

The 60-s – the birth
of rock and roll and
epoch of great
changes



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Speaking about rock'n'roll I would like first of all define the word itself.

Collins English Dictionary defines the term the following way:

a type of pop music originating in the 1950s as a blend of rhythm and blues and country and western. It is generally based upon the twelve-bar blues, the first and third beats in each bar being heavily accented.

It's hard to contradict the definition, but nevertheless, rock'n'roll expands far beyond the frames of just a musical genre. It can be equated to the philosophy and lifestyle of the whole generation. In my essay I will examine the reasons of origin and connections between the music and the epoch of its blossoming – the 60-s; study social, political and cultural foundations which have led to great changes in the life of the USA as well as of the whole world and conclude the consequences of these changes.

As it was mentioned in the Collins' Dictionary definition, rock'n'roll was born in 50-s as a blend of different music styles and trends. The epoch of 60-s as also takes its roots from the ideas installed by the beat generation of the 50-s, generation which fought against the Establishment and hypocrisy of the middle-class, generation which was the founder of a new lifestyle, that gave birth to the revolutionary 60-s.

The epoch of the 60-s can be defined as a mixture of many movements, ideas and trends of different kind. Generally it is known that 60-s were the age of revolution, rebel and freedom, freedom of a personality first of all. It developed into a series of social movements which were the reaction towards the outrageous cases of injustice, including racial, social and political violence. Among the most significant, the following social reactions

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can be distinguished: The Civil Rights movement – global movement against any kind of oppression against national minorities (mostly black people, Hispanic Americans and Indians). Discrimination and segregation was burning issue for America of that times and the movement started and headed by Martin Luther King was a serious landmark on the way of proclamation of absolute equality of the people. Movement for women rights brought equality to the women and men, and of course one of the most important movement, supported mostly by the youth was Anti-war movement, which gave a push to the development of numerous ideologies which were supported and advocated by the youth as ideas opposed to the war – such as sexual freedom (so-called “ free-love”), rock’n’roll music (Woodstock –was the largest music festival which was held under the slogan “ Three days of love, peace and music”) and numerous experiments and study of the psychedelics – substances which were supposed to help to open mind and to direct the look from outside towards the inside of the mind and consciousness. All these were hailed as counterpoise to the war in Vietnam, as a movement which promoted love and peace.

The anti-war movement in America has shown itself up in several manifestations among which important role played student activist movements such as: Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) – organization formed by American students, who protested against the nuclear weapon and wanted to change the society; they also participated in the Civil Rights movement; Free Speech Movement (FSM) – another student’s movement fighting for peace who was drawing the attention of the public to the problem. Beyond dispute ideological inspirer of the anti-war movement was

Martin Luther King, whose argumentation was based on purely moral and spiritual values.

The anti-war movement was widely supported and inspired by the hippies – the most numerous American subculture in the 60-s. Hippies emerged from the beat generation of fifties and were the successors of the ideology promoted by the famous inspirers and founders of the beat movement – Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs. Hippies rejected the so-called establishment, principles and way of life of the middle-class society, protested against the war, promoted the ideas of peace and love. The anti-establishment movement was stipulated by the social injustice, which was mentioned before, and was caused by the distrust to the ruling classes and false values of the middle-class society. The youth was disappointed by the hypocrisy and the double-standard policy, when social problems were neglected and the government was occupied by the spending money on military expenses to establish their dominance in the Vietnam. The protest embodied not only in the change of ideology, but also in the change of way of life with all its details from clothes to philosophy. Though the hippie movement was born from the beat generation, hippies went far beyond the limits of social protest. Hippies have created bright, colorful and impressive culture which has spread all over the world mostly due to the music and vivid art inspired mostly by ideology and psychedelics. The ideas of consciousness expansion were also connected with the popularity of eastern mystical doctrines and Zen Buddhism.

One of the manifestations of freedom, liberation and protest against the established rules and morals was sexual revolution, also known as sexual
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liberation. The movement challenged the existent norms and morals concerning sexual relationship between people, denied the idea of heterosexual and monogamous relationship, and disproved the idea of marriage. As a result, new doctrines have been promoted - homosexuality, polygamy and sexual experiments of all kinds.

In general, sexual liberation has loosened the strict rules of sexual relationship and sexuality in general. Women got right to make abortion and use contraception which was one more leap towards the inner and outer liberation of a personality and was also the part of Civil Rights movement. Public nudity has also become acceptable as a way of protest or self-expression. Against the background of general changes and breaking of the existent norms and rules, sexual revolution has found its place and fastened itself not only in the minds of American population but overseas as well.

The ideas of revolutionary changes and freedom are also interrelated with the idea of consciousness expansion and freedom of consciousness connected with the experiments with psychedelic drugs. Rapidly developing industrial society lacked attention to the spirituality of a person which was contrasted with the materialism. The big leap into the study of sub-consciousness was made when marijuana culture was supplemented by hallucinogens and psychedelics which became possible with the invention of LSD. LSD has been studied and popularized by many scientists and authors, such as Timothy Leary, Aldous Huxley and Ken Kesey. It has become a part of the culture which influenced music, visual and other kinds of art greatly. The need of consciousness examination was stipulated not only by the lack of attention to the spiritual side of life and development of psychoanalysis, <https://assignbuster.com/the-60-s-the-birth-of-rock-and-roll-and-epoch-of-great-changes/>

but by the penetration of eastern mysticism into the American society, Buddhist and Krishnaist's were gaining more and more popularity forcing the Christian tradition out. The freedom of a personality was admitted, but not only on social level; the personality was considered to be spiritual and multifaceted first of all.

The experiments with psychedelics have its use in the examination of human consciousness and acquisition of mystical experience, which gave a stimulus to the development and broadening of religious outlooks and doctrines.

The 60-s has been the epoch of great changes; it was the turning point in the history not only of the United States but of the whole world, as its heritage has expanded far beyond the borders of the US. First of all 60-s brought many positive changes, including freedom from national and gender oppression, establishment of the freedom of personality, widening of the views on life in all its manifestations and of course priceless heritage in arts – first of all music which still has its fans all over the world. Nevertheless 60-s was a contradictory time which regardless of all its inner brightness and vivid coloring has had serious drawbacks which resulted in blow of many important values that has led to the moral decay. Among them is the institution of marriage, whose value has been neglected. Moreover uncontrolled access to the drugs has led to mental diseases and disability of many people and even fatal outcomes.

The 60-s was the crucial point in the world's history, and its echo is still heard in many aspects of today's world life. The epoch gave its push to the

further development of the world including social, political, cultural and religious spheres.