, lasting only four years, three albums, and one Billboard Hot 100 hit. "Groove Is In the Heart," however, remains a reminder of just how fun (and straight-up quirky) pop music in the '90s would turn out to be.

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Divinyls
"I Touch Myself"
1990

Australian rock band Divinyls had been playing music for over a decade before its one and only U.S. hit, "I Touch Myself," was released. Usually referred to as a duo, vocalist Chrissy Amphlett and guitarist Mark McEntee started playing together in the early 1980s and released their first studio album, *Desperate*, in 1983 on Chrysalis. Essentially an ode to (oh, do I really even need to say it?) masturbation, "I Touch Myself" (which was co-written by Amphlett and McEntee and the songwriting team of Tom Kelly and Billy Steinberg, who also wrote Madonna's "Like A Virgin") is straight outta the oven, and Amphlett's raspy, breathy vocal delivery and overtly-sexual lyrics ("I want you / I don't want anybody else / And when I think about you / I touch myself," and a bunch of "ooh's" and "ahh's" along the way) heighten the song's persistent theme. Although controversial at the time of its U.S. release, the song would eventually peak at #4 on Billboard's Hot 100 chart. "I Touch Myself," with its sexual frankness, paved the way for other artists to express their, um, "inner" feelings, like Tweet's 2002 top-ten R&B hit "Oops (Oh My)" and Britney Spears' "Touch of My Hand" in 2004.

Stay tuned for the conclusion in next week's issue of the Beacon.

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