

9. Listen to the Music

Frankie greatly enjoyed the music of Pan Fried Onions. She bought all of their albums and went to all their shows when they came to town. She liked this band because they have a very light summery sound, and they always seemed like fun people in live performances. However, as Frankie learned more about this band, she discovered that the lead singer regularly makes sexist comments in interviews and donates to political organizations that Frankie believes are harmful to women. Most problematically, the lead singer recently pleaded guilty of criminal harassment for stalking and harassing his ex-wife.

Frankie is upset to learn that one of her favorite bands features an artist whose personal beliefs, values, and actions are, in her view, deeply morally wrong. She is also surprised to learn that this discovery does not affect her enjoyment of Pan Fried Onions very much. She might not feel as inclined to attend their shows as she used to be, but she finds that she still enjoys their music when it comes on the radio, and she sometimes still feels inclined to listen to it alone or with friends. She has mixed feelings about this fact. Part of her wishes that she could stop liking the music so that she could wash her hands of this person entirely. But given that she does still like the music, is it wrong for her to listen to it?

On one hand, Frankie thinks that she can separate the music from the musician. Sure, Pan Fried Onions have songs about dating and relationships, but these songs include very little evidence of the beliefs, values, and behaviors that Frankie finds so deeply objectionable. Also, if she listens to the music in the privacy of her own home, or with friends who understand that listening to this music is not an endorsement of the person writing and performing it, she struggles to see how her behavior could, in and of itself, be harmful. On the other hand, Frankie feels uncomfortable singing along with this artist, and she especially feels uncomfortable socially or economically supporting him. Maybe she should be seeking out other artists whose beliefs, values, and behaviors she can more fully support instead.

Study Questions:

1. Is it morally acceptable for Frankie to enjoy Pan Fried Onions even though she thinks the lead singer has morally problematic beliefs, values, and behaviors? Why or why not?
2. Is it morally acceptable for Frankie to socially and economically support this band, for example by posting their music on social media or by purchasing their albums, merchandise, or concert tickets moving forward? Why or why not?
3. If the lead singer demonstrated that he had problematic beliefs and values, but not (as far as Frankie could tell) problematic behaviors, would that change anything? Why or why not?