

William Shakespeare lives...



Shakespeare “lives” through music...

With his mastery of meter and an indisputable way with words, it’s no surprise that musicians flock to William Shakespeare for inspiration. Greats ranging from Lou Reed to Bob Dylan have drawn from the writer as an influence, and new blood like *Titus Andronicus* have even taken their name from one of his works.



Musicians that were inspired by Shakespeare...



The real relation
The underlying
theme

Rush - “Limelight”

- **The Inspiration:** Rush may no longer be filling stadiums, but in its heyday of 1981 the band wrote a song about battling with success. “Limelight” opens up with a paraphrase of the speech “All the world’s a stage” in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*.



The Tragically Hip – “Cordelia”

- **The Inspiration:** Here’s another song inspired by characters featured in multiple Shakespeare plays. This time, the characters range from *King Lear’s* Cordelia to *Macbeth*.

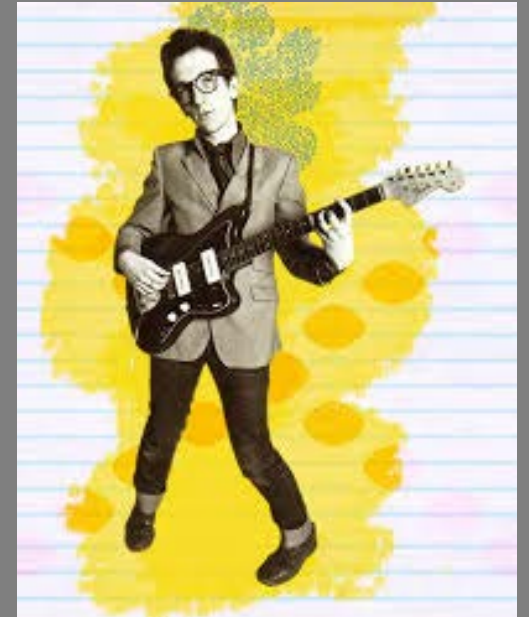
Lines Most Inspired by Shakespeare:

“It takes all your power
To prove that you don’t care
I’m not Cordelia, I will not be there”



Elvis Costello – “Miss Macbeth”

- The Inspiration: Costello’s song, with a modern take on the title “Lady Macbeth,” paints the guilt-ridden now-Queen in a sensitive light.
- **Lines Most Inspired by Shakespeare:**
“And everyday she lives out another love song
It’s a tearful lament of somebody done wrong
Well how can you miss what you’ve never
possessed, Miss Macbeth?”



Elton John - "The king must die"

- **The Inspiration:** In a song that discusses a person falling out of power, Elton John eloquently references plenty of Shakespeare's works including *Julius Caesar* (Caesar's had your troubles) and *Hamlet* (Widows had to cry).

Lines Most Inspired by Shakespeare:

"No man's a jester playing Shakespeare
Round your throne room floor
While the juggler's act is danced upon
The crown that you once wore"



Titus Andronicus - "Titus Andronicus Forever"

- **The Inspiration:** Although it isn't immediately clear from the lyrics in "Titus Andronicus Forever" that the words are based on the works of the playwright, the band's name, song title and lyric selection showcase the influence. Drawing on one of Shakespeare's least-loved plays *Titus Andronicus*, the band uses simple language to show war's lasting presence across centuries, chanting "the enemy is everywhere" over and over again. And whether it's set during Roman times (as the play is), The Civil War era (as the album is) or in modern day, the song's abrasive approach and message is universal.

Lines Most Inspired By Shakespeare: "The enemy is everywhere."

The logo consists of the words "TITUS", "ANDRONICUS", and "FOREVER" stacked vertically in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is centered within a white rectangular box.

**TITUS
ANDRONICUS
FOREVER**

Bob Dylan - “Desolation Row”

- **The Inspiration:** Although the specific narrative in Bob Dylan’s “Desolation Row” doesn’t necessarily follow one inspired by Shakespeare, many of the characters that paint the Dylan’s ultimate picture that is the song are plucked straight from his plays—*Hamlet’s* Ophelia and *Romeo and Juliet’s* Romeo.
- **Lines Most Inspired by Shakespeare:**
“And in comes Romeo, he’s moaning ‘You belong to me I believe.’”
“Ophelia, she’s ‘Neath the window, for her I feel so afraid”



“Ophelia” – The Band

- **The Inspiration:** For having such a bouncing, feel-good groove, “Ophelia” by The Band’s lyrics are nearly as dark as the words on the pages of *Hamlet*. Drawing directly from the madness that Ophelia goes through in the play, the band use this track to compare the character to a disconnected, hard-to-reach girl.
- **Lines Most Inspired by Shakespeare:**
“Ashes of laughter, the ghost is clear.
Why do the best things always disappear? Like Ophelia
Please darken my door.”



“Romeo had Juliet”- Lou Reed

- **The Inspiration:** Of all the songs on this list, maybe Lou Reed has the most straightforward adaptation of a Shakespeare piece with his modern, New York-inspired take on *Romeo and Juliet* with the opener for his 1988 album, *New York*. The track features the two lovers, Romeo Rodriguez and Juliette Bell drawn apart by families living on the East and West sides of the city.

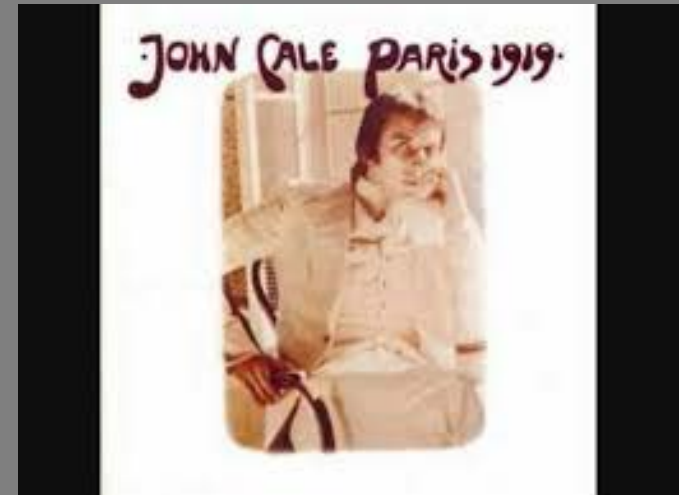
Lines Most Inspired by Shakespeare:

“Betwixt between the East and West he calls on her wearing a leather vest.”



“Macbeth” - John Cale

- **The Inspiration:** Plenty of tracks from former Velvet Underground members feature Shakespeare-inspired lines, but maybe the best one is John Cale’s “Macbeth,” which swaps out one of the most remembered lines from *Hamlet*. “Alas, poor Yorick” is traded for “Alas for poor Macbeth”.
- **Lines Most Inspired by Shakespeare:**
“Alas for poor Macbeth
He found a shallow grave
But better than a painful death
And quicker than his dying breath”



“Exit music (for a film)” - Radiohead

- **The Inspiration:** It's no secret that Radiohead's "Exit Music" was inspired by a Shakespeare work. In fact, frontman Thom Yorke had no problem using the modern remake, *Romeo + Juliet*, as inspiration to create a song for the closing credits. The result is a beautiful track that could end nearly any film.
- “I saw the Zeffirelli version when I was 13 and I cried my eyes out, because I couldn't understand why, the morning after they shagged, they didn't just run away,” Yorke has been quoted about the song. “The song is written for two people who should run away before all the bad stuff starts. A personal song.”

- **Lines Most Inspired by Shakespeare:**

“Pack and get dressed
Before your father hears us
Before all hell breaks loose

- Breathe, keep breathing
Don't lose your nerve
Breathe, keep breathing
I can't do this alone”



You can laugh
a spineless laugh,
We hope your rules
and wisdom
choke you,
Now,
we are one everlasting
piece.

A film strip is shown against a dark background. The film strip is illuminated from the center, creating a bright yellowish glow. The text "THE END" is printed in a bold, black, serif font in the center of the film strip. The film strip has sprocket holes visible on both the left and right sides.

THE END