

Stan Culture for Better or for Worse “At the End of the Day, We’re All Die-Hards for this Thing”

BY PRECIOUS VUE

WHAT IS STAN CULTURE? The term stan, by definition of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is “an extremely or excessively enthusiastic and devoted fan.” Since the rise of social media and digital content, online platforms have become easily attainable. The world on the web is constantly growing, meaning the never-ending posts of content by celebrities, idols, or content creators. It’s no surprise that people grow emotional attachments to whom they idolize and eventually find themselves engulfed in a community with similar attachments. Thus, the rise of stan culture begins.

“Stan culture is being a fan but more intensive or devoted. [Stan culture] can provide a community and sense of belonging [...] it can sometimes become toxic because it consumes into your daily life. Specifically for individual fandoms, some stans take things too seriously and too far.” Says first-year university student, Natalie V.

The term “stan,” rumored to be the combination of the words “stalker” and “fan,” made its debut in the modern world when famous rapper Eminem released

a track titled “Stan” in 2000. The track tells the story of a fan who grew an unhealthy and dangerous obsession towards the rapper. Since then, the term has had a negative connotation and laid below the surface.

With the rise of K-pop boy-band BTS, stan culture has grown increasingly popular on social media apps such as Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr. Though, that does not shine much light on the community. Due to the term being associated with fans deemed to be obsessive, aggressive, and protective towards their person or thing, stan culture has been known to be a toxic community.

“In the K-pop community, I know some stans' love for their idols can be so aggressive and protective [...] to the extreme of threatening or spending an exclusive amount of money. But that’s just one individual in the community. Stans can do a lot of good with their power with the influence of their idol.” Says Joseph. C, a second-year university student.

In 2020, BTS announced on their official Twitter account to advocate \$1 million to the Black Lives Matter movement. The tweet said “We stand against racial

discrimination. We condemn violence. You, I and we all have the right to be respected. We will stand together. #BlackLivesMatter.” Within the next twenty-five hours, devoted BTS stans, ARMY, fundraised \$1 million matching the same amount as the seven men.

Stans are not just die-hard fans, they are a community who collectively admires one thing with organized movements. People in the stan community take on roles to promote, invest, consume, and even provide meme-able content on social media. An individual stan defending their faves can be seen as overly protective or obsessive, but when the stan community unites as a whole it can create a powerful movement and either significantly make a difference or escalate the situation even more.

Graduate student, Shelby. L says, “Honestly the stan community can be a hit or miss. Regardless of how toxic or healthy the fandom is there will always be that one [stan] who will be overly obsessive. It doesn’t change anything though, because at the end of the day we’re all die-hards for this one thing.”

Music Review Skillet: Dominion

BY DAVINA BELLINGER

ONE OF MY FAVORITE BANDS, Skillet, is an American Christian rock band formed by John and Corey Cooper who are husband and wife along with Jen Ledger and Seth Morrison. They recently released their latest album Dominion on January 14. Skillet takes in the familiar mix of both heavier and softer directions within their vocals. An example of a song is their opening track “Surviving the Game” which is an uplifting rocker anthem but some other songs that relate with this song are other ones such as “Standing in the Storm” which builds up from it mixing music in dark pop melodies and atmospheric electronica. The album’s songs also add in extra electronic sounds and distorted screams that help make a fiery opening to the album.

A more soft-playing song from Dominion is “Valley of Death” which takes on the true direction and changes throughout the album until the following song which is “Beyond Incredible” which then picks up the electronica and full energy of the guitar within the chorus. Skillet has reached more than one billion streams in 2020 alone, making them one of the most successful bands in modern rock. Some other albums and songs that Skillet are known for are “Hero” and “Monster” which was one of their earlier songs from their album Awake back in 2009 when they took heavier songs but still have that same pattern and balance of soft and heavier tone mixes.

Following back with the album Dominion, the soft music playing atmosphere returns in the ballad “Refuge” but takes an interesting turn with a bit heavier

strings being played through the song. The next song returns to heavier rocker music with the song “Shout Your Freedom” which features a few pseudo-political overtones but within a broad sense in which is straightforward adding some classic rock sensibility like the duel guitar and solo following with all.

I think one of the most powerful ballads that the album has in general to anyone who listens to it is “Forever or the End” which mixes with acoustic and piano aesthetics before the rest of the band joins into the song. The harmonizing between John Cooper and Jen Ledger was outstanding and really blended with the song. A lot of these titles do provide the insight of how their faith is intertwined with what is happening with the world around them and all of us which is a fantastic message that the band gives to the audience.

Overall, I would rate this album a 5/5 star-rating because Dominion does outstanding work relating real world problems with a mix of dark and light tones throughout the album itself. The level of energy that these musicians put into all of the music in general will continue to make me and other fans want to listen to more of their near future music they decide to release in the next coming years. While not everyone is a fan of intense music they do have softer music that I would recommend such as “Stars,” which is from the album Unleashed back in 2016 and “Valley of Death” of the stronger messages they give to the audience.

