

A few years ago, I discovered "Losing Grip" by that poseur, radio and Hot Topic-friendly, blonde-since-2005-but-formerly-a-redhead, Barbie doll Avril Lavigne. It was released as the fourth single from her debut album Let Go (2002).

I thought she'd never have anything good up her sleeve.

Ke\$ha has admitted she doesn't have any creative control, so at least you know what to expect from her. If that's the case, then I don't know why Avril never admitted to not having any creative control.

I mean, think about it for a moment. Avril literally believes she has a carefully crafted, rebellious persona when it is actually a shield, protecting her from the criticism that would inevitably come with admitting her reliance on the same ghostwriters and hit-making machines

who brought us Britney Spears, Usher, Boyz II Men, Pink (yes, Pink), Rihanna, The Backstreet Boys and Kelly Clarkson. I'm not kidding. A lot of her albums from The Best Damn Thing (2007) onwards have Max Martin, Dr. Luke and/or Shellback (all professional songwriter-producers in the music industry) involved, and it just makes no sense.

This song, on the other hand, is incredible. The way she intertwines the catchy vibes of pop rock with the raw, genuine energy of nu metal and post-grunge is absolutely brilliant. Her performance is seriously dynamic and she nails the song's themes of frustration and emotional chaos with perfection.

I mean, it makes sense that she would sing about feeling trapped, given that she would eventually marry Sum 41 frontman Deryck Whibley and feel trapped by the pressures of their

relationship. The expectations they placed on each other, trapped by their own self-doubt and insecurities that Deryck and his bandmates only pretended to even have prior to him and Avril's marriage. Avril made Deryck feel like he was losing control, losing his sense of identity and purpose, or vice-versa. When "Losing Grip" and "Unwanted" were made by her and producer Clif Magness as the first two recorded songs for Let Go, where they would be included as the first and sixth tracks respectively, Avril was actually aware that these songs were speaking to her. If only the same could be said for the rest of her discography...

"I'm with You", "Losing Grip" and "Unwanted" (or "Losing Grip 2.0") are the only Avril songs that have a purpose and reach out to listeners. Even if there is no artistry or emotion in them, these songs at least **relay** the illusion of artistry and emotion.

What I mean by that is most of most of Avril's songs are so vapid and shallow. "Complicated", "Sk8er Boi", "Don't Tell Me", "My Happy Ending"—they're all just shallow pop songs with no real substance or meaning behind them.

"I'm with You" is a heartfelt ballad about feeling alone and reaching out for support. "Losing Grip" is an angry anthem about feeling like you're losing control of your life. "Unwanted" features the same sloppy production and distorted guitar riffs as "Losing Grip", as well as raw, emotional lyrics about feeling unloved; unfortunately, though, Avril still acts like a douchebag.

Of course, I'd always known Avril Lavigne existed, being a child of the mid-2000s. Who could forget "Complicated" or "Sk8er Boi"—those songs were everywhere back in the day. But for whatever reason, I never dove

deeper into her discography. I remember when I used to be interested in, or assumed that I was supposed to like, everything that topped the charts. I didn't know what I liked when I was only an infant, and I saw Kidz Bop commercials being played all the time on Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network.

I could have ripped Avril the Hot Topic punk's poseur music apart way earlier in my lifetime, you know. But you already knew that I wrote her off as just another manufactured pop rock princess.

"Losing Grip" is a whole different story. This song is raw, unfiltered, pure emotional expression. It's like Avril ripped open her chest, exposing her heart, then grabbed a microphone and screamed out everything she was feeling—or would eventually go on to feel the moment she and Deryck Whibley got married. The pain, the

anger, the desperation, the helplessness. It's all there in this song, laid bare.

It was revealed that the cause of their divorce in 2011 would be some backlash from Sum 41's fans when they started dating. Some stated they hated Avril's music, saying it was too "pop" and "mainstream". But she never thought their opinions would actually come between her and Deryck.

Deryck's fans were never fully on board with their relationship. They saw Avril as an interloper, a pop star who didn't belong in their mosh pits. They were all like, "I can't believe you married her. She's so... commercial."

Deryck told her politely that Avril was the love of his life, so during their time together the Sum fans felt a stinging rejection inside.

Oh my God, the first time I played the song (first the instrumental, then the actual song and

finally a metalcore cover), I played it on repeat for hours, drinking in those masculated guitar riffs. With each listen, I felt a bit of the heavy weight on my shoulders lift. It was like it was giving me permission to feel all the intense shit inside me. I didn't have to hide or deny my emotions anymore. I could finally let them out.

But my moment of cathartic release was fleeting, because I already knew how awful the rest of Avril's discography is. So pussified and watered down compared to the three aforementioned songs. It's like Avril took the sound that made "Losing Grip", "I'm with You" and "Unwanted" so special, then wrapped it in cotton candy and bubblegum. Give me a break.

Avril was a sell-out from day one. I get that Avril probably sold out during production of Let Go to appeal to a wider audience and make more money. Maybe "Losing Grip" was too real,

too heavy and intense for the masses. Not punk enough/too metal for the pop punk community, too metal for pop audiences. Well, I'm not the masses—I'm someone who craves honesty and substance from my art. Avril just doesn't cut it. She should not have released "Complicated" as her debut single or at any point in her career, period. That song is an aural abomination, and yet the world ate it up like the starving peasants they were.

It's a shame. I thought I had found a true kindred spirit in Avril and her music.

She was the girl who ruined my life with her voice. It all started when she was paired with a production trio called The Matrix, who would go on to provide production for the likes of Korn, Britney Spears and Hilary Duff. They even made an album with Katy Perry before she broke into the mainstream with "Hot N Cold".

Since Arista Record opposed "Losing Grip" vehemently, The Matrix went out of their way to make her as corporate and unimaginative as possible.

"No, Avril, you're 17 years old, you don't know what you're talking about. 'Losing Grip' is not going to sell, it's too edgy and nu-metal. We need to sound more like Faith Hill and Shania Twain. You're not pop-friendly enough."

To make matters worse, when Avril signed to RCA shortly after Arista Records dropped her, she didn't want to be done with her nu metal/post-grunge phase. Under My Skin (2004), which featured the hit singles "Don't Tell Me", "Nobody's Home" and "My Happy Ending" (her only top 10 hit from that album), was terrible. When I listened to it, I thought maybe this would show the world what she was really made of. But instead, it sounded like a

cheap imitation of Kelly Clarkson and Evanescence. Just another pop-friendly album, presenting watered-down versions of nu metal and the already hated post-grunge. The production was too pop-oriented, the guitars sounded more like they belonged in a Weezer song than anything by Nickelback or Creed, the music was melancholic as hell, there was too much reverb,

But I guess "Losing Grip" is a unicorn—a diamond in the rough, a shining gem amidst a pile of polished turds.

Still, I'm eternally grateful for the song. It reached inside me, understood me and gave me a glimmer of solace and validation. I'll take that and hold onto it tight. Even if Avril never again makes anything as impactful, I'll always have "Losing Grip" to return to whenever I feel myself slipping into the black abyss.

I guess that's the power of art—how one piece, one song, one painting, one story can transcend and transform, even if everything else an artist creates is lackluster. It's enough to keep seeking, to keep opening ourselves up and receiving.

So I'll keep "Losing Grip" playing on repeat, letting Avril's voice be my guide. And when I'm ready, I'll start my search anew, hoping to find more artists who dare to create with unrestrained honesty and rawness.

Until then, I'll keep losing my grip, but at least I won't be alone.