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# **Aesthetic Music and Social Activism of the Dark R&B Singer The Weeknd**

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and  
Culture**

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### ***Dedication 1***

*I dedicate this work to my beloved parents, Abd El Aziz Zaimi & Ghanya Laribi, for their endless love, prayer, and support.*

*To my little sisters Rahma, Rania and Hajer Zaimi. I just want to say thank you for the unending love.*

*To my lovely friends Wissal, Shaima, Nesrine, Samir, Dalila, Amina, Dounia, Arij, Achref, Aya, Hadia, and Rayan. Thank you for always believing in me and pushing me to continue.*

*Dr. Khaled Chouana for his unwavering guidance, patience and support.*

### ***Dedication 2***

*I dedicate this work to my family and my friends, for their love and support.*

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**List of abbreviations**

R&B	<i>Rhythm and Blues</i>
EP	<i>Extended Play</i>
EDM	<i>Electronic Dance Music</i>
USA	<i>United State America</i>
BLM	<i>Black Lives Matter</i>

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## Abstract

This master thesis aims to explore the way The Weeknd influenced traditional R&B music through darkness and incorporated elements of other musical genres. Additionally, it examines how he opened a new wave for other R&B musicians. Our research focuses on analysing some of The Weeknd's songs. The content analysis of songs has been examined in detail in the lyrics, the mixtapes, the music videos, and the literary motifs. We have also paid attention to examining how he expresses melancholy and despair in his music. By the end of this research, we have understood that his music lyrics have not only revolutionized R&B music but also resonated with our generation.

His influence goes deeper than just music, he is an outspoken advocate for social activism and racial equality.

**Keywords:** The Weeknd - R&B -

Mixtapes - Melancholy- Social activism

## المخلص:

تهدف أطروحة الماجستير هذه إلى استكشاف الطريقة التي أثر بها الويكند على موسيقى الأرنبي التقليدية من خلال الغموض ودمج عناصر من الأنواع الموسيقية الأخرى. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإنه تدرس كيف فتح موجة جديدة لموسيقى الأرنبي الآخرين. يركز بحثنا على تحليل بعض أغاني ذويكاند. تم فحص محتوى الأغاني بالتفصيل في الكلمات والأشرطة المختلطة ومقاطع الفيديو الموسيقية والمحسنات البديعية والأدبية. لقد حرصنا أيضًا إلى دراسة كيفية تعبيره عن الكآبة واليأس في موسيقاه. بنهاية هذا البحث، فهمنا أن كلماته الموسيقية لم تحدث ثورة في موسيقى الأرنبي فحسب، بل كان لها أيضًا صدى مع جيلنا.

وتأثيره أعمق من الموسيقى فحسب بل مدافع صريح عن العدالة الاجتماعية والمساواة العرقية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ذويكاند - موسيقى الأرنبي - أشرطة مختلطة - كآبة - العدالة الاجتماعية

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# **INTRODUCTION**

## **1. Background of Study**

Plato once said: “Music is a moral law; it gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything.” In this context, last year, our teacher of American studies introduced us to protest songs and their effects on the world. We also studied how American citizens use songs as messages to express their political opinions and how singers use music as a tool to describe how they feel about sensitive issues like poverty, social inequality, and women's rights.

Music singers can be viewed as lovers, poets, and human rights defenders based on their goals and their interests. And since Abel Makkonen Tesfaye, also known as The Weeknd, combined all of these characteristics, we felt there was a need to focus on him as a case study by analysing his aesthetic songs and his social activism.

The idea of working on The Canadian singer The Weeknd, who now lives in the USA, emerged when we found that his music and activism are worth analysing from a scientific perspective.

We have then decided to focus on the case study of Abel Tesfaye, who is, we think, one of the most famous singers of dark R&B in the world. It must be said, however, that no master's dissertation or PhD thesis deals with the work and artistry of The Weeknd. In short, examining the songs and activism of the Weeknd will be very relevant.

## **2. Aim of the Research**

This master dissertation aims to examine the songs and social and political activism of The Weeknd. It can be also argued that The Weeknd has a great influence on the R&B music scene as well as on culture, art, and fashion.

This work will explore the strategies used by The Weeknd to promote social change and the way he addresses the different issues of social exclusion, drugs, and racism.

Throughout this research, we are going to examine the most important songs, comments, and activism of The Weeknd and their effectiveness.

## **3. Research problem.**

The main issue we would like to tackle in this research has to do with investigating the new subgenre adopted by The Weeknd, namely dark R&B to shape his music career, as well as



exploring his participation in social and political activism. In this context, we will try to provide an answer to the following questions:

- What do The Weeknd's songs deal with?
- What is the reflection of The Weeknd's songs on the R&B?
- What makes his songs so special from an artistic perspective?
- What are the social and political causes that The Weeknd supports?

#### **4. Literature review**

We have examined the state of the existing literature and searched for scholarly books, dissertations, and theses that have dealt with the aesthetics and activism of The Weeknd.

Josh Eeles wrote an article for *Rolling Stone* magazine in October 2015 entitled "Sex, Drugs, and R&B: Inside The Weeknd Dark Twisted Fantasy." This article mentioned how the Weeknd faced challenges in the *BBC music show* because of his explicit lyrics. Also, the article highlighted the success of his songs in his album *Beauty Behind Madness*, as well as his preparations for a national arena tour. Finally, Eeles mentioned the fact that The Weeknd was shy, and a mysterious person compared to his songs and his unique sonic template.

Another scholarly work that needs to be mentioned is an article by Jose Patrico Perez-Ruff and Antonio Castro-Higuera entitled "Blinding Lights" (The Weeknd): Form Techniques and Branded Content in MTV's Video of the Year." Their research mentioned the release date and the production of the song "Blinding Lights" and how it was part of the Mercedes Benz campaign. The two authors also highlighted the formal aspects of the music video direction, the camera movement and editing, audio and ambience and lighting and symbolism.

In May 2014, Fredrik Dhenens published an article entitled "Resistant masculinities in alternative R&B? Understanding Frank Ocean and The Weeknd's representations of gender." The paper examined how The Weeknd avoids reinforcing harmful stereotypes, while other alternative R&B artists challenge traditional ideas of masculinity in R&B and hip-hop culture by presenting new dominant models. The Weeknd, on the other hand, dressed the hegemonic masculinity in his songs by stressing the dominant accepted representation of what it means to be a man in Western societies.

In December 2022, Gil Kaufman wrote an article in *Billboard* magazine entitled *The Weeknd Receives 2022 Allan Slaight Humanitarian Award for Social activism*. Abel Tesfaye received this award for his social activism and support of humanitarian causes. Kaufman also

mentioned that the Slight Family Foundation will donate 50,000 dollars to the charity chosen by The Weeknd as part of the award.

Finally, on December 5, 2023, CBC Music published an article about The Weeknd's donations to Gaza. The singer donated 2.5 million dollars to the United Nations World Food Programme for humanitarian efforts in Gaza. His donations come from The Weeknd's XO Humanitarian fund, and it will provide four million emergency meals, feeding over 173,000 Palestinians for two weeks. The article added that The Weeknd has a history of supporting humanitarian causes, including his donations to Ethiopia in 2021, Black Lives Matter causes, and the victims of the Beirut explosion in 2022.

## **5. Definition of concepts**

Several concepts that will be frequently used throughout this dissertation will be defined. The aim here is to develop a logical and coherent conceptual framework.

The first concept is Aesthetics, and it is a branch of philosophy concerned with the nature and appreciation of art, beauty, and good taste. It has also been defined as "critical reflection on art culture and nature". (University of Georgia) The word aesthetics derives from the Greek "aesthetics" meaning sense perception. The connection between the philosophical concept and The Weeknd is that that aesthetics reflect his evaluation as an artist as he explores themes related to aesthetics, beauty, and the darker aspects of human experiences in his music.

Another concept to be defined is dark R&B. Volt. FM defines this one as a subgenre of R&B that combines elements of soul, hip-hop, and trap music. It is characterised by its dark melody, and often melancholic sound. Lyrically speaking, dark R&B often deals with themes of heartbreak, pain, and loss. It is characterised by its slow tempo and minor key melodies. Common instruments used in dark R&B include synthesisers, pianos, and drums.

The third definition is falsetto. The Online Cambridge Dictionary notes that it is a form of singing or speaking by men using an extremely high voice. Britannica'' adds that falsetto is an Italian term that means "false soprano" and it is the upper register of the human voice, the opposite of chest voice.

Overall, Falsetto is a vocal technique used by singers to produce a high-pitched sound that is artificially produced and often sounds false. In the context of The Weeknd's songs, this term is characterised by the vocal cords vibrating at a length shorter than usual and somewhat apart, resulting in a breathy and flute-like sound.

The last definition one needs to highlight is a mixtape. The Online Cambridge Dictionary defines this term as a collection of songs put together for a particular person or occasion but not professionally produced, especially on cassette, or a collection of songs from one or more artists, produced professionally. So, it can be said that a mixtape is a compilation of music from various sources created by an artist. The Weeknd's first mixtape was called "House of Balloons" and it is a drug-drenched and emotionally chilling collection of songs that explores The Weeknd's drug use and experiences with love and heartbreak.

## 6. Primary and Secondary Sources

Concerning primary sources, they include The Weeknd's songs, music videos and interviews in which he talked about his aesthetic inspiration in music and his social activism.

Secondary sources include several books and articles that analyse the music and work of The Weeknd, as well as several books that talk about the impact of The Weeknd's aesthetics on R&B and Pop music. Also, we have examined academic works that deal with aesthetics in music, and articles on the biography of Abel Tesfaye and his social activism.

## 7. Approach and Method

The main issue that we want to address in this thesis is the aesthetics adopted by The Weeknd in his music and the reasons that made him one of the biggest artists in the R&B scene. We also want to explore and investigate the strategies used by him to participate in social and political activism. Therefore, the approach of this research is multidisciplinary. The thesis encompasses musical, sociological, political, philosophical, cultural, and literary aspects. Similarly, the thesis examines the Weeknd's biography, interviews, songs, and music videos. We have decided to analyse 5 songs that we think are the most relevant ones that might help us answer the questions raised previously. The songs are shown in the table below:

N°	Song	Album	Year	Theme	Chart
1	"Echoes of silence "	<i>Echoes of Silence</i>	2011	heartbreak, loneliness, and the aftermath of a failed relationship	It released for free
2	"Call Out My Name"	<i>My Dear</i>	2018	heartbreak,	Peaked at

		<i>Melancholy</i>		longing, and the emotional aftermath of a breakup	number 4 in the United States Billboard Hot 100
3	The Hills	<i>Beauty Behind Madness</i>	2015	Infidelity, drug use, and the duality of public persona versus private reality.	Peaked at number 1 (6 weeks at number 1) in the US Billboard Hot 100
4	“Blinding Light”	<i>After Hours</i>	2020	Lost love and longing _ Escapism and intoxication _ Self-destruction and danger _ Resilience and hope	-Picked number 1 on Billboard Hot 100 for seven weeks -Streamed over 3.6 billion times on Spotify
5	“Save Your Tears”	<i>After Hours</i>	2020	Heartbreak and regret _ Longing ad letting go	-Picked number 1 on Billboard Hot 100

## **8. Structure of the Study**

We have organised a plan divided into three main chapters based on the artistic strategies of The Weeknd.

The first chapter will deal with R&B music history and evaluation, as well as The Weeknd's background as the founder of Dark R&B.

Chapter two will examine the melancholy themes in The Weeknd music, and how deep sadness can lead to despair.

Chapter three will be about the artist's social activism and his support of social and political causes.

By the end of the thesis, it will be argued that the Weeknd is an important contemporary artist and activist as he revolutionised the genre of dark R & B and that he impacted the life of millions of fans of music in the world.

# Chapter One: R&B Music and The Weeknd

*“Rhythm and blues is the foundation of so many other genres. It’s timeless.” Marvin Gaye.*

*“In dark R&B, we blur the lines between pleasure and pain, light and darkness, creating a space where we can embrace our contributions.” Miguel*

*“The Weeknd brought a dark, mysterious vibe to R&B that was missing before. He’s opened up a whole new world for the genre.” Miguel*

The first chapter deals with R&B music, its types, and its themes. Then, section two focuses on the Weeknd as he is categorised as an R&B singer because of his vocal style and the fact

he experiences different genres such as dark R&B and hip-hop music. But globally speaking, it can be said that The Weeknd is associated with contemporary R&B. The third and last section of this chapter gives a short biography of the Weeknd and his musical career.

## 1. General overview of R&B music

Rhythm and Blues, or more popularly known as R&B, is a music genre that originated in the 1940s among African American communities. It basically includes blues, jazz, and gospel music and represents the people's experience, stories, struggles, and happiness. R&B has undergone a lot of changes and influences, seen in the soul, funk, and now more contemporary R&B styles, which draw influence from pop, disco, and hip-hop. The term "Rhythm and Blues" was used originally to describe music marketed toward African Americans and later expanded to also include soul and funk. In its new form in the 1980s, contemporary R&B incorporated most of the influences that its original name had described and added some newer ones: pop, soul, funk, disco, hip-hop, and electronic.

According to *The History of R&B and Soul Music* by Greenhaven Publishing, the term R&B music encompasses different styles within the genre in its definition; boogie-woogie, Doo-Wop, jump blues, 12-bar blues, Motown soul, 70s funk, and urban contemporary music. The story that the book recounts spans from the beginnings of R&B music up to the present. It expounds on the different styles of R&B and how other music genres intervened with the former in different instances.

In addition, Jerry Wexler's and David Ritz's book entitled *Rhythm and the Blues: A Life in American Music* (1993) explores the emergence of R&B music and the genre's historical development. It stands for rhythm and blues, a term that was coined in 1949 by Jerry Wexler, a music marketing executive for Billboard.

Early on, R&B was sort of an umbrella term for all the new and different kinds of music African American artists were making. It used sounds from gospel music, jazz, folk music, and old blues music to create something special and important in the music world.

Borthwick and Moy contend that: "By the early 1960s, the genre known as soul had become the most commercially successful of all the crossover styles. Drawing on musical influences from the genres of gospel, jazz and blues, 'soul's success was as much due to several labels, so-called "house sounds", and little-known bands, as it was to specific performers or songwriters." (5)

The explosive growth of soul music in the 1960s had influences from gospel, jazz, and blues. Its popularity was attributed to a number of labels, unknown bands, and building on Ray Charles and Sam Cooke's foundational work. Later, Motown emerged as the biggest name in the genre.

Since its founding by Berry Gordy Jr. as Tamla in 1960, the Motown label had a significant role in the development of hip-hop and mainstream R&B/soul music. Among the many well-known performers that contributed multiple top 10 songs between 1961 and 1971 were The Supremes, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, and the Jackson 5. Through its enormous popularity among a diverse range of audiences, Motown's influence went beyond music, helping to break down barriers between races and promote integration.

Quispel notes that "The Black-owned Motown record label, started by Berry Gordy, which produced and distributed the records of the Supremes, was highly successful, not only with Black, but also with White audiences. Besides the Supremes, other Black artists like Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Martha and the Vandellas, the Temptations and many others, sold millions of records to an enthusiastic White audience." (226)

Musical barriers between races were broken by Motown, the black-owned record label became a big success, because of its appealing songs and talented musicians like The Supremes who could appeal to both Black and White audiences.

Motown Sound greatly transformed the music business with its pop appeal, catchiness, unusual chord structures, melodic bass lines, accentuated backbeat with tambourines, and call-and-response style of vocals. Motown's uniquely lasting sound was a result of its practice of using horn sections, symphonic arrangements, and background vocalists in its production methods.

Therefore, there is another music style that influenced the genre which is called funk.

Bolden suggests that "When asked to define funk, George Clinton once said, "If it makes you shake your rump, it's the funk." At the most basic level, the term "funk" signifies honesty and beauty of expression at the depths of human emotion."(9)

George Clinton's definition can be used to describe funk music, and the catchy beats of this genre make you want to dance. But, as Bolden points out, there's more to it than that. Funk is more than simply physical movement; it's about expressing yourself honestly and beautifully and using music to highlight your true feelings.



Funk emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. What defines funk music is that it is essentially danceable and rhythmic. It is influenced by the whole range of favorite African American music genres such as gospel, blues, jazz, R&B, and gospel.

Compared to other popular music genres, funk music usually places more emphasis on rhythm and groove, with an electric bass playing a bassline at a slower tempo. This genre is based more on the building of a solid rhythmic base than on overemphasise melody and chord progressions.

Contemporary R&B is the next step, which started taking shape in the 1980s and is further developed today. Contemporary R&B incorporates elements of electronic music, hip-hop, funk, soul, and rhythm and blues. It is also characterised by smooth, soulful vocals, complex vocal arrangements, a quite distinctive record production style, which very often involves the use of electronic and synthesiser effects, and an undercurrent of rhythms and beats derived from dance and hip-hop. Many great artists like The Weeknd, Sza, and Frank Ocean played a key role in pushing the boundaries of contemporary R&B and blending elements of alternative and indie music to create a distinguished sound.

Though its roots trace back to the 1940s and 1950s, when rhythm and blues music had become very popular and the real foundation of the genre, contemporary R&B used synthesisers and other electronic instruments to promote it through the likes of Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, and Prince in the 1980s. In the 1990s, with the addition of hip-hop beats and samples, the genre evolved and produced a whole new generation built around vocal harmonies and catchy melodies. The 2000s and 2010s saw the further evolution of contemporary R&B, with artists such as Beyoncé, Rihanna, and Usher, who brought in fashionable and visual aesthetics and infusions of electronic dance music.

Another music genre is otherwise known as Alternative R&B. A subgenre of traditional R&B music, it draws influences from other genres of music like electronic, indie, and rock. It retains all the features of the contemporary model; however, the Alternative plays with the structure, whereas the former sticks to traditional vibes. It is characterised by unconventional production methods.

Alternative R&B artists mostly do not respect the traditional concepts of R&B music, so they rather develop new ways of expressing themselves and expand the genre to new horizons. Neo-Soul, among others, represents a new subgenre of contemporary R&B music and brings musical novelties. The increasing popularity of electronic R&B, with dominant synthesisers and digital production, among the younger generation of listeners is undeniable. The

experimental approach to this genre by alternative R&B artists like Frank Ocean, Solange, and the Weeknd has brought popular critical acclaim.

## **2. The Weeknd and R&B**

The Weeknd is one of the great artists who came up with a new musical trend in R&B music. His influence on modern R&B is huge. His influence on modern R&B is huge, as he brought provocative topics to the music scene and created a new trend in this genre—now called dark R&B—a subgenre characterised by a blend of R&B with hip-hop, moody and dark in its production, with lyrics on depression, heartbreak, drugs, and pain. It uses synthesisers, pianos, smooth drums, and electronic music.

The Weeknd's music is characterised by his unique voice. Breathy falsettos, delivered with a smokey tone that adds sensitivity and emotion to his songs. His singing has depth and complexity due to the use of highly elaborate melodies, particularly those with Arabic influences.

The Weeknd has a different strategy than other R&B producers that use samples from rap, jazz, or old soul. Alternative rock and punk are among the surprising genres from which he samples.

The Weeknd is one of the artists who created a new trend in the R&B musical field, having a great influence on modern R&B, bringing provocative themes to the music world, and coming up with a new music trend in this genre now referred to as dark R&B. A subgenre characterised by a blend of R&B with hip-hop, moody and dark in its production, dealing with lyrics of depression, heartbreak, drugs, and pain, using synthesisers, pianos, smooth drums, and electronic music.

The Weeknd is an R&B singer who raises a wide range of emotions, from love to desire, through heartbreak and melancholy. His themes and lyrics are dark, sad, and introspective, but one of the things that separates him from all the other artists in this genre is the power of narration that he applies to topics such as drugs, sex, and emotional pain. These are controversial topics that are usually very sensitive.

Apart from that, The Weeknd songs are known for their senseful topics, which include love, pain, and internal conflicts. Songs such as "Can't Feel My Face" and "Blinding Lights" are illustrations of his capability to merge melody and emotion together in a way that is core to the hearts of the listeners and are critically and commercially acclaimed.

Moore states that “The song itself only adds to the disconcerting effect these videos may have on us, its retro-synth wave orchestration a throwback to the 1980s, a decade marred by the incipient HIV/AIDS crisis, and its lyrics (‘I’ve been on my own for long enough’; ‘Sin City’s cold and empty’) holding eerie premonitions of the parameters of life under lockdown.” (250) This quotation maintains that the “Blinding Lights” music video seeks to assert The Weeknd as a maestro in projecting anxiety. The video is full of these weird themes and recurrent imagery that make the viewer feel really uncomfortable.

The retro-synth wave music makes the contemporary setting reek of historic sentiment with overtures to the AIDS crisis of the 1980s. Lines of loneliness and emptiness in the lyrics imitate the feeling of being in lockdown—this feels hopeless. The combination of dark historical allusions in the soundtrack, unnerving imagery, and lyrics that reflect our current challenges produces strongly discomfoting effects.

This combination of enigma, vulnerability, and artistic creation makes The Weeknd a charismatic R&B vocalist in this world. His enigmatic nature, soulful voice, and outstanding videos make The Weeknd such an attractive charm that hits at the emotional level of listeners around the world.

Overall, The Weeknd’s career as an R&B artist is very rich. His ability to blend melancholic storytelling with soulful vocals and modern production techniques was what cemented his standing as a pioneering R&B musician, influencing the direction of upcoming R&B artists.

### **3. The Weeknd’s Biography**

Abel Makkonen Tashaye, professionally known as The Weeknd, is a Canadian rhythm and blues singer-songwriter, and actor.

The weeknd fame started when he dropped his mixtapes from 2010 to 2011. He later got the attention of artists like Drake and others. His debut mixtape, “House of Ballon”, dropped anonymously to the internet in 2011, starting to bring him to the limelight, where audiences loved it for its dark atmospheric sound and mysterious and brooding persona.

The Weeknd was born on February 16, 1990, in Toronto, Canada. He is the only child for Ethiopian immigrants Amhara Makkonen Tashaye and Samrawit Hail, who separated after his birth. His father was mostly not involved in his life, which greatly influenced him.

The Weeknd was raised with his mother, and he has never shied away from showing his allegiance to her. In an interview with Rolling Stone Magazine in 2015, the Canadian singer said: “Everything good, I get from my mother.” However, he has an estranged relationship

with his father, who apologised to him in an interview with RadarOnline.com. “I wish more than anything I could make up for last time and went to offer him a sincere apology for not being there for him when he needed the most,” the elder Tasfaye said. He also revealed his pride in his son's success when he said: “My son is in my thoughts each and every day, and I long to tell him face to face how proud I am of him.”

Abel spent his childhood in the Scarborough district, a diverse and multicultural area of Toronto, with his mother and grandmother, who introduced him to Ethiopian Orthodox church service and his native language Amharic.

Tasfaye faced many challenges in his childhood including his father leaving, also struggling with poverty and drugs. According to GQ magazine, he smoked marijuana for the first time when he was just 11. All these dark moments led to the foundation of the Weeknd's future as a musician.

The Weeknd's obsession with music led him to drop out of West Hill Collegiate Institute in Scarborough when he was 17 to focus on his music career and to put a lot of effort into being well-known in the music industry, using the Weeknd as a stage name.

The Weeknd's wide influences were already embedded in him from a young age, from Ethiopian music, which shaped his vocal style, artistic development, and the visuals in his videos, all linked to Ethiopian history and Afro-futuristic aesthetics.

Additionally, he included Amharic, the native language of Ethiopia, highlighting his background and cultural influences even more. And to reinforce that point, Abel says to Pitchfork magazine: “My mother, my grandmother, my uncles would play Ethiopian artists like Aster Aweke and Mulatu Astatke all the time in the house. They would drink coffee, eat popcorn, and listen to music. It's such beautiful music, but I didn't realize how beautiful it was until I left that headspace. That's why I feel like my singing is not conventional.” He went on to add: “The feeling in my music and my voice is very Ethiopian and very African and much more powerful than anything. There are songs like “Gone” where I don't even know what I'm saying, I let my voice do all the talking, I'll probably do an album like that one day where there are no lyrics at all, just melodies and great production. Maybe the next one, I don't know if that's the Ethiopian side of me.”

Great artists from all styles of music had an influence on how The Weeknd forged his style. These influences range from R&B in the shape of Michael Jackson, Prince, and R. Kelly; hip-hop with Jay-Z and Kanye West; and alternative and indie rock with Portishead, The Smiths, and Massive Attack.

All these influences would eventually cohere in the Weeknd's music, creating the special blend of pop, R&B, and alternative sounds that characterise his sound. His background and place of growth had an impact on the musical style of The Weeknd; he was musically shaped by the multicultural environment of Toronto.

Starting at XO Records, which he founded with two managers, Wassim Slaiby and Amir Esmailian, he released mixtapes such as "The Morning," "What You Need" in 2010, and "Thursday," "House of Balloons" in 2011, an album that called attention for its alternative, modern R&B sound and its dark themes combined with heartfelt lyrics.

Abel used the mysterious name "The Weeknd" and the equally mysterious username "undefined" for his early uploads on YouTube, which made him stand out. In an interview with GQ magazine, they asked him about the difference between Abel and The Weeknd, and his answer was: "The lines were blurry at the beginning. And as my career developed and as I developed as a man, it became very clear that Abel is someone I go home to every night. And The Weeknd is someone I go to work with."

The Weeknd remained anonymous at first, but his talent was evident, and his mixtapes were well-received by critics. His album *House of Balloons* won the Pitchfork prize for "Best New Album." In 2012, the Weeknd signed with Republic Records, a big label, and cemented his position in the music industry by re-releasing his mixtapes as the compilation album *Trilogy*. Following his signing with Republic Records, The Weeknd's career in music continued with the release of his album *Kiss Land* in 2013, which was regarded as his debut studio album. The title of this album refers to a mental place that The Weeknd constructed, symbolising both the touring lifestyle and a genuine fear-filled atmosphere.

The Canadian singer illustrates *Kiss Land* as a hideous world that he has not been to before, a world full of weird situations and environments that really make one feel like living in fear. It also featured soundtracks such as "Love in the Sky," "Adaptation," and "Pretty." The Weeknd's *Kiss Land* album is characterised by smooth transitions between tracks and a consistent theme. Each tune in the album, both sonically and thematically, fits the bigger storyline and has been hailed by critics and fans alike for its unity of theme. Such coherence makes the listening experience for the listener with a sense of continuity and immersion better.

On August 28, 2015, XO and Republic Records released The Weeknd's album *Beauty Behind the Madness*, it featured artists like Lana Del Rey, Ed Sheeran, and Labrinth, along with production from well-known artists like Kanye West and Max Martin, serving as

executive producers for the album. It also included tracks like “The Hills,” “Can't Feel My Face,” and “Often.”

Mike McLaughlin stated that: "*Beauty Behind the Madness* is where The Weeknd truly exploded onto the global stage, blending his signature dark R&B with more accessible pop elements. This album is a kaleidoscope of emotions, showcasing Abel's versatility as he swings from the intoxicating pop of “Can't Feel My Face” to the raw, emotional depth of “The Hills”. (ONE37PM magazine.)

A turning point in The Weeknd's career is audible in *Beauty Behind the Madness*, the skillful blend of mainstream pop sensibilities with dark R&B heritage. Full of bright pop melodies, emotional depth, and emotional gamut, the album cemented The Weeknd's place as one of the most intriguing and essential musicians of today's era.

Critics gave *Beauty Behind the Madness* good reviews. It debuted at number one in multiple countries and became The Weeknd's first number-one album in the US. With 1.5 million copies sold globally in 2015, the album was a commercial success and won The Weeknd a Grammy Award for Best Urban Contemporary Album.

In 2016, the Weeknd started collaborating with electronic music, which really helped him in his music, mainly because of the release of his third album, *Starboy*, on November 25, 2016, under the labels XO and Republic Records. With his collaboration with Daft Punk in the song “Starboy,” The Weeknd applied influences of new wave and dream pop that gave the song more depth and complexity, marking a change in his sound.

The title of the album, *Starboy*, was indicative of his professional development and metamorphosis. The phrase “Starboy” talks about the development of a new identity or persona, which the musician takes upon discarding his old identity and accepting a leading role in the music business. It really shows a number of facets of his personal and professional life.

The Canadian singer released his debut extended play (EP) album titled *My Dear Melancholy* on March 30, 2018, under the labels XO and Republic Records. The Weeknd returned to the darker sound of his earlier work with this EP, which was produced by Frank Dukes and featured collaborations from Mike Will Made It, DaHeala, Skrillex, and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo of Daft Punk. “Call Out My Name” was the main track from this EP, and it peaked at number four on the US Billboard Hot 100.

The Weeknd's fourth studio album, *After Hours*, was published on March 20, 2020, by Republic Records and XO. A range of producers, including DaHeala, Illangelo, Max Martin,

Metro Boomin, and OPN, contributed to this album, which was mainly produced by the Weeknd.

The deluxe version of the album features Ariana Grande, while the remixed edition boasts guest appearances from Chromatics and Lil Uzi Vert. *After Hours* delves into themes of self-loathing, escapism, and loneliness. “Heartless,” “Blinding Lights,” and “Save Your Tears” were among the singles that promoted *After Hours*, with three of them peaking at number one on the Billboard Hot 100.

*Dawn FM* is another album in The Weeknd music career, which was released in 2022. MARGARET FARRELL noted that:

“As opposed to his previous releases, there’s more push-and-pull between the Weeknd’s desire for emotional versus sexual climax. Although he teeter-totters between pure committal regret on “Out of Time” to then wanting to keep things in the friend-with-benefits zone on “Best Friends,” *Dawn FM* showcases the most of Tesfaye’s relationship maturation. And although these songs delight in jaunty synth melodies, there isn’t a happily ever after.”( NYLON ENTERTAINMENT)

In this album, the musician explored many themes, including life and death, loneliness, and regret, as well as relationship dynamics. Songs like “Is There Someone Else?” and “Less Than Zero” frequently touch on themes of love, worthiness, and self-perception in relationships. Within the framework of romantic relationships, the songs explore emotions of inadequacy, hidden realities, and self-worth issues.

The Weeknd received numerous awards and nominations throughout his career, proving skill and influence in the music business. He was nominated for and won a number of important awards, such as Best Melodic Rap Performance, Best Urban Contemporary Album, and Best R&B Performance at the Grammy Awards, along with Favorite Soul/R&B Album and Favorite Soul/R&B Male Artist. The Weeknd also has received such prizes as the MTV Video Music prizes, Latin Grammy Awards, and multiple Billboard Music Awards.

All in all, there is no doubt that The Weeknd had a huge impact on R&B; he set up a dark atmospheric subgenre with his early mixtapes, standing in huge contrast to the then-dominant R&B with Electronic Dance Music (EDM) influences. His honest lyricism tackled themes of drugs, sex, and alienation, talking to a new generation while breaking the boundaries of fusing parts of the melancholy. With the popularity that came with it, the Weeknd became known for his role in crafting the R&B genre and encouraged a new generation of musicians who embraced the moodier and more intimate sound.

# Chapter Two: Melancholy and Despair

*“Sad songs are the best songs. I don't know how you can write and sing music without some sadness in your life.” Jennifer Nettles*

*“In the end, the music we create is a reflection of our soul.” the Weeknd*

*“I think The Weeknd is an incredible artist with a unique voice and style. His music resonates with so many people, and I admire his ability to create such emotionally charged songs. He's definitely one of the most talented musicians out there.” Ariana Grande*



This chapter will give a clear idea of the main themes of melancholy and its evolution with The Weeknd's music as one of the most influential singers of all time. His music often focuses on themes of deep sadness, melancholy, and despair, even if it appeals to a wide range of listeners.

The Weeknd's strategies to address those kinds of inner pain include a kind of originality that is rare in popular media, while artists who talk about related subjects typically focus on specific audiences inside small genres. However, The Weeknd captivates listeners of all backgrounds with his clever blending of these emotional topics into his songs, and this chapter will aim to clarify this idea.

The chapter will also talk about how melancholy can lead to despair and how it can make The Weeknd become a hopeless person according to his songs. The Weeknd's music usually features themes of melancholy, sadness and despair which are a direct representation of his feelings and experiences. He openly stated in an interview:

I have never been in a romantic relationship before, so I am unable to connect with others on that level. During that time, I faced negative experiences within my family and encountered difficulties in school, which made me feel like I was losing my sanity. This is why my songs have such a somber tone. They represent a period of darkness in my life. (the Weeknd, Hirschberg)

His vocals bring the Canadian singer solace by expressing these strong emotions. Such a statement is seldom heard from other musicians. The Weeknd and his music are one. He seeks therapy in these deep, dark themes of sadness and melancholy, speaking to a larger audience, and the effect and appeal are made more pronounced.

## **1. Key Definitions**

According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, the word melancholy is defined as "mental disorder characterised by sullenness, gloom, irritability, and propensity to causeless and violent anger," from Old French *melancholie*. "bile ill disposition, anger, annoyance."

Melancholy is an extreme condition of human sadness or sorrow, normally followed by a long-term phase of darkness. In the olden days, melancholy was related to the concept of "black bile," which was one of the four humours believed to influence the mood of any person during the Middle Ages.

These days, melancholy can be defined as a deep, widespread, and possibly lasting state of loss without an obvious cause. In addition, despair is another term that should be defined. The

Cambridge dictionary defines the term as “the feeling that there is no hope and that you can do nothing to improve a difficult or worrying situation.”

The absence of hope or faith that anything will get better or change is what is meant to be understood as despair. It may also apply to something or someone who is deeply depressed, or worried. A condition of total absence or loss of hope, coupled with extreme sadness and desperation, is what defines despair. To lose hope or faith in a successful outcome is a physical form of despair.

By the definition of these two concepts, melancholy and despair are distinguished basically by the degree of hopelessness. While being a negative emotion, melancholy has some possibility or chance that may be changed, but despair is a more powerful negative emotion in which all hope is lost.

## **2. Melancholy**

This section is going to look at melancholy as a relevant theme that The Weeknd makes use of in his songs. From themes of melancholy and longing to thoughts of reflection, there is much about human emotion that makes an appearance through the career of The Weeknd. He uses melancholy as a powerful lens to study all the details of relationships, what is behind celebrity, and the philosophical issues of existence.

Finola Finn noted that “the issue of melancholy intersected with the lives of Presbyterians and independents on multiple levels, the reasons for which reached back to the start of the seventeenth century.” (6)

Melancholy influenced Protestants’ and Independents’ lives in the seventeenth century through literature, social turmoil, medical theories, and networks of community support. The experiences of individuals within these religious communities were shaped by melancholy, which was viewed through theological, philosophical, and cultural perspectives against the context of instability in politics and religion in England.

The Weeknd’s lyrics, taste in music, and thematic review have all been deeply woven into his tracks as a complex tapestry of profound sadness. His melancholic soundscapes would not be complete without his enigmatic vocals. His breathy falsetto sounds weak and renders his desire quite appropriately matched with the themes of loneliness and grief from his lyrics. A love song performed in a strong voice against his airy falsetto would be emotionally completely different. According to the Cambridge Dictionary the term falsetto is known as “a form of speaking or singing by men using an extremely high voice.”

Falsetto as defined previously is a vocal technique used by singers to produce a high-pitched sound that is artificially produced and often sounds false. In the context of The Weeknd's songs, this term is characterised by the vocal cords vibrating at a length shorter than usual and somewhat apart, resulting in a breathy and flute-like sound.

Moreover, he adds vibrato, which makes this depressing effect even stronger. This conveys so many emotions, from extreme pain to nostalgia, and adds texture and dimension.

A powerful image of melancholy vulnerability is painted using vibrato and falsetto together, which hits an emotional connection with listeners.

When it comes to The Weeknd's songs, the key concepts of melancholy in his music, based on our analysis, started with the song "Echoes of Silence" from his 2011 mixtape *Echoes of Silence*. Elias Leight stated:

Now comes *Echoes of Silence*, which continues to expand the Weeknd's range. While several songs are still rooted in the anomie and destruction of Tesfaye's initial output, he is beginning to embrace more mainstream forms of R&B. The earlier aggressive sound has now been significantly toned down in favor of less threatening noises. While *Echoes of Silence* shows flashes of excellence, Tesfaye is caught like the Greek god Janus, looking backward and forward at the same time — while one side of him looks towards pop, the other harks back towards his previous mix of scary themes and sneakily catchy tunes. ( POPMATTERS)

The song "Echoes of Silence" comes to be considered as one of his first extremely sad and emotionally moving tracks, which led to the development of his unique and melancholy sound in the early years of his career. It is recognized as a great song that showed his talent for writing reflective, depressing music.

This masterpiece is considered as an alternative R&B with a simple instrumental composition, featuring only The Weeknd's powerful vocals, a piano, and a few chords. The singer's smooth, emotive, and soulful voice gives the song sad themes with more depth and emotion and conveys a sense of sensitivity and reflection. The Weeknd adds to the song's melancholy mood by using atmospheric production methods. The combination of dark instruments, strange melodies, and quiet beats creates a mood of longing and desire.

The title of the song even outlines the themes of memory, desire, and emotional emptiness. It also throws listeners into the artist's world of melancholy and creates haunting nostalgia and a sense of thoughtfulness.

The intro of the song with no words creates a melancholy mood, with slow sad piano chords and depressing melodies instruments. The song's lyrics express emotional weakness, confusion, and longing. This is what The Weeknd refers to when he says:

*Talk to me, baby*

*Tell me what you're feeling*

*You say you don't need to go*

*Don't you pretend you didn't know* (1-4 from the first verse)

In the first line of the song “Echoes of Silence,” The Weeknd sets the conversational and personal tone of direct address and expressive words, just to get through to the listener and make the pain and longing reflected in his lyrics intelligible. The use of the imperative in the first line sets the rest of the verse tone by creating a sense of anxiety and the need for communication.

Moreover, “Echoes of Silence” is more melancholic due to the use of the second-person point of view in the stanza: it directly puts the listener into the sad story of the song. The Weeknd brings intimacy with the usage of the pronoun “you” in relation to his lover and attracts the audience to feelings of longing, uncertainty, and emotional weakness of the main character.

What is more, “Echoes of Silence” deals with themes of self-awareness, leaving, and emotional complexity, which adds to the song's overall sad vibe. He says:

*But I could tell that you were scared*

*Cause you thought there was more to us*

*But you knew how this would end*

*It's gonna end how you expected*

*Girl, you're such a masochist* (12-17 from the first verse)

Those lines say a lot about relationships, emotional intricacy, and self-awareness. Adding to the song's sense of sadness, The Weeknd provides resignation, irony, and emotional bewilderment. It gets the listener into his world of introspection and longing.

The register in this stanza is also intimate and conversational through the use of second-person point of view, therefore making direct communication between the singer and the audience.

The nature of the tone is introspective, unhappy, and even aggressive, reflecting the disappointment of the singer's mind with the relations.

All in all, the track “Echoes of Silence” is a powerful and deep exploration of melancholy that can touch the spirits of the audience because of its atmospheric sound, symbolic narration, and real honesty.

The melancholy themes in The Weeknd’s music after “Echoes of Silence,” continued to evolve and develop. *My Dear Melancholy*, which was released on March 30, 2018, delves into many melancholic themes such as heartbreak, loneliness, and emotional turmoil. Kaylie Ramirez mentioned that:

“The Weeknd’s March 30 release, *My Dear Melancholy*, explores the hip-hop heartbreaker’s deeply personal reflections on love. As the title suggests, The Weeknd finds himself in a rut with depressed lyrics and slow, yearning beats on the six track EP. The punctuation of the title cleverly addresses the collective works to an unnamed party, causing many social media users to assume The Weeknd is airing his pent up emotions about recent relationships with Selena Gomez and Bella Hadid.”(The heights)

*My Dear Melancholy* sets this kind of feeling for being closer and more personable; therefore, The Weeknd personally feels the themes within the EP that are melancholic and emotional. “Melancholy” evokes very strong feelings of deep sadness, reflection, and mental turmoil. It also creates and implies a dark atmosphere. With this title, the icon sets the tone for the album, letting listeners know exactly what kind of emotional ride they are embarking on by highlighting the word “melancholy” in the title.

*My Dear Melancholy* cover image features The Weeknd face, partially hidden by shadows, wearing a thoughtful, sad expression, which conveys a deep feeling of melancholy and a sense of mystery. The colour palette of the cover is dark and muted with black and red colours, which reflect the theme of melancholy in the album songs.



Cover art of *My Dear Melancholy* 2018

All in all, this Album featured a darker and melancholy R&B tone, the Weeknd relationships and mental issues were apparent in *My Dear Melancholy* themes, which focused on sadness, loneliness, and depression, in songs like “Call Out My Name,” and “Wasted Times.”

“Call Out My Name” was released on April 10, 2018, from *My Dear Melancholy* EP, showcases themes of heart break, inside conflicts from The Weeknd’s own experience. The track was written by the artist himself and the producer Frank Dukes and comes with a dark haunting atmospheric production.

His sadness and pain from a recent separation are expressed in the lyrics, which evoke empathy and melancholy in listeners. In the song The Weeknd says in the first verse:

*We found each other*

*I helped you out of a broken place*

*You gave me comfort*

*But falling for you was my mistake* (1- 4 from the first verse)

This stanza avoids complex vocabulary register, lets the listener and the singer build an emotional connection.

The Weeknd describes past love with a mixture of nostalgia and sadness, creating a tone for reflection and emotional vulnerability.

The word choice is well chosen and emotionally charged with a simple powerful language. “Broken place” this metaphorical phrase describes a state of emotional pain or hardship, suggests that The Weeknd’s partner was facing a difficult situation and he helped her to move on. “Comfort” implies that she offered comfort for him, and the word “Mistake” brings attention to The Weeknd’s present feeling of pain and regret for their emotions.

In addition, the singer used the second person point of view “you” to directly address the other person in the relationship, and put the listeners in her position, they may imagine themselves getting support in a difficult situation, and then they can see the hurt that comes from discovering that their emotions were wrong. As a result, there is a deeper sense of connection with the song. Furthermore, in the second verse of the song The Weeknd sang:

*Guess I was just another pit stop*

*'Til you made up your mind*

*You just wasted my time* (20-22 from the second verse)

The metaphorical expression in the first line “I was just another pit stop” showed how the Weeknd relationship with his past love was short. It adds to the stanza's overall theme of melancholy and loss by suggesting a lack of long-term stability.

The expression “wasted my time” conveys feelings of sadness and regret. Time is very often a metaphor for life and opportunity. Here, it is about how much the singer feels let down by the relationship.

The use of words, in those very lines, is very simple and direct, making the lyrics more sincere. Moreover, there is a tone of disappointment and anger. The words used show different feelings, like weakness, sorrow, and repentance.

“Call Out my Name” the title of the song itself is a powerful term that perfectly expresses the feeling of depressing longing. “Call Out” may suggest that the Weeknd needs some attention. “My Name” symbolises a desire for the lost love to recognize the speaker’s existence.

All in all, the title represents a person lost in sadness and pain because of his past relationship. The repetition of the title in the song creates a sense of longing and urgency which add or melancholy to the song.

According to the “Call Out My Name” music video the Weeknd uses aesthetic visual to address the theme of melancholy in the video clip, like the black clothes and the scene of bats which is associated with sadness, pain, and haunting memories, also the use of light low which reflects the melancholy nature of the song.

Additionally, the video features the Weeknd walking alone through an empty street and buildings, and this may symbolise his feeling of isolation and loneliness. The woman in the forest scene can represent the Weeknd’s love or a symbol of his desire for connection and her presence shows feelings of longing and nostalgia.

In short, the aim of the “Call Out My Name” music video is to use narrative storytelling, symbolic imagery, and visual aesthetics to create an emotionally charged and attractive visual representation of vulnerability, heartbreak, and longing as well as visually amplifying the song’s melancholic themes.

To sum it up, “Call Out My Name” can be defined as a melancholic song because of its personal, emotive musical elements that create feelings of sadness and loss, as well as its lyrical themes of inner sorrow and heartbreak.

Alexander Coltun Shneider stated:

The Canadian musician dropped his fourth studio album “After Hours” on Friday, following the release of his extended play record “My Dear Melancholy,” in 2018. The album, composed of 14 tracks, traverses the singer’s journey of heartbreak and acknowledging his own wrongdoings in a relationship that ultimately met its demise. Also known as Abel Tesfaye, The Weeknd expresses regret over his past mistakes with a former lover in “After Hours” and promises personal change while revealing his evolved, candid honesty. (Daily burn)

In 2020 The Weeknd released a new successful album called After Hours by XO and Republic Records. This album is a blend of R&B, new wave, and dream pop, with a more upbeat and different style while yet delving deeper into darker topics. The Weeknd applied electro pop and new wave elements to create a style that had a totally different sound but still captured the intensity of his emotions.

*After Hours* received positive reviews from critics and debuted at 1 on the Billboard 200 chart and remained in that position for four weeks.

In the context of melancholy areas, the album title *After Hour* describes a time of late-night reflection, emotional depth, and isolation during which people face their problems, fear, fight with difficult emotions, and manage the complexity of love, loss, and sadness. The meaning of the title symbolises a feeling of honesty, review, and breakdown of emotions that is consistent with the melancholy quality of the Weeknd's sound, and the topics covered on the album.



Cover art of *After Hours* 2020

The cover album of *After Hours* is a powerful visual articulation of design and aesthetics to evoke ideas of melancholy. The Weeknd is depicted in the cover picture with his face smeared with blood, where he is staring aggressively but carefully at the viewer; this may symbolise unseen suffering, emotional trauma, and the scars of incidents of the past, thus amplifying the melancholy themes of the album.

It is through the contrast between The Weeknd's face and the dark, melancholic colours that this picture evokes a sombre, reflective mood, well-suited to the rich emotional content of the song.

The imagery carried through shows the examination of loneliness, heartbreak, and misery in this album, projecting in it the feelings of weakness, pain, and anxiety.

“Save Your Tears” and “Blinding Lights” are two singles from the EP *After Hours* by The Weeknd. Both will go on to be huge successes in the singer's music career. “Blinding Lights” became the most streamed song in Spotify history. Additionally, “Save Your Tears” won the 2021 IFPI Global Digital Single Award.



Both “Save Your Tears” and “Blinding Lights” devils into themes of melancholy, but based on the analysis of the lyrics, musical elements, the music video “Save Your Tears” appears to be more melancholic compared to “Blinding Lights.”

“Save Your Tears” addresses themes of emotional conflict, heartbreak, and regret, capturing the pain and weakness that follow a relationship’s separation. The song’s lyrics, which convey the depressing nature of lost love and the aftermath of a breakup, are filled with loss and desire. The Weeknd says in the first verse:

*I saw you dancing in a crowded room*

*You look so happy when I'm not with you*

*But then you saw me, caught you by surprise*

*A single teardrop falling from your eye* (1-4 from the first verse)

The stanza is emotive, reflective, and melancholy in tone. “Saw” and “you” create a direct conversational language, and “teardrop” describes a weakness.

The tone is quiet, sensitive, and tinged with sadness and longing: in other words, it is a combination of jealousy and desire. The line, “You look so happy when I’m not with you” refers to the singer’s jealousy of his past lover because she is happy without him. “Caught you by surprise” conveys a wish to get away from the singer’s eyes, while “single teardrop” expresses sadness that is kept hidden.

The choice of words is strategic. “Crowded room” highlights the sense of loneliness even in the middle of a crowd. “Happy” shows the emotional change by standing out strongly against the tears. The powerful image “single teardrop” brings up a single sensitive moment.

These lines convey a sense of heartbreak and melancholy, with the Weeknd observing their ex-lover at a party, happy in their absence. Simply, the lyrics to “Save Your Tears” delve into topics related to melancholy, sadness, and the emotional aftermath that follows a breakup. The melancholy tone of the song is amplified by the Weeknd’s observation and thoughts on his ex’s happiness, the hurt of seeing her with someone else, and the feeling of betrayal.

The “Save Your Tears” music video is something brilliant when talking about the melancholic theme. The colour palette of the music video enables an additional way of storytelling visually and helps to put across the melancholic themes of the song.

The red colour symbolises passion, energy, and emotional intensity. The Weeknd’s signature red attire and the usage of red lights create a dramatic and emotional atmosphere that captures feelings and emotions, which are attached to regret and sorrow. Adding to the depth of the story is the use of blue for the women’s dress, which is attributed to sorrow, reflection, and

feelings of melancholy. Black is yet another colour that creates feelings of mystery, darkness, and solitude. A visually stunning conflict is created by the bright red colour against the sombre background, thus revealing the sad and emotional pain portrayed in the song.

Furthermore, The Weeknd's "Save Your Tears" music video is full of symbolism and visual storytelling that goes well with the song's melancholy lyrics. Solís, Monica Sisavat. said that:

The Weeknd has been sporting a bandaged face as part of his After Hours persona, but in the video for "Save Your Tears," he finally decided to take off the gauze, revealing a major makeover. While the singer previously told *Esquire* the bloody makeup was to raise awareness about drunk driving, the plastic surgery revealed in the visual seems like a nod to his song "Escape From LA," in which he references that all "LA girls look the same" because they all get "the same work done" on their face."(Popsugar Entertainment)

In the "Save Your Tears" video, the bandages from his After Hours persona come off, showing a completely altered face with heavy plastic surgery, and this change can directly relate to "Escape From LA," where he criticises the superficiality of LA culture, particularly how common plastic surgery is there.

This scene of the guitar play might refer to weakness and emotional rush. The sad tone in the guitar music dramatises the depressing undercurrents of the song, adding an emotional story to the video.

Masks can be used to represent the concept of concealing one's identity or emotions and express emotional distance, the element of illusion. This aspect gives the video depth by focusing on simplicity and social masks.

In the video, plastic surgery depicts the concept of how the real appearance, possibly physical, has to change in order to meet societal expectations or norms. This aspect brings darkness to questions of originality and self-worth with themes of self-transforming, insecurity, and a pursuit of perfection.

The performance by the Weeknd in the video exudes sensitivity and emotional depth. His facial expressions and expressive actions mirror the honesty and reflection within the song's lyrics, further cementing the mood as one of melancholy.

The shot of a gun in this video seems to point to themes of danger, violence, and mental instability; it underlines the darker sides of relationships and the effects of emotional suffering, while also raising the suspense and volatility of the story.

Through this evaluation of music, The Weeknd looked into many melancholy themes. His songs went deeper into the emotional depths of love, loss, and human experience. Now, he

can be regarded as a legendary character in modern R&B and pop due to building a universe of conflicts and expressing real emotions via his songs.

### **3. Musical Elements Enhancing Melancholic Atmosphere**

#### **3.1. Slow Tempo and Rhythm**

The songs of The Weeknd are known for their slow tempo and unique rhythmic style. Most of his songs are usually between 60 and 80 beats per minute, setting a mood into the mood of moody and atmospheric. His composition at a relaxed tempo draws from the personal moments and intends to cause feelings of comfort, sadness, and emotional hurt.

*So call out my name (Call out my name)*

*Call out my name when I kiss you so gently* (10-11 from the chorus)

This verse typifies the measured beat and pace of "Call Out My Name," which is delivered in such a way that every syllable is rendered in a meaningful, deliberate tempo that pays service to the lyrics in the expression of weakness and longing. The slow tempo raises the stakes and power of the song, making it possible for the listener to experience all the emotions expressed in it.

At a slower pace, the emotional delivery of the vocals and the intricate melodies are best felt, and it gives an opportunity to the listener to be completely absorbed into the mood evoked in the song, letting the lyrics evoke deep feelings.

The Weeknd, with his deliberate tempos, demonstrates an impressive skill in executing "beat switches," which are sudden transformations in the beats of a song, giving a totally new sound. He might have quickly changed the rhythm, energising and surprising the tracks.

The utilisation of a slow tempo and rhythm in the Weeknd's music plays a crucial role in establishing the melancholic atmosphere that connects with the audience.

#### **3.2. Use of Minor Chords and Melodies**

Minor chords and melodies used by The Weeknd in his songs help to increase the emotional intensity. With the utilisation of minor chords, he suggests remorse and melancholy, which in turn bring depth to his music. Minor keys naturally cause a feeling of sadness and introspection, hence creating a melodic palette that articulates the themes of existential suffering, yearning, and heartbreak. His discography sews up with minor chord progressions smoothly, thus making a very characteristic and sombre atmosphere in his music.

Songs like “Wicked Games” and “The Hills” are testament to the fact that the Weeknd actually knows how to write melodies based on a minor scale, which already increases the emotional impact of the delivered lyrics many times over. Such melodies, made with a melancholic tone, just perfectly work with an introspective manner of storytelling, allowing a listener to fully submerge into this miserable atmosphere. Here is an example of the use of minor chords and melodies in “The Hills” in the chorus:

*When I'm f\*\*\*\*\*d up, that's the real me*

*When I'm f\*\*\*\*\*d up, that's the real me, babe*

Those words create anxiety and uneasiness, while the melody is in a minor key. This minor sound creates a dark mood for this song, further relaying the Weeknd's inner conflict and emotional alienation. The song's application of minor chords and melodies, through the atmosphere it creates of darkness and thought, enhances the themes that the lyrics communicate: hedonism, self-destruction, and existential sorrow. Generally, “The Hills's usage of minor chords and melodies adds depth and complexity to its auditory landscape while additionally helping in expressing the song's gloomy and depressing tone”.

### **3.3. Emotive Vocal Delivery and Expressive Techniques**

The Weeknd is a truly magnificent vocalist, and his vocal talent is the perfect tool for the style of music he plays. His versatile and incredibly smooth transitions through his registers along with the emotion of his soul coming through in each note does manage to capture the feeling behind the music. He also uses vibrato and falsetto to a great effect throughout his work, allowing his voice to become truly powerful and heart-wrenching. The Weeknd shows off his smooth vibrato in “Earned It”, especially in the chorus line:

*So I love when you call unexpected*

*'Cause i hate when the moment's expected*

*So i'ma care for you, you, you*

*I'ma care for you, you, you, yeah (8-11 from the chorus)*

Another example of his use of falsetto is in the song “Save Your Tears”, showing his ability to switch between his chest voice and falsetto easily.

*I don't know why i run away*

*I make you cry when i run away (7-8 refrain)*

On the other hand, these techniques would sound contrived and dark; however, with the Weeknd's expert vocal control, they add a great deal of depth and sensitivity. He manages to add a great deal of character and range to each song through seemingly just his voice. Each

song goes through a full range of feelings and intensity, that's where some of its best qualities lie, and a big part of that is the range of The Weeknd.

### **3.4. Atmospheric Production and Soundscapes**

The Weeknd's unique brand of atmospheric production is crucial for setting the tone for his emotionally driven music. With his innovative approach to production and sound design, he constructs sonic landscapes that are deeply introspective, brooding, and emotionally charged. Ganshe Pillai stated that:

Listening to "Dawn FM" is as much an experience as it is a simple listen-through—it's transportive. The Weeknd builds on the foundation for this style of music that he established for himself on "After Hours," and produces a very enjoyable project. Phenomenal vocal performances, coupled with accurate and cohesive production elements ensure that the entire album is as smooth as the voice of the artist himself. While I cannot claim to experience the nostalgia for the 80's that "Dawn FM" is attempting to conjure, The Weeknd creates such an intoxicating sound, that I feel like I was there all the same." (The Miscellany News paper)

The Weeknd's remarkable vocal delivery, the immersiveness, and evocative nature of the album, along with its calculated elements of production, make for a great experience in listening. The Weeknd has this talent for building a sound that is so attractive; it makes one feel like they are part of the 1980s, even if they did not live through the era that this album nostalgically speaks to. All put together, it would seem that Dawn FM skillfully expands on the framework laid out by After Hours and is one delightful and memorable musical experience.

The Weeknd's music would lack the depth, complexity, and emotional resonance that has made him such a respected artist in the industry.

## **4. Despair**

Heartbreak, loneliness, and the dark sides of fame, all those melancholy themes can lead to despair and hopelessness.

Despair is introduced in The Weeknd's music in the form of emotional distress, broken relationships, loss and the consequences of fame and celebrity, and songs such as "Call Out My Name," which capture the intensity of human despair through haunting lyrics and atmospheric production. The Weeknd's raw and bare storytelling does make sense to listeners who might find themselves in an emotional mess.

“Call Out My Name” is a song, as mentioned earlier, that speaks about themes of heartbreak and despair, which follow the aftermath of a breakup, regret, and longing. The Weeknd said in the chorus:

*So call out my name, call out my name (9)*

This line carries the sense of loss and longing for the time when The Weeknd is waiting for his ex-lover to call out his name, even though she does not want him anymore.

The mood here is urgent, emotional longing. It carries with it a sense of urgency and yearning for connection. The speaker yearns to be called out, identified, or recognized by whomever they are speaking to.

In addition, it is a repeated line that falls within a larger context of the speaker’s emotional struggle for recognition and acknowledgement. It reflects the need for attention, emotional vulnerability, and the intensity of feelings.

The repeated use of the phrase “call out my name” has a rhetorical device known as anaphora, where the same words are repeated at the beginning of successive clauses or sentences, this figure of speech adds emphasis and emotional intensity to the speaker’s lyrics, reinforcing the sense of desperation and longing conveyed in the line.

In short, the line summarises despair through its tone of desperation, repetitive pleading for acknowledgment, and the passion of the singer in reaching for connection. It displays the feelings of emotional vulnerability and yearning for some form of validation to bring forth deep emotional turmoil that the Weeknd faces in unreciprocated love or emotional distance.

On the same song, The Weeknd insinuates almost losing a part of himself to the former partner, but now he feels used, and his time has just been a waste, reflecting a feel of hopelessness and despair. The Weeknd sing:

*I’ll almost cut a piece of my self for your love (19 from the second verse)*

The overall tone of this line is one of regret, sacrifice, and desperation. It shows just how tough emotional pain could be and vulnerability in the same. The Weeknd here is looking back on a deep personal sacrifice they almost made for love, a statement that could mean that at some level of desperation, longing, and the hurt that may follow.

This line forms a landmark moment within the greater context of the singer’s emotional journey. It captures a moment where the speaker considers how far they were willing to go for love, a very poignant moment, and this maximises the depth of emotional investment and consequently loss and despair.

The word “cut” suggests a physical and emotional act of self-sacrifice, and “piece of myself” makes the whole business of sacrifice personal and, “for you love” shows the reason behind the sacrifice, highlighting the deep feelings of the speaker toward the person he loves.

Metaphorically, the line makes use of a figure of speech to equate the act of sacrificing a piece of oneself for love to a real-life action of cutting away a piece of one’s being. This metaphorical imagery gives such depth and intensity to the singer's expression of despair and the turmoil they have gone through.

All in all, the lyrical content, and musical arrangements in songs such as “Call Out My Name” from *My Dear Melancholy* exhibit this movement toward despair. This song carries the pain of heartache, loneliness, and emotional deadness, capturing the raw pain and emptiness that follows the breakage of a relationship.

To conclude this chapter, one can say that The Weeknd’s music also tends to have the kind of melancholy that precedes despair, slowly leading the listener through the emotional journey of depth and inner reflection and finally culminating in hopeless and painful despair. The transition of the Weeknd’s music from melancholy to despair can be observed through the development of themes.

Early works by The Weeknd, like “Echoes of Silence”, featured some sort of melancholy full of hedonism and excess. Yet, slowly, his works took a dark and curving aspect of despair, most strikingly in *My Dear Melancholy*, a work concentrated on broken hearts, betrayal, and the emotional struggles from failed relationships.

Overall, The Weeknd takes his listener across the spectrum of human emotions, very slowly, from a zone that is very melancholic in character and reflection to a sharp zone of despair and desolation. In this way, the development emphasises the Weeknd's ability to express the power of emotional complexity and the mark of the struggle that has taken place within himself on his music again and again to bring forth a narrative that converges on despair and themes of inner conflict.

## Chapter Three: The Weeknd and Activism

*“Enough is enough. It’s time to stand up for this. We can either sit and watch, or do something about it. The time is now. #blacklivesmatter.” The Weeknd on X*

*“Palestinians deserve their freedom. This isn’t politics, these are real lives.... I stand with the people of Palestine as they demand an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and an end to the ongoing genocide”*  
*The Weeknd*



This chapter talks about how The Weeknd is one of the strongest supporters of humanitarian and social justice actions. His humanitarian work and donations affected many communities all over the world, from supporting racial justice movements like Black Lives Matter to his last donation to Gaza. All these efforts make him a good influence in the music industry.

Joe McCarthy stated that:

The Grammy-award winning artist has evolved a lot over the years, but he's always crooned about heartbreak, breaking hearts, and what it's like to live with no heart at all. He's conveyed these conceits through various genres — grungy R&B, bright and chiseled pop, industrial pop, and others — earning more fans and growing his global reach with each new album. But The Weeknd, also known as Abel Tesfaye, isn't singularly insistent on matters of love outside his verses. The mysterious and irresistible songwriter has spent the past few years expanding his philanthropic pursuits and using his clout to back political issues. (GLOBAL CITIZEN)

In addition to his song's global appeal and exploration of the complexity of relationships and personal challenges, the Weeknd has shown an immense commitment to social activism. This singer often wanted to prove himself not only through his music but also through his charity.

## **1. The Weeknd as a Social Activist**

The Weeknd said: “That this is a Canadian award sits deep with me. Allan and The Slight Family Foundation are known across the country for their generous philanthropy, and it means a lot to be acknowledged, and is an honour to be recognized along with the legendary Canadian artists who received this award before me.” (Universal Music Canada)

Besides his music career, the Canadian singer has a very powerful background in social activism. He won the Allan Slight Humanitarian Spirit Award during the 2022 CMW. The Weeknd holds this award very close to heart because it signifies his commitment to charity work and social activism.

### **1.1. Ethiopian Studies Program**

To help develop an Ethiopian Studies program, The Weeknd made a huge donation to the University of Toronto. In 2016, he gave \$50,000 towards starting the program that offers lessons on Ethiopia's history, culture, and the language of Ge'ez in Ethiopia.

Professor Michael Gervers started the effort by collecting a total of \$200,000 for the studies program, and due to The Weeknd's contribution, the initiative received more attention from people.

The Weeknd donations to the University of Toronto show us how deep his connection with Ethiopian heritage is. He not only helps to preserve Ethiopian cultural heritage but also increases knowledge and understanding of Ethiopia's historical contributions to the world.

### **1.2. Global Humanitarian Efforts**

The Weeknd is a man of action who uses his money and influence to greatly contribute towards global humanitarian problems, basically by providing food aid that is crucial to needy populations the world over.

In 2017, The Weeknd contributed \$100,000, which helped to complete the Suubi Health Centre in Uganda. Under the larger initiative, which was started by French Montana, a Moroccan rapper, this donation helped in offering basic health care services such as maternity clinics for thousands of people living in rural parts of Uganda.

Furthermore, Fatima Al Mahmoud stated: "In a show of solidarity to the people of Lebanon, Canadian singer The Weeknd has donated \$300,000 in relief aid following the Beirut blast that killed hundreds, injured thousands, and left many families homeless."(Beirut.com)

The Weeknd donated \$300,000 to efforts of rebuilding after the catastrophic explosion which occurred in Beirut in August of 2020. Thousands had to leave Beirut and suffered serious harm because of the explosion. With the help of his manager Wassim Slaiby and Slaiby's partner Rima Fakhri, The Weeknd made donations as part of the Global Charity for Lebanon effort. Donations from this campaign were allocated to integral organizations like the World Food Programme, the Children's Cancer Centre of Lebanon, and the Lebanese Red Cross, making sure that financial assistance reached the people who needed it.

### **1.3. Relief and Community Support for COVID-19**

The Weeknd made significant contributions to disaster relief efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the donations was \$1 million, which was divided equally between two very important charities. In support of his native homeland, Canada, he gave a \$500,000 donation to the COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund of the Scarborough Health Network. All this money was channelled into buying essential medical supplies like oxygen, ICU beds, and emergency personnel safety gear.

In addition, half of his gift went to MusiCares, a group that helps musicians facing the epidemic with money, health care, and rehab. He started this to help the community, especially those in the show business who had a hard time during the crisis.

#### 1.4. Fighting World Hunger

The Weeknd's engagements with the UN World Food Program allowed him to play an important role in the fight against world hunger. As the WFP Goodwill Ambassador, he contributed immensely through international humanitarian activities, including donations and fund-raising for the fight against hunger in several countries hit by crises.

The Weeknd donated \$1 million in 2021 to reduce famine in Ethiopia and was able to feed two million people who were affected by the fighting in the Tigray region. Working together with WFP USA, he also established the XO Humanitarian Fund, to date raising \$5 million. The \$2.5 million initial payment to the fund helped get emergency food assistance to Ethiopian mothers and their children.

Additionally, Abigail Seiler mentioned that:

The Weeknd contributed \$1 to the Fund from each ticket sold for his North American Stadium Tour, as well as proceeds of an exclusive XO Humanitarian Fund/U.N. World Food Programme tour t-shirt. The Weeknd's corporate partners, tour venues and supporters also stepped up to donate. World Food Program USA's Board of Directors, together with U.S. donors, contributed another \$1 million. (World Food Program USA)

To continue supporting the World Food Program in its effort to end world hunger, The Weeknd committed to donating \$1 from every ticket sold from his worldwide "After Hours" til Dawn" stadium tour to the XO Humanitarian Fund.

All in all, The Weeknd is an unyielding man on a mission to leave his fingerprint on the world, and it's not just for the music. It is something he has demonstrated through donations given to scores of humanitarian projects all around the world.

## 2. Racism and Black Lives Matter

Black Lives Matter is a social and political movement that is for nonviolent civil disobedience as a method of resistance against the incidents of police brutality and other acts of violence against Black people that have been motivated by race. It was established in 2013-2014 in reaction to the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, an innocent teenager from Africa. The movement works at protecting the justice, freedom, and respect of Black communities as it reduces and eradicates structural racism. Janaya Naimah Cooper notes:

The Black Lives Matter Movement was formed in 2014 due to the horrific murder of Michael Brown. However, this specific Black Power Movement reflects the Civil Rights Movement. Black Power activists have been fighting since the 40's and 60's on a daily basis to resolve the issues that impact Black lives in America today.

The #BlackLivesMatter hashtag was created by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, who also started a movement around it, and it focused on racial inequality in US justice and policing systems, as well as the acts of police violence. The BLM kept growing by organising marches and raising awareness about multiple famous Black lives taken by police, such as those of Freddie Gray, Sandra Bland, and Philando Castile, and with the death of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer in 2020, the marches provoked worldwide and gave a large amount of awareness and support to the movement, and millions of people participated globally in the largest demonstrations in American history.

BLM supports the elimination of funds for the police and transferring money to community programs, as well as the removal of police officers qualified immunity, and adopting accountability systems for the police.

The Weeknd is one of the artists who has actively supported the Black Lives Matter movement. He also made public support of racial justice and equality, including huge donations to stand with the movement.

The Weeknd donated \$250,000 to the Black Lives Matter movement after two Black men, Alton Sterling and Philando Castile, were murdered by police in 2016. His support and public solidarity came at a very crucial time when the movement was gaining momentum.

Furthermore, Rosy Cordero mentioned that “The Weeknd is showing solidarity with protests following the death of George Floyd at the hands of police by donating to organisations supporting the Black Lives Matter movement and encouraging others to do the same” (Entertainment Weekly)

In the year 2020, after George Floyd’s death which led to a resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, The Weeknd contributed \$500,000 to various organizations that support African American communities facing systemic racism and police brutality. His actions also included urging business associates and executives to support programs aimed at racial equality, which illustrates his ongoing dedication to promoting racial justice and global solidarity.

There aren’t any songs specifically by The Weeknd that discuss the Black Lives Matter movement, while he uses his social media networks to share awareness regarding social racism, police brutality, and racial injustice. He supported the BLM movement and inspired his followers to get engaged and support the cause by using his huge following. He tweeted, “Enough is enough. It’s time to stand up for this. We can either sit and watch or do something about it. The time is now.”

In addition to financial contributions, The Weeknd used his platform and influence to bring about social justice and change in society, as seen in the Black Lives Matter movement. His actions reflect a strong stand towards upholding the values of the Black community and against injustice. Being a big figure in the music business, The Weeknd's involvement has gotten other fans and celebrities to take part in the campaign by keeping the conversation of racial fairness in the public eye.

### **3. Supporting Gaza**

Since the beginning of the Zionist military operation in the northern half of the Gaza Strip in response to the October 7 incident, when a group of people belonging to the Zionist entity were killed and kidnapped by some Palestinians who were looking for freedom for their country and their prisoners, the Zionist entity penetrated nearly the entire Gaza Strip, killing more than 33,000 Palestinians, 40 percent of them children, without taking account of the deaths caused by hunger, harsh health conditions, the collapse of citizens' health services, and the bodies under rubble. Mohamed Buheju and Aamir hasan stated that:

Throughout the latest 2023/2024 War on Gaza, the [Zionist] Forces (IDF) have caused incidents which impacted the food supply chain in the strip. These incidents included bombardment or destruction of the food stores, food convoys, and other civilian food market infrastructure. These actions have no explanation except for being deliberate. Critics argue that such actions exacerbate the humanitarian situation in Gaza and impact food security. (5)

Gaza is now suffering from the greatest food insecurity; it is in a disastrous state, with an urgent need for humanitarian aid. The blockade that the Zionist entity has imposed on Gaza has brutally affected the almost two million people who live there through the severe limitation of their ability to travel, trade, and go about their daily lives.

According to the Reuters news agency, some people in southern Gaza have been boiling leaves as food for their children. However, the Zionist entity still denies and blames Hamas, which says that they are storing food.

However, the recent horrific developments in Gaza have sparked a large social media campaign called "Blockout 2024," which is shaming celebrities who are failing to speak out about the human tragedy there. It originated in the days following this year's May 6 Met Gala. Sarah Shamim noted that: "On May 7, a video surfaced of TikTok influencer Haley Kalil, lip-syncing the words "let them eat cake", outside the Met Gala. Kalil has 9.9 million followers on her TikTok account @haleybybaylee."(ALJAZEERA)

The turning point of the last Met Gala event was when TikTok influencer Haley Baylee lip-synched the famous phrase “let them eat cake” during the event, a phrase associated with Marie Antoinette and her disrespect for starving people of France in the past. The situation was seen as symbolic of the celebrities’ apparent dissociation from international humanitarian issues.

The “Blockout 2024” movement asks people to block the accounts of celebrities like Zendaya, Selena Gomez and Tylor Swift, who did not use their platform to raise attention to the terrible situation in Gaza.

Through this campaign, many famous people lost followers on all social media accounts such as Instagram. This proves the power of influencer users to contribute that they are unable to pressurise celebrities to post something on their account that is related or raise awareness of humanitarian issues like Gaza events.

Naturally, The Weeknd is not a part of Blackout 2024 because he has such a strong history of supporting and promoting Palestinian rights.

According to the World Food Program, the goodwill ambassador Abel Tesfaye gave millions to help the efforts in Gaza. The Weeknd donated \$2.5 million to the United Nations World Food Programme to provide the people in the region with emergency meals due to the war and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. This donation aims at four million emergency meals, hence serving to help the people of Palestine in Gaza who suffer from extreme hunger and a shortage of food. The World Food Program USA stated:

Tesfaye’s contribution comes amid a critical moment in WFP’s response efforts, as it races to feed more than one million Gazans on the verge of starvation. Since the crisis began on October 7th, WFP has provided food assistance to more than 764,000 Palestinians in coordination with other UN agencies and local and regional implementing partners. During the recent humanitarian pause in fighting, WFP has reached more than 121,000 people, including in hard-to-reach areas previously inaccessible within Gaza. Food assistance has included fresh bread, fortified date bars, canned food, wheat flour, pasta, tomato paste and oil. WFP continues to move as many trucks as possible full of food and aid into Gaza daily during the humanitarian pause. (WFP USA)

The Weeknd donated an additional \$2 million to the WFP in March 2024 for its ongoing activities in Gaza. With the kind donation, 1,500 metric tons of fortified wheat meal can be distributed to feed the over 157,000 Palestinians who are severely food insecure.

The Weeknd gives his time to humanitarian causes, which include supporting Palestine. Since becoming a WFP Goodwill Ambassador in 2021, he has actively addressed global hunger and emergencies by using his resources and position. Through his XO Humanitarian Fund, he

collected millions of dollars to support numerous emergency responses, including those in Ethiopia and now Gaza. He also makes private donations to the fund.

Overall, The Weeknd received great appreciation from the entertainment community and public for the donation he gave to the WFP for Gaza. Recipients, supporters, and even advocacy groups further underscored his help considering the importance and effectiveness it yielded.

The Weeknd showed an extreme commitment to addressing global social and humanitarian issues through his contributions to BLM and his donations towards relief efforts in Gaza. The large sums that he donated to the cause and publicly campaigned in support of BLM testified to his commitment to racial justice and fighting against racist institutions in the US. Similarly, his big contributions to the World Food Programme for Gaza show a deep consciousness of humanitarian emergencies and a commitment to minimising suffering in conflict areas.

The Weeknd's focus on racial justice and humanitarian aid proves that he has deeper values of compassion, unity, and social responsibility. His actions reflect how famous people can use their influence and resources to shine a light on crucial issues, call for community action, and give substantial contributions to worldwide causes. The positive reaction from the entertainment world and the public outlines the impact of his efforts and puts in a brighter light the role of celebrities in initiating change in society.

This chapter can be concluded by saying that the philanthropic works of The Weeknd are exemplary examples of the pivotal role celebrities can take on concerning global issues and social justice. They can make a difference by creating a world that is fair and full of compassion through a steadfast commitment to such causes.

# CONCLUSION



To conclude this thesis, the researchers think that The Weeknd is one of the most talented creative singers in the music industry, whose songs deal with people's issues in love and life. The Weeknd's impact on R&B music is evident; he particularly used elements of his dark, atmospheric sound and introspective lyrics in most of his best songs. This new trend of music, often known as dark R&B, gained a great following among the younger generation.

Chapter one provided a general overview of R&B music, which started with African American communities in the 1940s as a way to address their pain, happiness, and stories, and it changed over the years, including other styles like funk soul and electronic music.

Chapter one also covered the genres, styles, and topics of R&B music that The Weeknd categorised. Thus, The Weeknd's influence may be heard in recent music. By blending pop, electronic, and alternative components into his R&B base, he created opportunities for a new generation of musicians. This genre-bending strategy not only brought R&B back to life, but it also questioned conventional music classifications in general within music altogether.

In addition, chapter one spotlighted The Weeknd's background, his life as a kid, and the way he became one of the most streamed musicians in the world. as well as his music evolution over the years, starting with his old mixtapes in 2011 to his latest album, *DownFm* in 2022.

The second chapter tackled the songs of The Weeknd about melancholy and despair. R&B music has always been considered to address love, heartbreak, and heartfelt songs. Also, he utilises heavy basslines and synthesisers to create more atmospheric sounds. As a result, his unique falsetto vocals, which combine several genres to create a dark and melancholy atmosphere in his songs, are an important component of his style. In short, there were a lot of melancholic themes in the songs we have examined in this chapter. The Weeknd has used themes of melancholy, desire, and mindfulness to explore the depths of human emotion throughout his musical career. He examines the complex sides of relationships, the ups and downs of celebrity, and the big philosophical problems of life through a powerful lens of sadness and depression, the recent world's disease.

Throughout his career, The Weeknd explored themes of sadness, depression, loss of hope, and self-detachment. His early mixtapes focused on despair, depression, and toxic relationships, but his later albums show a more nuanced exploration of emotional struggles. like "Call Out My Name" and "Blinding Lights," continue to explore heartbreak and loneliness.

Finally, the third and last chapter rationally challenged the notion that The Weeknd is more than just an R&B singer; rather, he is a humanitarian and social activist who has become a

strong advocate for social justice. The Weeknd's journey is far from over. His influence on R&B, pop culture, and community activism will only grow as he progresses as a musician and a socially enlightened person. His life story exemplifies the value of artistic pursuits and the responsibilities that come with them. The mysterious R&B singer with a rising voice has emerged as a powerful advocate for social justice.

Abel Tesfaye, the artist behind the music, is utilising his popularity to encourage positive change, replacing great songs with dark, depressing mixtapes. The Weeknd's participation goes beyond one cause. He is a humanitarian representative for the World Food Programme, proving how committed he is to reducing world hunger. In 2020, he donated \$500,000 to Black Lives Matter and racial equality activists. This year, he made a huge \$2.5 million commitment to his XO Humanitarian Fund to provide meals for individuals affected by the Gaza crisis. The Weeknd's motivations are most likely influenced by a desire to make an important difference. His position as a WFP advocate indicates a long-term effort to reduce hunger. While information about his Gaza donation is insufficient, it is consistent with his previous humanitarian activities.

His activities left an enduring impression. His donation will be used by the WFP to feed people in need in Gaza. More significantly, his popularity encourages people to take action by bringing attention to international issues. Of course, there are many who criticise celebrity activism. Some call it "slacktivism," meaning it's a kind of play that has little meaning. But the Weeknd's significant contributions and continued participation offer a greater and more meaningful purpose. The Weeknd is an example of an artist who made a positive social impact and humanitarian use of his fame. He is not simply a top-charting artist but also an activist of social justice who uses his voice to make the world a better place.

The researchers believe that The Weeknd music developments may have an impact on his personal experiences. As he reached significant success, The Weeknd's music reflected the difficulties of dealing with fame and the effects that it can have.

Then the most important thing is that the Weeknd is one of the artists who support the Palestinians and express sympathy with them. So, we chose him as a case study unless his songs effectively suit our issues as young depressed people and how his music relates to us as a new generation. Also, we have seen that The Weeknd's Music speaks to fans because it is honest. His honesty and vulnerability allow listeners to connect with their own challenges, creating a sense of shared experience and social connection. Moreover, studying him allows us to understand that his exploration of sadness is more than just a personal experience; it

relates to a generation facing the same issues. His music allows listeners to mainly discover and receive complex emotions, creating a feeling of connection, shared experiences, and personal problems.

In the end, it becomes more obvious after analysing The Weeknd's music that modern R&B, or what is known as Alternative R&B, can be more than just enjoyable listening. Although The Weeknd's music is definitely catchy, it also uses its sound to explore deeper themes of depression, hopelessness, and poisonous relationships, and that is what we can see clearly that most of our teenagers commit suicide and students become intoxicated by such toxic relationships and fake love that religious communities and our Islam have forbidden it at all. Because of its complexity, fans are able to interact with the Weeknd's music on a deeper level than merely appreciating it on its own.

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