

Why Billie Eilish's HIT ME HARD AND SOFT Was "THE GREATEST" Album of 2024

You are sitting at a table in a crowded room while anticipating the outcome of the final award. You know you poured your heart and soul into this album, and the night is coming to a close. The bright lights and the busy voices of everyone around you increases your excitement. But then the familiar name you know was not called. The event you couldn't wait for turns into one you don't want to remember. Disappointment creeps into you, the echoing of the applause all around you sounds muffled, and you feel the tears swelling in your eyes, but you cannot cry because everyone is watching you — waiting for your reaction, waiting for you to make a scene. So you clap for your opponent and plaster a fake smile on your face, even though it hurts so much inside.

We can go on and on about who was robbed at the 2025 Grammys and what they were robbed of, but the biggest award of the night was stolen from a very talented, contemplative, and expressive songwriter. If you go to Spotify right now and look up "BIRDS OF A FEATHER" by Billie Eilish, you will see it has over 2.3 billion streams ("Revealed"), which is the most streamed song off of her album, *HIT ME HARD AND SOFT*. And if you look up "TEXAS HOLD 'EM" by Beyoncé, you will see that the song has over 600 million streams as the most popular song from her album, *COWBOY CARTER* ("Revealed"). You can also go to the 2024 Spotify wrapped to find that *HIT ME HARD AND SOFT* was the second most streamed album globally of 2024 ("Revealed"), and "BIRDS OF A FEATHER" was the second most viral song globally ("Revealed"). But Beyoncé's *COWBOY CARTER* was not on any of these lists. Billie

Eilish deserved Album of the Year because her intimate and inclusive creative process produced a more emotionally rich and culturally significant work.

HIT ME HARD AND SOFT connected more to the listeners because it was written by only two people, which gave the album a more cohesive artistic vision, rather than *COWBOY CARTER*, which had a total of seventy-two writers (“Revealed”). Billie Eilish worked with her brother Finneas to write all the songs on this album. Their close relationship was a very beneficial factor because it helped bring the emotions alive in the lyrics, and it was easier for Billie to be herself in her music. Her song “SKINNY” includes lyrics about the struggles of being in the public eye at a young age, how that had an impact on her, and the overall body shaming on social media that has become more popular over recent years. Billie and Finneas write,

“People say I look happy

Just because I got skinny

But the old me is still me and maybe the real me

And I think she's pretty”

and

“And the Internet is hungry for the meanest kind of funny

And somebody's gotta feed it

Oh, do you still cry?

Still cry

I cry”

These lyrics demonstrate the bitter emotions Billie has felt and the pressure people have put on her about her body. She implies that people think you look happier when you lose weight or when you are skinny. This is a very vulnerable thing to talk about, and it's not easy to admit or show the toll other people's opinions can take on us. It is much easier to express yourself and your struggles with a more intimate and trusting team. And it makes for more heartfelt and deeper music. While Beyoncé collaborates, Billie creates. While Beyoncé performs, Billie confesses.

With Billie Eilish creating impactful, emotional music, it helps her develop a deep connection with her audience. All of the emotions in her songs such as, love, sadness, fear, worry, and anger are very complex and important, so when you feel all these emotions you are relating to her through her music, and there is this bond shared between her and her fans. Music has a much bigger impact on you when you listen to songs you can personally relate to. It makes it more fun and intimate knowing that you share these feelings and experiences with this famous artist. The songs they write feel more special, have an overall greater impact on you, and make you want to listen to their music more because of how connected and seen you feel with it. A study by the National Library of Medicine explains how music is tied with emotions:

Emotions clearly appear in the first dimension (e.g., music conveys feelings; music can lighten my mood; music helps me better understand my thoughts and emotions), indicating that they might play an important role in achieving self-awareness, probably in terms of identity formation and self-perception, respectively. However, the regulation of moods clearly appears in the third dimension (e.g., music makes me cheerful; music can enhance my mood; I'm less bored when I listen to music), suggesting that moods are not central issues pertaining to identity (Schäfer).

This explains how music affects our emotions and feelings. The study included a short survey on the different reactions people have when listening to certain types of music and how it affects their mood. This applies to the dimension of emotions that is felt when you listen to Billie Eilish. The mix of sadness, anger, and love (just to name a few) corresponds with the deep connection her music has with its listeners. But it's not just the lyrics of her songs, it's how she delivers those lyrics in her songs. For example, if you listen to “WILDFLOWER” you will hear the soft background vocals that add to the soft, harmonic, style of her song, sounding like a siren call. These details bring out the sad and heartbroken emotions within the song. Another example is the catchy beat and the way Billie delivers the lyrics in “CHIIHIRO.” When Billie sings,

“I don't, I don't know why I called

I don't know you at all

I don't know you

Not at all”

That part of the song makes me feel as if I'm levitating. The combination of the music with the way she confesses the lyrics enhances the betrayal and anger in this song. The way you can feel Billie yelling in the song, makes you want to scream along with her. The change in the volume of her voice adds very raw emotion to the whole song. This emotional range of her voice at the end of the song ties in so well the rest of the song. She shows how emotions can be connected, and with “CHIIHIRO,” she demonstrates the connection between anger and sadness. With this album it does not feel like you are listening to the music, but experiencing the music.

Billie Eilish's music reflects on her real-life past experiences, which contributes to her fans connecting with her. She has suffered from depression and suicidal thoughts in her past and she writes about those feelings in the hard times she's gone through in her music. She has opened up about her past in multiple interviews and talks about how that relates to her music. In 2019, Billie Eilish collaborated with a company called Ad Council to participate in a video for mental health awareness. In the video she was asked many questions about her mental health and about mental health in general. She says, "But I have seen it and I have been it, and even if it's just a little bit more comfort, that can really mean a lot to someone. Because you don't know what is going on, even in that moment there could be something going on and it's been like that for me. It really means a lot" ("Billie Eilish On Mental Health"). This helps some of her fans who have dealt with or deal with similar emotions feel more seen. Billie's authenticity gives her credibility as an artist because it proves that she is a human being like all of us, and that strengthens the bond between her and her fans.

Beyoncé did not win this Grammy for no reason. With her 35 Grammys and 99 Nominations, she has proved that she is an incredible artist (she is called Queen B for a reason). I'm not saying that Beyoncé doesn't have any deeply emotional songs that connect her to her fans. For example, "Halo" is a very powerful song, and it has had a major cultural impact on society, but I do not think *COWBOY CARTER* was the album of 2024. "TEXAS HOLD 'EM" did have a significant cultural impact, and was a pretty popular song, but it lacked the deep, personal, intimate connection that Billie's songs had claimed. Beyoncé has had an amazing career and has produced so many good albums, but *COWBOY CARTER* does not reflect her best work, and it did not do as well statistically speaking, as I have previously stated, as *HIT ME HARD AND SOFT*. Billie Eilish had a greater impact and outcome on her album.

What makes music truly worthy of the highest honor in the industry? Music that brings people together whether it's with positive or negative emotions. Music that makes us feel recognized. Music that we can sing, laugh, dance, scream, and cry to. Billie Eilish and Finneas recognized all of these key points when they wrote *HIT ME HARD AND SOFT*. The Grammy for Album of the Year should recognize not just technical excellence, but music's unique power to make us feel seen, understood, and elevated—and in 2024, Billie Eilish's intimate masterpiece accomplished this and didn't just play through our AirPods, but echoed through our souls.

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