

Something Different: Linkin Park

You'd be forgiven, if you read this blog, for thinking that I'm solely a tech blogger, who does nothing else with his life. And sadly, you'd probably be accurate in that assumption. But I do on occasion do other things. I sometimes flatter myself to be a musician, and play at least one instrument. Music is, after all, not difficult (at least the way I play it.)

As someone who spent their formative teen years in the early 2000s, emo nu-metal was a considerably large part of it, a fact that has somehow translated into adulthood (though my musical tastes have grown somewhat more eclectic since then.) Chief amongst these groups was Linkin Park.

Over the past few days, [Linkin Park has been embroiled in controversy](#) over their decision to reform 7 years after the suicide of their lead singer, Chester Bennington. This has been largely led by Chester's son, Jamie.

At first I wanted to dismiss it as the chauvinistic rantings of a typically male-dominated audience when faced with a replacement by a female singer. Personally, having heard Emily Armstrong sing the newest song, I was convinced.

But there were four aspects of this controversy I wanted to write more on.

One: The decision to reform.

We have an irksome trait as music fans to idolize singers above all. Most of you could tell me the name of the singer of your favourite band. How many more can name the lead guitarist? The bassist? The drummer? A fraction reducing at every step.

Linkin Park has always been the project of Mike Shinoda, the rapper and backup vocalist of the group. Mike Shinoda, as I understand, was co-writing the lyrics alongside Chester Bennington. As [one Reddit post puts it](#): " The gist of it is if Mike sang it, Mike wrote it. If Chester sang it, Mike still might have written it. "

This speaks of nothing musically. I don't know if Chester Bennington played an instrument or contributed musically to the group. There were 6 members of the band throughout most of their history. These are professional musicians who have every right to continue the work they had been doing before the suicide of Chester Bennington.

The expectation that Linkin Park would die along with their lead singer is a trivialization of the life's work of 5 people.

Two: Emily Armstrong and her ties to Scientology

Emily Armstrong is a scientologist. Maybe. Unless she isn't. No one is really clear on the matter, because she has neither acknowledged nor denied it.

What we know is that she's a second generation scientologist, if at all. She was born into it. Like [another Reddit thread on the subject suggests](#) leaving a cult is one of the hardest things you can do. Doing so when indoctrination has started as a child is likely even harder.

For years, Emily Armstrong has operated as the lead singer of a relatively obscure hard rock band. Fear of reprisal could likely have swayed her opinion not to openly speak out against an extremely manipulative group such as scientologists. From the same Reddit thread:

“ Former members that have dared to go against the organization and speak out have been kidnapped, abused, tortured, withheld food and water to the point of starvation, and ultimately killed.

Themes of the new song "The Emptiness Machine" certainly suggest she's left scientology behind, alongside other music she has written which talks on similar subjects.

We probably shouldn't condemn someone for brainwashing they were subjected to as a child.

Three: Emily Armstrong and her ties to Danny Masterson

Danny Masterson is one of those awkward topics. Convicted for rape and serving 30 years to life in prison, he received an outpouring of support from people who worked with him, people who wrote letters to the judge to ask for leniency, to support Masterson's "good character". Based on the sentence, they don't seem to have worked.

Dozens people wrote in support of Masterson, Armstrong among them. Others include essentially everyone Masterson worked with on the Ranch and That 70's show, most of whom have faced some sort of repercussions due to their actions.

The matter is... interesting.

Ted Bundy, for example, was a master manipulator. He was handsome, charming and generous. He volunteered for the samaritans. Everyone who believed he was good and kind was manipulated into that belief. We don't blame these people. We blame Ted Bundy.

But for some reason, we don't allow celebrities to be people. We have put them up on pedestals and make no allowances for them to be human, that something as simple as manipulation could happen to them. They should be able to see through all facade, all deceit, all attempts at subterfuge.

And if they don't, they are the only victims that it is okay to blame: those whom we have elevated who were not able to see through the manipulations of a person who managed to get [so many people to vouch for him](#)

Bad celebrities. How dare you fail at omniscience.

Four: The Legacy of Chester Bennington

This is one of the sticking points. And maybe something I shouldn't be putting into writing. Jamie Bennington has accused Mike Shinoda of trying to erase his father's, Chester Bennington, legacy. This is absurd on so many levels: They haven't deleted any old songs, they're not ignoring Chester Bennington's existence. They're simply moving on, something Jamie is clearly (and understandably) unable to do.

But it allows me to open up my feelings on suicide: I think we, as a community on the internet, glamourize it.

Sound Garden, for example, had fallen into complete obscurity before the suicide of Chris Cornell in 2017. Now it feels like every other time I get into the car I hear Black Hole Sun on the radio. The same can be said for Linkin Park. And if we want to go further back, [here is a comment thread from 1994 about Kurt Cobain's death](#). I don't know if Nirvana were unknown before Kurt Cobain's decision, but his dramatic exit certainly rocketed them to new heights as people lamented music he'd never get to write.

This glamourization of suicide may have contributed to (what I at least interpret as) [a general upward trend in suicide rates](#), though I'm sure it's a much more complex issue.

Instead I want to talk about one matter. The legacy of Chester Bennington and the only person responsible for destroying it: Chester Bennington himself.

I have complicated thoughts about suicide and how we should treat those who lose their battles. Every effort should be made to help them, but those who fail should not be glamourized. They shouldn't be celebrated. In my opinion, they should have their names stripped from public works and attributed to a John/Jane Doe character.

People should not be rewarded for leaving behind children who, like Jamie Bennington, spiral out of control wondering why they weren't enough to keep their parent around. There should be no praise for a person who elects to exit in such a way that they blow apart the lives of those around them.

Suicide causes people to leave gaping holes in their wake, holes that can never be filled as parents grieve for children, children grieve for parents, lovers ache for those they couldn't reach and siblings weep for those they couldn't save.

To commit suicide is to disregard the damage you will do to all of the people who have ever loved you, who continue to love you, and will continue to feel the loss long after you've opted out.

It is the ultimate act of selfishness. And it should not be rewarded in the way that it is.

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