

YOU'RE LISTENING TO SUBMERGE, A PODCAST THAT SHOWS THE JOURNEY AND EVOLUTION OF SUBGENRES OF MUSIC.

[CHAMBER OF REFLECTION: FADE IN]

THIS EPISODE IS FOCUSED ON THE SUBGENRE KNOWN AS LO-FI, SHORT FOR LOW FIDELITY.

ONE OF THE BIGGEST MODERN NAMES IN THE LO-FI SCENE IS A QUIRKY ARTIST KNOWN AS MAC DEMARCO. A VAST MAJORITY OF DEMARCO'S MUSIC SOUNDS DREAMY AND EASY-GOING, WITH LYRICS EXPOSING HIS VULNERABLE AND EMOTIONAL SIDE OF HIMSELF.

[CHAMBER: FADE OUT]

[BROTHER: FADE IN]

OFF HIS ALBUM TITLED "SALAD DAYS", "BROTHER" IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF DEMARCO'S TAKE ON THE LO-FI FEEL. THE SYNTHETIC SOUNDS THAT DEMARCO USES IN HIS MUSIC IS MADE WITH AN EIGHTIES DRUM MACHINE KNOWN AS YAHAMA RX-5. ADDING IN A TWIST TO THE ALREADY EXISTING GUITAR AND DRUM TRACKS, THIS MACHINE ASSISTS HIM IN MASTERING THE LO-FI SOUND. IT ALMOST FEELS AS IF THE VOCALS ARE NOT MEANT TO BE HEARD BECAUSE OF THE LEVEL OF PROJECTION, THOUGH THEY DO COMPLETE THE DESIRED TONE OF THE PIECE.

MAC DEMARCO LUCIDLY IS NOT THE FIRST TO HAVE EXPERIMENTED WITH LOW FIDELITY MUSIC. UNDERGROUND ARTISTS THAT USED LOW QUALITY AND CHEAP

EQUIPMENT, IN FACT, ACCIDENTLY BIRTHED THIS GENRE. THESE ROUGH RECORDINGS THAT WERE USUALLY TAPED WITH CASSETTES CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF MANY ON-THE-RISE ARTISTS.

[BROTHER: FADE OUT]

[PALE BLUE EYES: FADE IN]

ONE OF THEM WAS THE VELVET UNDERGROUND.

THE ORIGINAL MEMBERS OF THE VELVET UNDERGROUND WERE THE FIRST TO PUT LO-FI MUSIC IN THE SPOTLIGHT. FROM THEIR DEBUT ALBUM TO THE END OF THEIR CAREER, THE GROUP PAVED THE ROAD FOR THIS GENRE.

[PALE: FADE OUT]

[AFTER HOURS: FADE IN]

“AFTER HOURS”, FROM THE GROUP’S THIRD STUDIO ALBUM RELEASED IN 1969, FEATURED VOCALS FROM THE GROUP’S DRUMMER, MAUREEN TUCKER. HER GENTLE VOICE SINGS ABOUT LONELINESS AND THE YEARN SHE HAS FOR IT. THOUGH THE SONG WAS WRITTEN BY LEAD VOCALIST, LOU REED, REED THOUGHT THE SONG WAS SO INNOCENT AND PURE THAT TUCKER’S LIGHT VOICE WOULD FLOW BETTER. WITH A SOFT GUITAR STRUM THROUGHOUT THE TRACK BEHIND TUCKER, THE SONG ALMOST SOUNDS LIKE A LULLABY, EXPOSING THE MORE DELICATE EXAMPLES OF LOW FIDELITY MUSIC. THE VELVET UNDERGROUND’S SOUND LEAD TO THE ICONIC MUSIC OF A COMMONLY

OVERLOOKED GROUP KNOWN AS SEBADOH, WHO EXPLORED AND RECREATED A DIFFERENT LO-FI SOUND.

[AFTER HOURS: FADE OUT]

[REBOUND: FADE IN]

SEBADOH GAINED SOME FAME BACK IN THE 90'S, MAINLY WITH THEIR ALBUM TITLED BAKESALE. A HIT OFF THE ALBUM, REBOUND, INTRODUCES THE NOISIER APPROACH SOME TOOK WITH THE LO-FI GENRE. REBOUND EXEMPLIFIES THE LOW FIDELITY SOUND WITH ITS DEEPER AND MORE SERIOUS LYRICS SUNG BY QUIETER VOCALS, A COMMONALITY THROUGHOUT THE GENRE. YET SEBADOH COMMITTED TO FEATURING NOISY PERCUSSION AND GUITAR PERFORMANCES, WHICH DIVIDED THIS GROUP FROM THOSE BEFORE. THE SOFTWARE THE GROUP USED IMPACTED THEIR SOUND GREATLY. THE PORTASTUDIO FOUR TRACK CASSETTE RECORDER ENRICHED THE ROUGHER SOUND OF THE GROUP.

SEBADOH ADDED A NEW ROUTE TO THE LO-FI SOUND THAT MANY ADMIRERD AND MIMICKED.

[REBOUND: FADE OUT]

[NAOMI: FADE IN]

NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL FOLLOWED SEBADOH'S PATH AND BEGAN PRODUCING SIMILAR LO-FI RECORDS AROUND THE SAME TIME.

SOUNDS OF OLDER SOFTWARE AND THE PRACTICE OF "ACTIVE DREAMING" IMPACTED FRONT-RUNNER, JEFF MANGUM, GREATLY. MANGUM'S MIND

FREQUENTLY TOOK HIM TO PLACES HE WASN'T COMFORTABLE WITH, YET DID HE NOT STOP IT, WHICH IS AN EXAMPLE OF ACTIVE DREAMING AND EXPLAINS THE UNIQUENESS OF THE GROUP'S LYRICS AND ALBUMS ARTS. SOFTWARE SIMILAR TO SEBADOH'S GAVE OFF AN OLD-TIMEY FINISH TO THEIR SOUND, THAT NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL RESPECTED. THE GROUP DREW IN FANS DUE TO THEIR INCLUSION OF FUZZ, DISTORTIONS, AND IMPERFECTIONS IN THEIR MUSIC THAT WAS SOMETIMES A RESULT OF THE EQUIPMENT.

[NAOMI: FADE OUT]

[HOLLAND, 1945: FADE IN]

AN EXAMPLE OF THIS CAN BE FOUND OFF THE GROUP'S ICONIC ALBUM, "IN THE AEROPLANE OVER THE SEA" ON A TRACK TITLED "HOLLAND, 1945". LYRICS IN THE SONG MAKE REFERENCE TO ANNE FRANK AND REINCARNATION, WHICH MAY SOUND STRANGE TO NONFANS, BUT MAKES SENSE TO THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND THE RANDOMNESS OF NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL. SOUNDS OF LOUD DRUMS AND MUTED GUITARS SEEM MESSY AND UNFINISHED, BUT TO THE GROUP, PUTS THE ICING ON THE CAKE.

[HOLLAND: FADE OUT]

[BABY: FADE IN]

FEW ARTISTS FOLLOWING NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL COPIED THEIR "IN-YOUR-FACE" AND LOUDER LO-FI STYLE. SOME APPROACHED THE GENRE IN THE WAYS THAT THE VELVET UNDERGROUND DID, THE DREAMIER SIDE OF LO-FI. MODERN-DAY LO-FI ARTISTS LIKE BECK, WAVVES, MAC DEMARCO AND BEACH HOUSE ACT IN

THIS WAY. PUSHING LO-FI'S BOUNDARIES IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS, THESE ARTISTS AND MORE EXPAND THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE GENRE. THE FAINT VOCALS REMAINS A CONSTANT THROUGHOUT. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT APPROACHES MUSICIANS HAVE TAKEN IN LO-FI OVERTIME, THE TRUE SOUND OF THE GENRE HAS STAYED.

FOR WHJE RADIO, THIS HAS BEEN EMILY PATTYN. FOR MORE STORIES LIKE THIS, VISIT [WHJE.COM](http://WHJE.COM).

[BABY: FADE OUT]