Music with a Mental Health Story

Presented by:

Chet Baker
Jazz trumpeter and vocalist Chet Baker was a gifted musician and considered the "James Dean" of jazz in the 1950's. Baker's emotional depth gave way to significant accomplishments, which unfortunately were overshadowed by his drug addiction, but they did not dismiss his charismatic artistry.

Mariah Carey
In April of 2019, iconic superstar Mariah Carey revealed to People Magazine that she had a lifelong battle with bipolar II. But her diagnosis did not stop her. Carey shared she goes to therapy and takes medication for her condition. A celebrated musician with 18 number one hits and more than 200 million records sold, her openness about her mental health journey is truly an inspiration.

Janet Jackson
In an interview with Esquire Magazine, Janet Jackson shared that she struggled with depression through her 30's. "It could relate to failing to meet impossibly high standards. And of course there are always the societal issues of racism and sexism. Put it all together and depression is a tenacious and scary condition. Thankfully, I found my way way through it..."

Lady Gaga
World-famous Lady Gaga has been very vocal about her experience with PTSD, anxiety, and depression. Gaga spoke with Oprah about her journey in 2020, and since then has been a mental health advocate, promoting Mental Health First Aid and spreading the message "It's OK to Not Be OK."
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Amy Winehouse
Amy Winehouse was a British singer and songwriter, cherished for her deep, expressive contralto vocals and mix of soul, rhythm, blues, and jazz style. This iconic singer lived with manic depressive disorder and bulimia, and unfortunately substance use disorder led to her untimely death in 2011. She will always be cherished as a great singer who contributed much to the arts.

Adele
Adele is a Grammy-Award winning singer best known for her bluesy singing style, emotion, and range. She has been very open about her mental health and how she dealt with anxiety and depression after her divorce, and how "a lot of therapy" helped her process her grief.

Mac Demarco
Mac Demarco is a phenomenal guitarist best known for his easy-going sound. The influential musician has been open about his struggles with anxiety, manic depression, and alcoholism which he claims was a coping mechanism for stage fright. Without his album Salad Days, much of the new sound we hear in Indie Music might not exist today.

Kurt Cobain
Kurt Cobain, who was the front man of the world-famous band Nirvana, had attention deficit disorder as a child and then bipolar disorder later on in his life. He unfortunately never pursued treatment, and despite the band's success, Cobain died by suicide at age 27. His lyricism and melodic genius continue to provide solace to people today.
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Brian Wilson

Brian Wilson has been labeled as a musical genius who produced more than 24 Top 40 hits with his band The Beach Boys. Wilson is the survivor of an abusive father, and battled schizoaffective disorder and depression throughout his career as a musician. As the band became more famous, Wilson become more seclusive, turning towards drugs in an effort to self-medicate his depression. With the help of a psychologist, he finally got care and was able to take his life back.

Britney Spears

Britney Spears, American singer, songwriter, and pop icon has had her mental health in question by the public ever since her news of her conservatorship surfaced. While a mental health condition hasn’t publicly been disclosed in relation to the conservatorship, Spears has been open about her experience with anxiety from a young age, particularly due to her busy schedule and high expectations of her as a singer. She continues to be open about her life and women’s health on social media.

Kendrick Lamar

Kendrick Lamar, deemed one of the most influential rappers of his generation, has won 161 awards, including 14 Grammy Awards. Lamar has been very open about his experiences with depression and suicidal ideation, particularly in his track "u" on To Pimp a Butterfly. Exposure to violence having grown up in Compton, California, the rapper reports, have contributed to his depression.

Mac Miller

Mac Miller was a beloved rapper whose bars and fun production style captivated millennials all over the States. His untimely death from an overdose at age 26 shook many fans and fellow musicians, bringing attention to mental health. On his last album, songs like “Self Care,” “Wings,” “Come Back to Earth,” and “Hurt Feelings” showed everyone just how in tune he was with his feelings of depression.
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Phoebe Bridgers
Phoebe Bridgers is a songwriter who was nominated for 4 Grammys. She revealed in a conversation with Metallica's drummer that she has major depressive disorder and anxiety, which she has received therapy for. Many of her songs are written from a deeply personal place, reflecting on abuse she has endured as well as her mental health journey.

Wayne Coyne
Wayne Coyne, front man of the Flaming Lips, has been open about his experiences with anxiety after he was mugged, and has been a vocal advocate for ending the stigma around depression and anxiety.

David Byrne
David Byrne, singer songwriter, producer, actor, music theorist, and film maker is best known for heading the Talking Heads. He has Asperger's which makes it difficult for him to be in social situations, but he believes it has almost been like a superpower which has allowed him to hyperfocus on his creative endeavors.

Elliott Smith
Elliott Smith is heralded as one of the most influential "Emo" Alternative/Indie singer songwriters and guitarists, and was very open about his struggles with ADHD and depression. His mental health experiences were apparent in his lyrics and dissonant melodies.
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Nick Drake
Guitarist and singer-songwriter Nick Drake was considered one of the great lost geniuses of English Music, particularly because he did not enjoy fame or being in the spotlight. The musician suffered from depression, which influenced much of his lyricism.

Diana Ross
Diana Ross is an American actress, singer, and pianist who rose to fame as the lead singer of The Supremes. In her book, she reveals that she suffered from Anorexia Nervosa due to the pressure she was under by Motown and Berry Gordy. She is in recovery from this condition, after seeking treatment and being in rehab.

Ian Curtis
Ian Curtis was the front man of the legendary post-punk and gothic rock band, Joy Division. Curtis lived with depression and epilepsy, which made it difficult for him to perform live. Sadly, Curtis died by suicide at age 23, but his legacy lives on as people around the world continue to listen to his music.

Elton John
Elton John is an English singer, pianist, and composer best known for his song "Rocket Man". He has released 31 albums since 1969 and is acclaimed by critics and musicians. The musician has been open about his experience with Bulimia Nervosa, from which he has since recovered because the three words "I need help" changed his life. Since then, he has been active as an advocate and through charity work.
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Dolores O’Riordan
Dolores O’Riordan was the lead singer of the Cranberries, an Irish rock band who rose to international fame in the 1990’s. O’Riordan reported that she was abused as a child and suffered from depression, bipolar disorder, and binge drinking to self-medicate. Best known for their jangly and dreamy guitar work and O’Riordan’s ethereal singing style, the band is still listened to today.

Robert Smith
Robert Smith, front man of the 80’s post-punk band, The Cure, admitted that he experienced psychosis, depression, and suicidal ideation around the recording of their fourth album. The album’s lyrics and sound were deeply influenced by his state of mind at the time, but would go on to be the band’s most popular album to date, reaching number 8 on UK Albums charts, and has been critically acclaimed as contributing to the style of gothic rock.

Gary Numan
Gary Numan is an English electronic musician well-known for his hit "Cars" which came out in the early 1980’s. Numan has been open about his Asperger’s Syndrome, sharing with Irish News that he finds social situations difficult, and small talk and reading body language to be especially hard. However, like David Byrne, he finds that his mental health condition helps him fixate on things that interest him, like music.

Sinead O’Connor
Sinead O’Connor is an Irish singer songwriter and musician best known for her song "Nothing Compares 2 U". The singer revealed that she had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder and hopes that in sharing her mental health journey, she can help the millions of people living with bipolar disorder.
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Peter Green

Peter Green was an English blues singer, songwriter, and guitarist who founded the world-famous band Fleetwood Mac. He was eventually diagnosed with schizophrenia after long stints with drugs, and he spent time at mental health institutions. Fun fact: Green actually wrote the song Black Magic Woman which Santana later covered.

Zachary Cole Smith

Zachary Cole Smith is the lead singer and guitarist of the burgeoning underground Indie band, DIIV, which sports jangly guitar riffs and pedaled effects. Smith has been very candid about his mental health journey with depression and recovery from addiction, and the spectrum of emotions he’s experienced can be heard in the band’s album Is the Is Are, Oshin, and Deceiver.