

4-22-2022

## The Black Parade

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### Recommended Citation

Curcio, Jiana (2022) "The Black Parade," *Intertext*: Vol. 30, Article 16.

Available at: <https://surface.syr.edu/intertext/vol30/iss1/16>

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Many people have heard about the “emo phase” of life that normally takes place during someone’s middle school years. The black eyeliner and Hot Topic clothing are made fun of all the time, but the most known social dimension has likely been the music, especially from the band My Chemical Romance. During my “emo phase,” in middle school, I discovered their 2006 album, *The Black Parade*. Even though I now wear different clothing and makeup, the music of that album still resonates with me, especially the storytelling aspect of it.

*The Black Parade* tells the story of a character called the Patient. Throughout the alternative rock opera, My Chemical Romance, in dark military jackets like a somber version of The Beatles, recounts the Patient’s journey through death after he passes away

due to cancer. Each song offers a different perspective on his journey, whether it be the journey itself or his looking back on different parts of his life. The songwriting skills of the band are on full display throughout the whole album, instrumentally and lyrically. Frontman Gerard Way can perfectly capture the emotions of each story and is backed by the gifted guitarists Ray Toro and Frank Lero. In *SPIN*, Jeremy Gordon describes Gerard Way as “a carnival barker in front of the twin-guitar attack of Ray Toro and Frank Lero.” He goes on to say, “Lero drove the tracks with relentless punk energy while Toro’s instincts trended toward the scaled-up dinosaur rock of his youth.”

Each member does their part perfectly when it comes to the creation of this story and the mood of the album, which explores different emotions and sounds as it flows through the life and death of the Patient. Songs like “Dead!” describe the Patient going through his last two weeks of life, while “The Sharpest Lives” captures living life to the extreme. Both have high energy and driving guitar parts

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Photograph by Ryan Brady.

Layout by Hannah Ramusevic.

that are perfect for people who need a song to headbang to. Then there are songs like “Cancer,” which reveals the Patient’s cause of death, and “I Don’t Love You,” a gut-wrenching look at a lost love in the Patient’s life. Both songs take on a much more ballad-influenced sound and perfectly represent the highs and lows of life and death.

There is also no talking about this album without bringing up its most successful song, “Welcome to the Black Parade,” where the Patient meets death in the form of a parade. This song is My Chemical Romance’s version of “Bohemian Rhapsody” by Queen. The mixture of driving drums, intricate and clashing guitar solos, and Gerard Way’s inspiring vocals makes for an epic song that speaks to many listeners. Even though it is a song about someone’s death, it inspires people to live their life. This band was able to create an anthem for the masses while still telling a coherent story, a feat that most musicians strive for but fail to accomplish. *The Black Parade* is a masterful piece of art that has changed how I view music and songwriting in my everyday life as a music major.

One of the most interesting things about *The Black Parade* is the societal impact the album has had, especially for the emo movement. At first, most people did not take My Chemical Romance seriously because of their affiliation with the emo community. In the words of Jeremy Gordon:

As far as painted-up musicians went, My Chemical Romance were too ironic and sexless to be KISS, too uncool and sexless to be Bowie. They were lumped in with the stereotyped emo package—these guys with their eyeliner and tight pants and

amateurishly trimmed swoosh haircuts, howling in high voices about how their hearts hurt, all of which was easily brushed off as affectation.

Even though they had immense talent and a chart-topping album, some critics still viewed them as less than other artists because of their fanbase. Even today, with the massive success of their music and the joyous uproar that came with their reunion announcement on Halloween of 2019, they are still not shown the same respect as other artists who have had similar success.

An insanely prominent band when it comes to the emo and alternative rock genres of music, My Chemical Romance secured their popularity through *The Black Parade*. They were able to mix components of rock, opera, ballads, pop-punk, and many other genres together while telling their story of the Patient. Even now, almost fifteen years later, the sound of a G note on a piano can make some people raise their heads in recognition of “Welcome to the Black Parade.” Even though the critical success of the album was overshadowed by the societal disdain of the emo community, it still holds up when it comes to talking about inspiring songwriting and storytelling through music. This album has had a huge impact on me as a musician and has helped influence not only my music taste but what I create when I write.

#### *Works Cited*

Jeremy Gordon. “10 Years Later, My Chemical Romance’s *The Black Parade* Still Speaks To Emo Internet Kids.” *SPIN*, 2016, October 24.