

# Youth culture and the school of rock

[Education](#), [School](#)



The movie *School of Rock* is a film that revolves around a first class pseudo rockstar and bogus schoolteacher which Jack Black portrays in the film whose exploits to find a temporary way to earn money took him inside the classroom of a prestigious grade school which he transformed from an avenue of academic learning towards his very own band practice and rehearsal studio, complete with a new set of band mates to replace the ones that dumped him at the early part of the film (Christian Spotlight on Entertainment, 2003).

The movie takes a spin on education, and how it is important to teach students not just the sciences, math, history, English, literature, art and current events, but as well as the craft in looking more inwardly and less outwardly. While the seemingly unnoticeable improbable areas of the movie was not sought by most viewers, the poor manner by which the principal hires teachers which proves potent in jeopardizing the school's erstwhile good standing and high esteem is highly improbable considering that the protocol for hiring could have immediately alerted the principal about the fraudulent effort of Black.

But because of the effort to justify the point of the creators of *School of Rock*, viewers are forced to accept the fictional situation Black was into to see how both plot and conflict progresses towards the impending climax of the movie that threads the borderline separating propriety from rebellious attitude, norms and deviance, piety and blasphemy, and the overall outlook of what is right and wrong.

I. The extent of the critique that the movie School of Rock provided when it comes to criticizing the existing youth culture as portrayed in the movie can be found in the manner by which that particular age (prep school) was portrayed – including all of the noticeable characteristics of the age group the most important of which is compliance and being overly impressionable.

Obviously, the aim of the movie is to glorify rock n roll, and one of the most dedicated soldiers of rock n roll – Jack Black – was sent on another mission to educate the modern day heathens of rock n roll by describing children inside prep schools as nothing but geeks, grade-conscious smart alecks, bullies and insecure individuals. That is the main premise of the critique of the movie about the existing youth culture today, but that does not seem to be consistent with the current youth lifestyle. Thanks to technology, music became alive in the digital sphere, and can be accessed more conveniently.

Real-world kids with the same age and profile as the kids presented in the movie may have their Ipods on most of the time in between class lessons and at home, their Internet powered computers make them closer to more rock music and rock n roll culture. They listen to rap-metal bands like Linkin Park, Limp Bizkit and punk rockers like Avril Lavigne and Green Day. In the age of MTV, they do not just get to listen to their rock idols; they also get to see them even when there are no scheduled concerts.

Because of this, the attack of the movie on the existing youth culture and how it is bereft of rock can be merely deduced into something that the movie presumes. Youth culture is generally the result of the influence of the adults

that surround a particular youth and influence him or her either by directly shaping the behavior through conscious actions or efforts or as a result of how a particular youth's subconscious mind reacts to the experience he or she shares with a person, ultimately creating influence in the youth's mind and the culture to which it responds and reacts to.

Most of the parents portrayed in the film are consistently admonishing their kids to focus on studies and make little time for less important things, like playing the musical instrument and later on, listening to rock n roll albums (Sweat, 2008). The movie illustrates the situation of the youth and the adults when it comes to culture building and cultivating – the youth are generally in a greater position to be left without any other options or alternatives towards what culture to embrace, and that is why there are those who are subservient to the culture that is introduced to the youth.

In the movie School of Rock, the prevailing youth culture among the students is a culture that is characterized by the desire to learn, the desire to please the parents with good grades, the desire to go with the existing school program not generally because they were forced to like it but because they were left with very little choice in the options detailing the culture they may and can embrace, a situation that changed when Black arrived (Christian Spotlight on Entertainment, 2003).

Characters like Summer Hathaway illustrate the fact that while being submerged in a culture that leaves very little option for variety, selection and the exercise of free will, that still, there is a very good way of making the most of what is being presented to the individual and come out from that

experience a better person. The movie did not indicate that the children have bad parents; it just so happen that they did not know rock n roll in any of its types of forms that made the infusion of rock in their new school life as a totally exciting and new experience.

The culture of subservience and the characteristic of the students to adapt is the existing youth culture; rock and roll was not the symbolic youth culture – it was the fact that sooner or later a new influence will be introduced to the youth and to the existing culture and this new idea/belief/system will either replace the old culture or assimilate itself to the old culture and create an entirely new and different culture.

What happened to the students of School of Rock is the experiencing of the culture change that underwent transformation via the assimilation of a new idea/culture; when they learned how to enjoy rock, the change generally affected the outlook and not the aspects of the student/youth's life that characterizes the complete taking over of a new culture – remember that music is already part of the youth culture embraced by these children in the movie, as portrayed and established early in the film (Christian Spotlight on Entertainment, 2003).

They were excellent musicians who were all oddly enough exposed to classical music and a dose of pop music that included Christina Aguilera and Puff Daddy. And more importantly, they did not slack from studying and that the new musical education was showed as something that the parents later on happily integrated to the culture of their children, and it goes to show that

music is not the blanket culture but a section of the culture that is generally about malleability in adjusting to the changing times.

There are areas in the American youth culture criticism of the movie towards real life situation that is generally done in poor taste, particularly how some of the students were made to represent stereotyped characters in a modern day grade school – Lawrence, who was an Asian American student was stereotyped as the Asian geek; Billy was a gay stereotype (note the reference to Lisa Minnelli, another effort at stereotyping), a particular aspect of the movie that was also noticed by individuals making comments about the movie in the Christian Spotlight on Entertainment website.

All in all, the extent of the critique included the criticism on the use of extreme rigidity to make students obedient, compliant and disciplined which may not be necessary now since more and more schools are now taking a different approach towards a more liberal take on music as well as of life and how these are integrated in the overall holistic approach towards an improved way of student self development.

There was also an area in the criticism of the youth culture via the use of the movie that defeats itself – youth culture today is not in need of an out of the box experience to be able to experience pop culture because youth is pop culture, and rock n roll is not a musical elitists anymore that the youth are ignorant about it and the parents of the students are disturbed by the impact of rock n roll to the youth and the assimilation of this type of music to the youth culture.

Somehow, the writer and the director of the film made poor research about the drastic change in the personality of rock and how it has crossed towards becoming a mainstream entity that it is today – is rock music is indeed something that does not go well with learning and studying, then why is there a product called Multiplication Rock, wherein the lessons in mathematics are taught using rock music?

Why are there products like Toddlers Sing Rock N Roll which is being distributed as a for sale items that parents enjoy and even recommend having? Why is the discussion on rock n roll and the links to related articles found in educational and learning support websites like Lee's Summit? II. The movie, however focused on the rockstar dreams of the character of Jack Black, put a serious statement regarding the perceived 'stiffness', strictness and lack in personality found in some of the schools in America.

In the movie, it was clear that prior to Black's entry to the school system, the students are characterized as compliant to the system, and it was only Black and his effort to teach the kids rock n roll that became the avenue to which the students learned to infuse personal decision and personal direction in how their lives will shape out, and not depend entirely on the system that is designed to make them compliant and obedient members of the society (Christian Spotlight on Entertainment, 2003).

Black was trying to teach the kids one of the basic tenets of rock n roll, and that is the characteristic that allows for the constant challenging of the norms, which, according to Black, was an action that is known as 'sticking it out to the man'. Rock n roll was the instrument that Black used so that the

students were made aware of the fact that it is important to know one's self and reconcile one's self with the realities in life.

The effect manifested itself later on in the movie – there were go-getters and self expression was unhampered by the consideration that they should first please other people and consider first their opinion and say. Because of the breaking of the cycle that makes students compliant through the influence of the school system, some members of the class started understanding themselves and making reality check on their mindset.

Music was an effective tool because unlike the other aspects of the youth culture imposed and forced upon them, music is not force-fed to them; it was continuously opening new doors that allowed for many personal conflicts and personal problems to be addressed.

The character Zack Mooneyham found rock n roll as an effective way for him to express his artistic side by not just covering songs but also by getting the chance to write and play songs which he himself wrote; the character Freddy Jones managed to re-direct his anger and obvious penchant for hostility by becoming a full fledged drummer and percussionist; Tomika managed to overcome her insecurity about her weight problem while the rest of the band's support crew showed marked excellence in their particular assignment during the performance night.

This may not be included in the curriculum, but the children are learning different new things in a different way. III. The movie also indicated how much influence school is, not just in providing an avenue wherein the



students can harness their economically viable skills which they can use when they grow up and become members of the workforce, it also showed that the experiences of a student inside the school, as well as the culture wherein a student is a part of, are crucial factors in the formation of the cognition and drive of the student towards what he or she wanted to become as a member of the workforce.

Brian Falduto's character already knew what he can and cannot do, and the rock project allowed for him to showcase his potential. This was the case of Summer, who was also showing inclination in making the managing of the band a serious business that can lead to a full time career in the future. While these may all be temporary for these fictional characters, the point is that rock n roll gave the students a chance so that they themselves can see what they wanted to do most probably when they grow up, and get a crack at that with a head start this early.

The authoritarian conflict that the students are already subjected to even when Black was not even in their lives was mirrored by Black's identical authoritarian leadership when he came into the lives of the students, which was in irony about the fact that Black's character was all about going against the system and sticking it to the man.

But Black nonetheless proved to be the tipping point for the students who, through the short course of time they were together prior to the battle of the bands, were already showing signs of skills and competencies that they may or may not use as part of their professional capacity range once they started their active participation in the work and labor strata.

Conclusion – It is easily understandable that what Black was hinting on is that the youth culture of today is bereft of the impact and influence of old school rock artists, and it is because of Black's puritan outlook that School of Rock has become less and less of an effort to show how music influences lives and instead becoming the one man act of the shoving of Black of a particular type of music from a particular era of rock to kids who are exposed to the rock music of their age and time.

Black was worshipping his particular understanding of rock n roll so much that the criticism for youth culture did not have enough legs to stand on – it was being attacked by a work of fiction that does not engender musical heterogeneity, which was made obvious during the time when Black showed intolerance to the mere mention of musical artists who are not included in his rock n roll list. Black and his character was a snob, and at the end, he showed how he is not a teacher one bit by showing very poor characteristics and capabilities that is necessary for effective teaching.

In retrospect, the movie seemed like a criticism about the lifestyle of rock n roll puritans who cannot and would not go anywhere because of the culture that they imbibe. The kids, it turned out, are all right after all – the question is, can they say the same thing for the character of Black in the movie and his own culture? Maybe what needs a serious scrutiny and criticism is the youth culture of people like Black's character in the movie. They should stop seeing grade school student as idiots and innocents when it comes to music and perhaps with that, they may be able to provide a more youth culture critique.