

:: Dialectic of 90s American Music ::

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If there is a dialectical opposition within 90's America, it's the pseudo-wino, pseudo-cultured, metropolitan, fem-corporate, night-on-the-town of uptown living versus the pseudo-political, pseudo-intellectual, hacker, anti-corporate, rave club of cyberpunk skiddie basement dwelling. To contextualize further, think Friends versus The Matrix; the passive high life of arbitrary qualms of the city quelled by the active aggression against the very system that allowed for their aggression to exist on the scale it did in the first place. Neither is actually cultured nor actually intelligent, rather their social clubs akin to obrazovanshchina outshine with a mighty flame the intelligent spark that seated them and thus we are left with yet another dialectic of *the majority*.

This dialectic is exemplified greatest when framed musically. On the one side you have the positive, passive, pop-filtered, and more expensive productions versus the negative, active, raw-filter high-gained, electronic productions. So not only are we speaking on certain music branches and specific genres, but we can reduce this dichotomy to ideals. This means there are specific artists that explicate the general mood and feel of the 90's qua these two ideals.

This becomes more apparent when you ask people what bands they remember or listened to during certain time periods, with the 90s being remembered under the dialectic by the two categories of opposition defined earlier. Such a dialectical remembrance places *Dave Matthews Band* (the 90s' equivalent of the 80s' U2, and subsequently the 00s' Coldplay precursor) under the corporate, uptown, wino, clean-filter, large production end of the dialectic, and *Rage Against the Machine* (with The Prodigy being the UK 90's parallel) under the anti-system, skiddie lab, gain-filtered, lofi productions of 90's American mid-life. Even their naming conventions are exemplary of this. *Dave Matthews Band* is named after their frontman, making it akin to *The Joe Rogan Experience*, a name *of and about* one person, as if you are somehow invited into their world, but only by their allowance, very self-important, egotistical, and arguably pretentious - the things 90's highlife is most easily characterized by, with a glazing of ignorance directly visible on its surface. *Rage Against The Machine* is categorically different, different in *kind* from the naming convention of the last, not being about a person or some direct title, but being about an attitude, a mood directed as, "a howling, expletive-driven tirade against the ills of American society."¹

As you'll see in the music videos, *Dave Matthews Band* uses high-quality cameras, has orchestral components to his songs, lots of band members, lots of post-production effects applied to the instruments, just overall high-production cost for the whole project, whereas *Rage Against The Machine* at most uses a black and white filter to show some attempt at cinematography, with the video being recorded on what appears to be hand-held cameras by today's standards, and the videos are of their concerts rather than a typical music video like Dave Matthew's. Additionally, all their records have a disclaimer stating that no drum loops, no synthesizers, and no scratching are used on any of their records because it was all done on the guitar with a few pedals by the singular Tom Morello; this doesn't get any closer to the stereotype of 'garage band'.

The easiest reduction of these two bands, and therefore that of people living in 90's America, is to the side that affirms American life and the side that denies it. For example, *So Much To Say* by *Dave Matthews Band* is about how there is so much to say and do in life, so much to experience, and really in the case of the affirmers of American life, so much wine to drink (*Tool's* very own Maynard James

¹ Buckley, Peter. The rough guide to rock. Rough Guides. 2003. 844. 978-1-84353-105-0.

Keenan to no surprise has his own winery). However, *Killing In The Name* by *Rage Against The Machine* is, as the BBC and deniers of American life say, "the military-industrial complex, justifying killing for the benefit of, as the song puts it, 'the chosen whites'."^{2 3}

I believe it's difficult to find two more opposite bands in America during this time period who were actually successful at capturing a large segment of the population's beliefs and attention. So this is not simply two bands I like arbitrarily, but a demonstration that culture is objective and thereby objectively reducible to dialectic theory that accurately explains the general feel and mood not just of geographic ontology but perspectival mindset of daily life given that geographic ontology. That is to say that any culture, as the summation of interpersonal relations tied to geographic ontology, can be objectively framed and explicated given proper dialectical oppositions which then allow for epistemological certainty of the inner workings of that culture. You take these two opposing frameworks for 90's America and combine them, you collapse this dialectic and what you get is an accurate totalizing summation of the culture, the aesthetic *feel*, of what it was to **be** 90's America.

So have a listen to what is objectively the two most 90's American music groups and try to remember without lamentation how arbitrary the problems were when America sat atop commanding heights -

So Much To Say by *Dave Matthews Band* - <https://youtu.be/HgJOjB8-e8w>

Killing In The Name by *Rage Against The Machine* - <https://youtu.be/bWXazVhlyxQ>

Live versions for radical comparison:

So Much To Say by *Dave Matthews Band* - <https://youtu.be/OYD8bUJk1eQ>

Killing In The Name by *Rage Against The Machine* - <https://youtu.be/8de2W3rtZsA>

² http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/8419446.stm

³ Another reference for the song, with a much greater explanation as to the particular context of that individual track can be found here - http://everything.explained.today/Killing_in_the_Name/