

Research Assessment #8

Date: 11/2/2020

Subject: Leon Bridges: Old Music in a New Age

APA Citation:

Caramanica, J. (2015, June 26). Review: Leon Bridges Reveals Classic Soul and Something More Personal. Retrieved November 06, 2020, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/26/arts/music/review-leon-bridges-reveals-classic-soul-and-something-more-personal.html>

The vintage soul of Leon Bridges-- is indeed, a very good thing. (2019, December 30).

Retrieved November 06, 2020, from <https://culture.org/leon-bridges/>

Assessment:

In today's world of music, the environment is filled with electronic instruments and aggressive sounds. Leon Bridges of Atlanta, Georgia, however, is changing the game. Bridges' music reflects the swing and soul sounds that make the 50s and 60s so heartfelt and appealing, and in doing so he has carved out his own genre in modern music.

Even with his dress and stage presence, Bridges embodies the spirit of Mid-20th century music. Called a "soul man of the classic sort" by the New York Times, he struts on stages throughout the country wearing high-waisted slacks and wide collared shirts (Caramanica, 1). Despite the expectations of modern listeners, his classic persona, and devotion to it, is part of why people love him so much. His influences, after hearing a song or two, are apparent. Songs like, "River", "Coming Home" and "Better Man" show his younger audience what music used to be, and help his older audience to reminisce about artists like Sam Cooke, B.B King and Etta James. However, aside from comparisons such as this, Bridges' storytelling and songwriting within his music are testament to his differences as an artist, and his riveting vocals elicit emotion like any of the greats. Along with this, Bridges' willingness to be vulnerable in his music,

especially present in the song “River”, makes his performances and studio recordings feel intimate, and encourages the audience to reflect on their own love lives and past experiences.

During my research, a recurring theme in Bridges’ work is his dedication to his persona. It is seen in his music, lyrics, performance and presentation, and doing this has brought great success and a dedicated audience. However, the idea of dedication can be extended to other realms outside of one’s persona. For example, dedication to an emotion in the process of creating a song can make listening to it so much more intense. This is why basic pop songs don’t make us feel much; emotions are vaguely expressed and artists are hesitant to be vulnerable or explore musical possibilities. Pop songs can be written in a matter of minutes. Meanwhile, artists like Radiohead and Freddie Mercury demonstrate their dedication to emotional effect, and it is demonstrated in the way their songs make listeners *feel*. This is my plan in ISM. My time is limited, unfortunately, so fewer songs will have to be produced. However, I will ensure that these songs are emotionally impactful through experimentation and isolation, as prescribed by the great Kevin Parker.