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## psychiatry in music

### Psychiatry rocks

James McDonald

Modern popular music abounds with references to madness, insanity and mania, most commonly as an analogy for a romantically or chemically altered state of mind. The genres of heavy metal and punk, however, have taken particular glee in juxtaposing lyrics inspired by the more shocking psychiatric associations such as asylums, padded cells, electroconvulsive therapy and psychosurgery with loud, fast aggressive music. Songs such as Black Sabbath's 'Paranoid' and Black Flag's 'Depression' are landmarks of their respective genres. No band is as rich in references to psychopathology, however, as original 1970s New York punks The Ramones. Songs such as 'Psychotherapy', 'Gimme Gimme Shock Treatment', 'I Wanna Be Sedated' and 'Teenage Lobotomy', although playing fast and loose with DSM criteria, are punk rock classics, mini case-vignettes with a savage, knuckle-headed wit lying behind the buzz saw guitar attack. This lyrical preoccupation was no coincidence. Lead singer Joey Ramone (real name Jeffrey Hyman) had Marfan's syndrome. As a teenager, he experienced a psychotic episode and was treated in hospital, his experience informing many of The Ramones' songs. Later in life Joey was diagnosed with severe obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), which, although not directly referenced in song, led to conflicts within the already famously dysfunctional group. Band mates were often left waiting for hours outside the singer's apartment before leaving on tour as he completed a series of rituals inside. Joey's struggle with OCD would sadly indirectly lead to his death. On returning home from a doctor's appointment, Joey was plagued by an intrusive thought that he had not closed the door at the surgery properly and set out across town to remedy this. Unfortunately, he slipped on ice on the street and fractured a hip, complicating the treatment of previously diagnosed lymphoma. He did not recover and passed away in April 2001, aged 49. Two other original members of the band, Johnny and Dee Dee, died soon afterwards. The Ramones remain one of the most influential and best loved rock'n'roll bands of all time, their enduring appeal to those disenfranchised by mainstream society best summarised by the intro to the band's signature anthem 'Pinhead': 'Gabba, Gabba, we accept you, one of us'.

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