

Reviewing Personality Disorders Through the Music and Composition of Billy Joel

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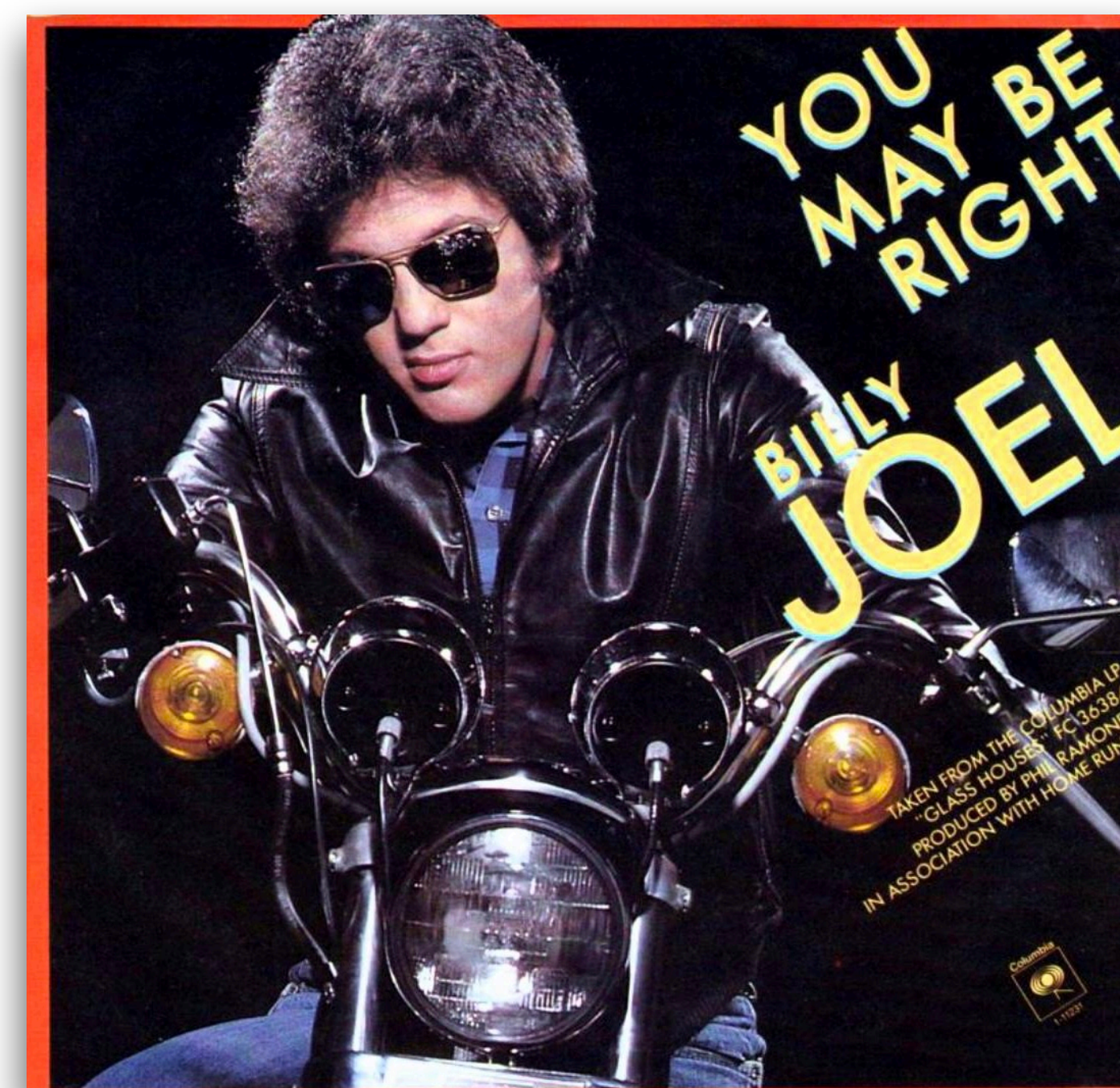
Abstract

As part of our psychopathology course at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, residents are provided a comprehensive lecture on the mental status examination (MSE) where deficits in thought (content and process) are learned through examples of music. MSE findings are an important aspect of formulating the most likely diagnosis; objective findings of the routine physical examination that when taken with patients' historical information may support or counter a clinician's provisional diagnosis.

The aim of our paper is to review the Cluster A Personality Disorders including Paranoid Personality Disorder, Schizoid Personality Disorder, and Schizotypal Personality Disorder through the music and composition of Billy Joel. The use of lyrics and melody are creative ways to review thought content and thought process, respectively. As such, we review the etiology and clinical characteristics of the Cluster A Personality Disorders through multiple works of the singer and songwriter including Pressure, Sometimes a Fantasy, and You May Be Right.

Schizotypal Personality Disorder *You May Be Right, 1980*

I've been stranded in the combat zone
I walked through Bedford Stuy alone
(Discomfort with close relationships)
Even rode my motorcycle in the rain
(Eccentric behavior)



So you said that only proves that I'm insane
You may be right
I may be crazy
(Brief psychotic episode)
But it just may be a lunatic you're looking for

Remember how I found you there
Alone in your electric chair
(Isolation and loneliness)
I told you dirty jokes until you smiled

Terms used by Joel in <i>You May Be Right</i> , 1980	
Term	Historical Significance
Insane	The noun meaning "insane person" is attested from 1786
Crazy	The origin meaning "break down in health" may be traced to the late 15th century. Its application to psychiatry is circa 1610 and first recorded in 1813
Madness	Traced back to before 1900, it had become an acceptable descriptor by the 1300s, a time when mental asylums had become wide-spread institutions across Europe
Lunatic	Aristotle posited that the full moon may induce "insanity" due to the brain mostly consisting of water. Given the moon's power over the tides, Aristotle thought it could also affect brain neurotransmission

Borderline Personality Disorder *She's Always a Woman, 1977*

She can kill with a smile, she can wound with her eyes
She can ruin your faith with her casual lies
(Instability in relationships)
And she only reveals what she wants you to see
She hides like a child
(History of trauma?)
but she's always a woman to me
She can lead you to love, she can take you or leave you
(Splitting; black & white thinking)

Oh, and she never gives out and she never gives in
She just changes her mind
(Unstable affect; impulsivity)
And she'll promise you more than the garden of Eden
Then she'll carelessly cut you and laugh while you're bleeding
(Self-harming behavior)
But she'll bring out the best and the worst you can be
(Another reference to splitting)
Blame it all on yourself 'cause she's always a woman to me

She is frequently kind and
she's suddenly cruel
(Unstable affect)
She can do as she pleases
she's nobody's fool



Personality Disorders and All Corresponding Songs

Cluster A

Schizoid - *Sometimes a Fantasy*
Schizotypal - *You May Be Right*
Paranoid - *Pressure*

Cluster B

Antisocial - *The Ballad of Billy the Kid*
Borderline - *She's Always a Woman*
Histrionic - *Big Shot*
Narcissistic - *The Entertainer*

Cluster C

Avoidant - *I Don't Want to Be Alone*
Dependent - *Shameless*
Obsessive-Compulsive - *Angry Young Man*