Opinion

Photo of the Day |



A student sits outside the University of Connecticut campus in Storrs on Sunday, Oct. 18, 2026. With the cold weather fast approaching, students looked to enjoy the warmth before it was gone. PHOTO BY MORGAN BLANCHARD, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Why sad music is so mainstream

by Phoebe Mark
CONTRIBUTOR
SHE/HER/HERS
mdu26001@uconn.edu

"Stick Season" by Noah Kahan. "Scott Street" by Phoebe Bridgers. "Iris" by the Goo Goo Dolls.

Nowadays, it seems that everybody listens to sad music. In the current music scene, many people are drawn to popular artists like Noah Kahan or Phoebe Bridgers — artists whose signature sounds are defined by sad melodies, lyrics and themes.

Even across genres, there is the same pattern of sadder songs becoming big hits. The popularity of sad songs is probably not because everyone is depressed or in a slump. Rather, people look to sad music as an outlet.

People may find comfort in sad music because they evoke emotions that are too vulnerable to share with the world. Every person deals with their own struggles — both external and internal conflicts that may feel too intimate to share with other people to alleviate the burden.

However, music provides a safe space for people to truly feel. Many artists write songs with themes of heartbreak, struggles within oneself or longing for a change. Even though these songs come from strangers living such different lives, their music may understand a person in a way nobody else could.

Listening to these songs can remind a person that they are not alone in the world stuck with their own feelings. It gives them space to wallow in their emotions and take time to process their feelings without the need to share them with anybody else.

Even if music cannot change a person's situation, it provides comfort knowing that someone can put their feelings into a song. Music can help someone understand their own emotions when they cannot do it for themselves.

Sad music can also evoke a sense of nostalgia, giving people an outlet to reflect on old or current feelings. Sometimes, we just want to put on our headphones, listen to music and go for a walk while thinking about our lives. This may be about a person we once knew, a hard time in our lives or perhaps ongoing feelings that we cannot seem to settle.

As complex creatures, our past experiences influence our lives in complicated ways that even we don't understand sometimes. But sad songs may reveal parts of ourselves that we previously didn't know.

In my own life, I've turned to music in order to process my emotions. In my junior year of high school, I was experiencing issues involving my closest friends, leaving me conflicted, hurt and confused about my emotions all at once. During this time, I created a playlist consisting of songs that reminded me of both my current situation and the way things were when everything was normal in my life. Though a seemingly small thing, this playlist quickly became the soundtrack to all the times I reflected on my situation and the events that led me to that point. It provided me comfort knowing this little collection of songs perfectly encapsulated the amalgamation of emotions and thoughts in my mind.

Why do so many songwriters write about heartbreak or other sad themes? Perhaps it is only human nature to do so. When we experience our happiest moments, we tend to live through them fully in the present.

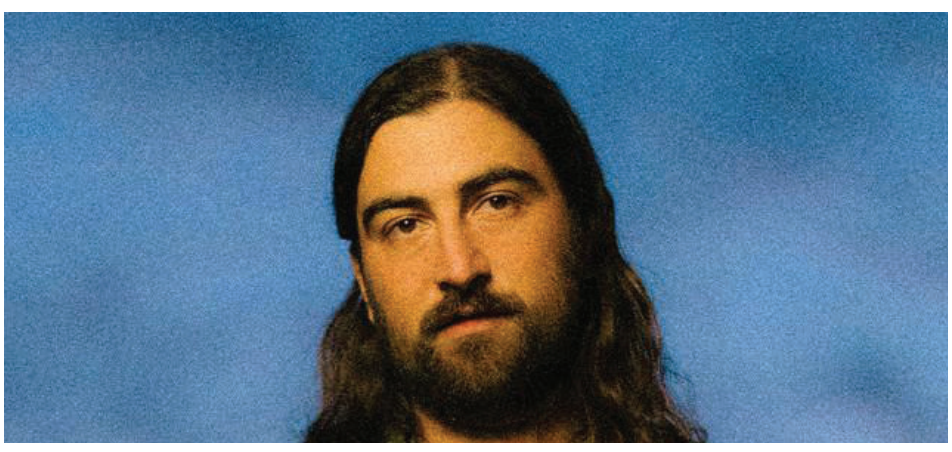
On the other hand, those sadder times in our lives often lead us to reflect on our experiences. We sometimes can't help but let those sadder emotions occupy our minds. This is reflected in many songs that artists release – songs based on their personal lives and real emotions at that time.

In an interview with NME Magazine, artist Lizzy McAlpine said, "The music video that I made for 'Ugly things' I made by myself in my house with my camcorder. I really wanted to capture the feeling of loneliness, and it felt like the only way that I could do that was to actually be alone."

She continued, "I hope people feel a catharsis when they listen to 'Ugly things.' That's what I feel when I listen to it." In McAlpine's song, she writes about the heartache of watching your ex move on after a breakup and "having to reconcile the person that you thought they were and the person they are now."

Through her lyricism and sound, she hopes to connect with her audience by capturing the feeling of a pure love that sours emotionally over time, turning into an ugly picture. Especially in her music video, she resonates with her audience through scenes out of an ordinary, unfiltered life of a person experiencing the emotional and physical desolation of a breakup.

Sad music gives people an outlet to fully express their emotions with no expectations or pretending for somebody else. It provides a sense of comfort and understanding that happier tunes perhaps cannot. Sometimes, people long just to feel something.



Noah Kahan is a mainstream folk artist from Vermont. His music, centered around his coming-of-age in New England, is considered to be emotionally moving by many of his fans. PHOTO COURTESY OF SPOTIFY

Germany and America need each other now more than ever

by Evelyn Pazan
STAFF WRITER
SHE/HER/HERS
evelyn.pazan@uconn.edu

From Oct. 9 to 11, I attended the German American Conference at Harvard University, an event meant to bring together academics, professionals and politicians to consider the challenges and successes that both Germany and America face. Despite the differences between the colliding languages and cultures, one thing stuck out to me. We, as people and countries, are much more alike than we think, and we need to use that to our advantage.

Germany and America are both within the top three economies in the world, with Investopedia nominal GDP estimates of just over $32 trillion and $5 trillion, respectively. Joining them in the top three is China, whose GDP has exploded from just over $1 trillion in 2000 to nearly $20 trillion in 2025, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

While Germany and America are both mature economies and lower growth is to be expected, Germany has been experiencing prolonged economic stagnation, and America is facing slowing job growth and continued affordability issues. At the core of these countries' problems is a lack of innovation.

According to the World Intellectual Property Organization, China leads the world in a variety of innovation measures such as scientific output, international patents filed and electric battery prices. This push is coming from the top. For the first time in years, China's government has spent more on research and development than Europe as a whole, according to International Energy Agency (IEA).

Germany, long known as a leader in innovation and machines, is losing its drive with slow technology adoption and a dying "start-up culture." This sentiment was clear at the German American Conference, where German panelists shared frustrations with Germany's bureaucracy and its ability to pivot to rival China.

America faces a different problem. As large incumbent companies swallow larger market shares, they are focused on defending their market position, rather than innovating to grow. This shift in the direction of spending creates what researchers call "the Innovation Paradox," where spending continues to increase, but productivity doesn't improve with it.

From a sociopolitical standpoint, Germany and America's shared issues could not be clearer. In September of this year, Germany's far-right party, Alternative für Deutschland or the AfD, nearly won the majority of the vote in Saxony-Anhalt, a state that was part of the former German Democratic Republic.

The AfD has been on the rise for years, nearly doubling its support from 2021 to 2025, and many are worried that its anti-immigrant, nationalist and anti-European Union policies are bringing Germany to the point where the post-World War II idea of "never forget" no longer applies.

Meanwhile, Americans are approaching a highly consequential midterm election as polarization runs rampant and approval ratings for the current conservative leadership are some of the lowest in history.

Much like Germany, America is experiencing growing social and political divisions that make common ground hard to come by. Debates on both sides within America are focused on more ideologies and manifestos and less on shared goals, erasing opportunities for collaboration and improvement.

Not only does this make bipartisan cooperation nearly impossible, but it threatens the international relationships that helped America and Germany remain prosperous and strong for so long.

America and Germany are both facing challenges that will define their futures, but they are not facing them alone. Our countries could make significant progress for themselves and their people if leadership made a true commitment to partnership and the betterment of both nations. But unfortunately, it seems like our leaders aren't going to do it for us.

If the politicians won't prioritize cooperation, we are going to have to. Organizations like the German American Conference and Atlantik-Brucke are key to creating forums where German and American visionaries can unite.

Political change and innovation often begin with a simple conversation or a shared idea, and these kinds of discussions are what we need to reinvigorate transatlanticism and teamwork between two historically close allies.

Last week, I experienced firsthand how much we can learn when we're willing to listen to one another, language barrier or not.

Despite vastly different values and histories, Germans and Americans have similar aspirations and concerns.

Since the second World War, Germany and America have worked hard to create a symbiotic relationship and now is not the time to let it crumble.

The stakes are high, and now more than ever, we need people who are willing to keep the conversation going.