

Music Theology

His smile catches my eye from across the room and immediately draws me to him. Bathed in a halo of soft light, the lead singer is the archangel of the band. Shadows dance on his bare chest and arms. He stands frozen in time, his graceful hands forever grasping the microphone. With his mouth stretched open, he is immersed in a passionate flow of music. A grimace twists his face in this moment of intense expression. A vision in black and white, he is immortalized. The other band members linger around him in scattered shades of grey. They toy with their instruments, looking up with eager eyes. Unlike their unadorned front man, they wear white shirts and stern expressions. One picture portrays the group as a whole, its members all grinning and laughing together. Flecks of celestial glitter twirl around the band's name and connect the surrounding images. An ethereal, circular symbol lurks behind the name. The word cuts through the middle of the page, with the other images revolving around it. The poster embodies a tiny universe, and at its center stands Incubus.

Hanging on a plain white wall, this musical microcosm brings a personal touch to an otherwise bland college dorm. Conforming to the room's layout, it lies on its side, and the band members appear to have fallen down inside its borders. Someone has knocked over the paper cage in which they are trapped. Locked inside this glossy prison, they remain isolated within their own universe, unable to reach the outside world.

But the band's real power does not lie in photographs or posters. It springs from their music and lies dormant until the moment when its full force can be released on stage. Incubus uses the concert setting to create a particular environment for their audience, one that is conducive to introspection. The band's lyrics and creative performance techniques combine to throw the audience from their usual trains of thought, and the onlookers begin to see themselves and the world around them in a new way. Incubus opens their fans' eyes to the messages they want to convey, ideas of humanity and altruism. Songs such as "Pardon Me" and "Megalomaniac" express disgust with the self-absorption of modern society. The singer screams to us that he has "had enough of...people's mindless games." He reminds us that we are all "heaven sent, and there was never meant to be only one." Incubus encourages people to look beyond themselves and acknowledge their parts in the world around them.

These ideals became clear to me when I attended my first Incubus concert. Although I had been a fan of the band for several years, I did not truly understand their message until I saw them perform live. I was fourteen when the group finally toured in my hometown, and I had no one to go with except Mary, a classmate whom I found extremely irritating. Well, the choice was either her or my mother, but I stubbornly refused to be seen at the concert with a parent. At the show I began to regret my decision. Mary talked endlessly while we waited for the band to appear on stage, and I just stood there feeling grumpy, silently praying for the lights to dim. Thankfully my wish was soon granted. A moment of blackness and a single guitar riff were enough to silence my companion. After a second of this haze, I was quickly bombarded by strobe lights and loud drumming. The backdrop on the stage began to move, and the band members were suddenly in sight. The paintings behind the band kept changing, and objects were being raised and lowered all over the stage. A myriad of sounds and images encircling me, I felt like I was inside a magic trick. Someone had tapped his wand and pulled the group out of a hat and onto the stage, and now he was setting everything in flight. Lights flashed in different colors, and fog poured from the stage, enhancing the sensory experience of this waking dream. The sense of unreality lasted throughout the show, the visuals and music working together to spin a web of fantasy that stretched over the crowd. I was in a daze. The tranquil music seemed intensified by the lights and images that appeared on stage, and for the first time I really listened to the lyrics. I was lulled into a reflective trance.

Removed from my own world, I was now gliding through the realm of Incubus and paying close attention to their rules. The voice on the microphone was telling me to stop focusing on myself and worrying about the minutiae of life. It said, "You have a responsibility to the rest of the human race, to the world. You are not just a person; you are part of something bigger."

I should be nicer to the person next to me.

During that concert, I decided to stop criticizing what I had previously seen as other people's "personality flaws." I realized that I am not perfect, and I have no right to judge others. I do not have the ultimate say on the way a person should look or act; I am merely one unique part of a unified whole. The world is a composite of differences, and Incubus pushed me to

embrace the diversity around me. The concert setting compels people to take a closer look at the meaning of the band's lyrics. I have looked, and I have learned that their message is tolerance.

After the concert I decided to be nicer to Mary. We talked for some time, and I realized that I was too harsh in my first judgment of her character. Although she was quite more talkative than I would have preferred, she did have interesting things to say. The situation was not that bad once I gave it a chance. As we made our way out of the building, we were accosted by a man who was frantically trying to sell the last of his posters. At first we turned down his offer, but after he lowered the price, we each agreed to buy one. There were only two kinds left, images of the band in either a collage of garish colors or plain black and white. Mary chose the former, and I took home the latter, our choices representing the differences in our personalities.

As I look up at the poster, now hanging in my college dorm room, I see pictures on a glossy page. I see the name of my favorite band. I see the torn corners of the paper. But if I look closely enough, I can perceive something bigger. I can catch a glimpse of my epiphany.

Works Cited

Incubus. "Megalomaniac." By Brandon Boyd. [A Crow Left of the Murder](#).

EPIC/IMMORTAL, 2004.

Incubus. "Pardon Me." By Brandon Boyd. [Make Yourself](#). EPIC/IMMORTAL, 1999.