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# Seattle U Community Reflects on 2021 Music Releases

Bill Smolskis, Volunteer Reporter

Throughout the year, there have been delays, surprise releases, unexpected collaborations and several debut releases that placed new artists at the forefront of popular culture. The Seattle University community shared their thoughts on this year's musical selections.

Q: What was your favorite album of the year so far?

First-year Global Business major Lachlan Soughan:

"Personal preference, I'd have to say 'Donda' by Kanye West. The album is a tribute to his mother and I really enjoy the more emotional side of Kanye. Overall, it was a very sound album and somewhat touching."



Second year Communications major and KXSU Promotions Director Ella Rustin:

"Probably 'Glow On' by Turnstile. They're a punk/ metal band and they released a new album that's very different from what they've done before."

Seattle University Professor of Music Theory and Guitar Jeffrey Bowen:

"I don't have this wide ranging view of the current pop release scene, but picking things at random, I thought of Halsey's latest album, 'If I Can't Have Love, I Want Power.' It's interesting to have Trent Reznor involved in a project like this... I don't know if I was a Nine Inch Nails fan, but I definitely steeped in that music and I recognized it as really well done to say the least... I think she had a record with a different tone to it that she wanted. I think she became pregnant during the recording of and she wanted to express the highs and lows of that experience."

Q: Were there any specific releases this year that you were anticipating? Did they deliver on your expectations?

Soughan: "Well, Drake obviously dropped his album, 'Certified Lover Boy,' which I enjoyed. It's grown on me. But I'm also anticipating an album from Travis Scott called 'Utopia.' I'm really excited for it because Travis Scott is quite a unique artist in the sense that he kind of goes to different sides of the spectrum."

Rustin: "I'd probably say 'Donda' by Kanye West. I was waiting for that album for like over a year and it was really good. Also Suicide Boys' new album."

Bowen: "The honest answer, to establish my point of reference, was the new release from a band called 'At the Gates.' They're a Swedish melodic death metal band that's been around for a while, so I'm tracking some of that: bands that came up in an earlier era and they're still going, still making heavy music. I think the Halsey album fits that category. I heard stories about the production, so I was very curious as to how that was going to sound... I've become aware of St. Vincent, and each record I heard was a little bit different... I was curious to see what she was gonna do on this new record ['Daddy's Home']; what was the presence of her guitar? I was finding a lot of resuscitation of soul and R&B sounds that are kind of merged with her songwriting, which also tends to be a little darker."

Q: Do you think listeners in general demanded music at a faster pace, or were they more willing to accept the circumstances created by COVID-19?

Soughan: "With our generation now it's a lot about instant gratification. Especially in the COVID-19 era when everyone's on their phone and social media there's a sense of always looking for something to drop... I respect the artist's time. It is a tease when they say it's gonna drop and it doesn't, but in reference to Kanye, he delayed his album for a couple months and people were really angry about when it didn't drop, but to write an album about the most important person of your life and share it publicly to the world, you should be given any amount of time."

Rustin: "I think because concerts weren't available, people anticipated more music from artists. I guess they figured that artists would have more time to work on albums because they can't really go on tour, but at the same time I think a lot of people understood how hard COVID-19 musicians, and how they didn't have resources to help fund projects."

Bowen: "I really don't know... I have seen two trends. One is, yes, being hungry for new music and being hungrier for live performance. And in the meantime being okay to stay with their record collection or Spotify. Also delving back into music that they may have listened to in previous eras of their life. You know, some college students, but also students in their thirties, forties, sometimes fifties going back into their record collection and wanting to learn how to play those things."

Q: Were you listening to older or newer music in the past few months?

Soughan: "It's a large mix. When I work out it's definitely rap, but when I'm by myself relaxing I like to put on some classics, some of the Beatles and stuff because I was raised on a lot of old rock and seventies and eighties rock/pop."

Rustin: "I feel like this year I got into a lot of older music. I got really into a lot of nineties experimental bands and stuff like that, and obviously any new artist that I liked if they came out with stuff, but I really enjoy listening to eighties and nineties bands. I got really into this band Slowdive, they're like a shoegaze band, they're really good. Recently I've been really into nineties hip hop, like The Pharcyde, A Tribe Called Quest. I really like Lauryn Hill too."

Bowen: "Both! Two things have been going on: I've been aware that if left to my own devices, I can become out of touch with what's happening currently. Part of it is feeling a need to be diligent about exploring new releases. And I have been feeling a tendency to go back and fill in certain gaps in my listening. Certain groups that I had listened to, I just became aware that they put out six albums since I stopped paying attention."