

< Germany's Youth Word of the Year shortlist includes viral 'Doobie Scoot Canoe' meme

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≡ Transcript

AYESHA RASCOE, HOST:

Germany's equivalent of the Merriam-Webster dictionary awards a prize every year for the best new word or phrase as judged by a jury of teenagers. This year, one phrase on the short list has gone viral around the world - du bist gut genug. From Berlin, Esme Nicholson reports.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "GUT GENUG")

RAYAN DJIMA: (Singing in German).

ESME NICHOLSON, BYLINE: This is Germany's hit of the summer. The refrain, du bist gut genug, means you are good enough.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "GUT GENUG")

DJIMA: (Singing in German).

NICHOLSON: It's performed by singer Rayan Djima and rapper Shirin David, who teamed up with music producer trio Kitschkrieg, and it's gone viral, reaching millions beyond Germany despite the language barrier. In fact, the language barrier has generated multiple memes, the best known of which is "Doobie Scoot Canoe." But there's also this ringtone version.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

NICHOLSON: There are even memes of memes, with German producer Marti Fischer producing a country version.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

MARTI FISCHER: (Singing) Doobie scoot canoe. Doobie scoot canoe.

NICHOLSON: But the song's true sentiment gets slightly lost in mistranslation, so here's a quick explainer.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "GUT GENUG")

SHIRIN DAVID: (Rapping in German).

NICHOLSON: The strong hook of the catchy refrain cuts to Shirin David's rap verses, which sound like a self-doubting inner voice. She sings, I never do myself justice because I'm never fair to myself.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "GUT GENUG")

DAVID: (Rapping in German).

DJIMA: (Singing in German).

NICHOLSON: But Rayan Djima's falsetto pierces through the insecure rap again and again. His response is always, you are good enough. It's an anthem for an algorithm-driven world that seems to hold us all to impossible standards, be it looksmaxxing or perfect parenting. And it's a consummate earworm in English and in German.

(Playing piano).

I'm at the piano. See if you can hear the difference when I sing both.

(Singing in German). Doobie scoot canoe.

But maybe the earworm is intentional.

UNIDENTIFIED CHILD: (Singing in German).

NICHOLSON: Because it's nothing if not inspiring to hear your own kid belting it out. So now you've heard enough of you're good enough, maybe you believe it, too. For NPR News, I'm Esme Nicholson in Berlin.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "GUT GENUG")

DJIMA: (Vocalizing).

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