

# Effect on the british invasion bands history essay



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Throughout history, there have been a great number of instances where certain aspects of the time period had an effect on art forms of the time. A good example of this is how the decade the 1960's affected the British Invasion rock and roll groups. There were a great number of historical events that occurred during the 1960's, both positive and negative. One event that had already been taking place for five years before the decade even began was the Vietnam War, which was a violent conflict that pitted the United States and South Vietnam against the Communists of North Vietnam. The war began due to North Vietnam's efforts to unite itself with South Vietnam, thus making South Vietnam Communist. The United States did not want Communism to spread in Asia any more than it already had, so eventually the United States entered the war. The war was unsuccessful, however, since the United States troops were not prepared for the Vietnamese climate conditions and the guerrilla warfare tactics of the North Vietnamese.

While these major historical events were going on, rock and roll had just begun to take off. Although rock and roll didn't truly reach its creative peak until the 1960's, the genre actually grew and became popular in the 1950's. Rock and roll in itself has been thought by some to be simply a combination of country music and rhythm and blues. This is not the case, however, as the original ideas of rock and roll were in place for a long time, although it did not become a whole separate genre until the mid 1950's. Probably the biggest influence on how rock and roll became so popular is Elvis Presley. Following his influence, artists such as Little Richard, Buddy Holly, and Chuck Berry started what was called rock and roll's golden era. It wasn't until the

mid 1960's that rock and roll had another wave of change comparable to this one.

The British Invasion was a musical movement, which consisted of English rock and roll bands that found fame in both the United Kingdom and the United States. The British Invasion bands did not receive recognition right away, however. In fact, many bands attempted to copy the American style of rock in the 1950's, although many had little success. The reason for this is that they were unable to grasp the rock and roll feel for the most part. By 1962, some of Britain's youth was able to understand the rock genre and a few bands became popular in Liverpool, especially the Beatles. It was the Beatles, in fact, who was the first band to go to the United States and spread their own type of rock overseas. After their example, many bands followed. By 1964, Britain had become the birthplace of such popular bands as The Who, The Rolling Stones, The Yardbirds, and others. (Britannica. com - British Invasion) Between 1964 and 1966, the British Invasion bands had successfully brought their brand of music over to the United States and had numerous hits including Downtown by Petula Clark, Do Wah Diddy Diddy by Manfred Mann, Wild Thing by the Troggs, Satisfaction by the Rolling Stones, and many others. (Britannica. com - British Invasion)

Since the 1960's was a time period in which sex, love, violence, and drugs were running rampant, it is evident that some of these social factors of the time period had an effect on these bands. The Beatles and the Rolling Stones were two of the most popular British Invasion bands in both the United States and The United Kingdom at the time. They are also prime examples of social factors have affected the music of the time period. The Vietnam War, <https://assignbuster.com/effect-on-the-british-invasion-bands-history-essay/>

which was directly related to the Hippie Movement, was one factor that had an effect. Mass drug use of the time period was also a factor that had a major influence on the British Invasion bands. Besides all of that, the media also had a tremendous effect on many of the bands.

The Vietnam War was received with mixed feelings in the United States, and many people's opinions were negative. Although some people were for the Vietnamese struggle, many felt that the United States would not have the ability to win and believed that it was not the United States responsibility to fight for South Vietnam. One group of people in the United States, most generally called "Hippies," felt that violence in any form should not be present and also advocated environmental issues and love. Hippies also usually dressed in clothing with bright colors with flowers printed on them. They also tended to wear headbands and put flowers in their hair.

The hippie movement had an effect on the music of the time in which many of the British Invasion bands wrote songs that included many of the hippie ideas. For example, in the song, In Another Land by the Rolling Stones, the lyrics read, "In another land where the breeze and the trees and flowers were blue I stood and held your hand. And the grass grew high and the feathers floated by. I stood and held your hand. And nobody else's hand will ever do. Nobody else will do." (The Rolling Stones Albums) These lyrics show that the Rolling Stones showed feelings for nature and the environment, as well as love, which directly relates to the hippie style.

Besides the musical influence the hippies had on the British Invasion bands, there was also a fashion influence as well. In the most of the bands it was

typical for most of the members to have fairly long hair or dress in a hippie manner. An example of this is throughout most of the Beatles career in the 1960's, they had slightly long hair in the front, which was fairly consistent with the hippie style. Even though they began their career wearing matching suits, they later on wore clothing that sported more of a hippie influence.

Although the hippie movement played a major part in having an effect on the British Invasion bands, another major influence on many of the bands, which was also related to the hippie movement were the use of psychoactive drugs such as LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) and marijuana. LSD is a hallucinogen, which basically means that when taken, it puts the user in an altered state of consciousness. The sensations first occur about forty minutes after the drug is taken. After about an hour, the intensity level of the drug is at its highest and lasts for about four to five hours. People who have experienced LSD have said that during that peak point that their senses became stronger, and also sometimes seemed to mix. Also, while on the drug it appears as if inanimate objects can move and bend. (Psychological effects of LSD) It is also said that LSD can give the user a new dimension of creativity, which resulted in the use of the drug by many rock bands in order to come up with fresh, new ideas. Another psychoactive drug, marijuana is a plant that contains the chemical THC (tetrahydrocannabinol). THC is what gives marijuana its mind-altering control and gives what many people call, a "high". Most often marijuana is smoked, although it can also be eaten. Marijuana also is said to help people think more creatively.

Perhaps two of the most popular bands who had changed their musical style through the use of psychoactive drugs are the Rolling Stones and the

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Beatles. The birth of psychedelic rock is what brought about this change in these bands. Psychedelic rock began in the late 1960's and was the result of LSD use as well as feedback and electronic sounds. The most popular psychedelic rock band was the Grateful Dead, who actively used drugs during their concerts. (Britannica. com - Psychedelic Rock) The Rolling Stones and the Beatles both became influenced by this type of rock, and wrote songs that showed many signs of drug use. Between 1966 and 1967, The Beatles created albums such as Revolver, Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, and Magical Mystery Tour. These albums all had psychedelic influences in them. For example, in the song Magical Mystery Tour, the lyrics are, " Roll up, roll up for the Mystery Tour. Roll up, and that's an invitation. Roll up, to make a reservation. Roll up for the Mystery Tour. The Magical Mystery Tour is waiting to take you away, waiting to take you away." (The Beatles Discography - US Albums) It is evident that based on these lyrics the " magical mystery tour" is a marijuana high because the term " roll up" refers to rolling up a marijuana joint, and the " magical mystery tour" as well as " taking you away" refer to getting high. This is a major difference from the lyrics in earlier songs the Beatles had written.

The Rolling Stones also experimented with psychoactive drugs, which in turn affected their music. The songs in their album, Their Satanic Majesties Request, displayed a psychedelic side. In the song, Two Thousand Light Years From Home, the lyrics read, " Sun turnin' 'round with graceful motion. We're setting off with soft explosion. Bound for a star with fiery oceans, it's so very lonely, you're a hundred light years from home." (The Rolling Stones Albums) These lyrics have a very fantasy-like manner to them, in which

speaking of “fiery oceans” and “soft explosions” hint that they are the creative result of an LSD trip. Also, saying, “you’re a hundred light years from home” may have a hidden meaning of being high.

Though not directly related to the hippie movement or drugs, the media had an extremely large influence on the British Invasion bands. Television had reached an extremely high popularity by the 1960’s and therefore provided a new way for the bands to gain exposure rather than just live events, or even word from newspapers or magazines. Even though the 1960’s took place well before the MTV era, bands were still seen on television shows such as “The Ed Sullivan Show” and “The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson.” It was on these television appearances that the Beatles performed that truly started the British Invasion. Since the Beatles had instantly gained incredible amounts of popularity in the United States because of these television appearances, many other bands seized the opportunity and presented themselves to the American audience.

Media exposure also had a negative influence on some of these bands, however. For example, in an interview in the London Evening Standard, John Lennon of the Beatles said, “Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn’t argue with that; I’m right and I will be proved right. We’re more popular than Jesus now; I don’t know which will go first – rock ‘n’ roll or Christianity. Jesus was all right but his disciples were thick and ordinary. It’s them twisting it that ruins it for me.” (The Dark Side of Beatlemania – John Lennon) At that time it was not considered to be anything negative. Five months later however, Datebook, a United States magazine for teenagers reprinted that quote and featured it in an article titled, “The Ten Adults You  
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Dig/Hate The Most". Since the quote had been misconstrued by the media, many people in the United States interpreted it as though the Beatles were antichrists. Radio stations stopped playing Beatles' music on the air and many children around the country publicly destroyed Beatles records, memorabilia, etc. Other bands quickly learned that the media could easily twist and turn what one says, so they would have to be more careful.

In conclusion, based on these main points it is evident that the 1960's truly did have a huge impact on the British Invasion bands. The marijuana and LSD use by many of the bands gave their music a fresh, new sound that had never been heard before. Also, the hippie influences added a new way for social concerns to be expressed. Finally, the British Invasion bands also learned that the media can portray them in both positive and negative ways, based on how they manipulate words or actions.

After thoroughly researching the 1960's as well as the bands that made up the British Invasion, I feel that the sixties was one of the most eventful, tragic, interesting, and beautiful time periods in world history. The stories from the two major conflicts going on - The Vietnam War, as well as the struggle back in the United States between the war supporters and those against it are absolutely riveting. I have also found that there are tremendous similarities between the hippies and the authors of the Romantic Era in Britain. Both the hippies and the romantics felt very strongly about nature and expressed their feelings in art forms, the romantics through poetry and the hippies through song. I also have found similarities between psychedelic rock and the works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who wrote works such as Kubla Kahn and The Rime of the Ancient Mariner. Because of

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Coleridge's use of Opium, his works showed signs of fantasy, very much like the psychedelic style. I feel that not only has the 1960's had a major effect on the British Invasion bands, but I also feel that the bands themselves have drilled a deep impact into the culture of the 1960's as well as today.