

Music and the counterculture assignment

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Podcast Script The 1960s was the beginning of a cultural revolution in America. The counter-culture of the 1960s was viewed by some as “mankind’s best, maybe only, hope; others saw it as a portent of civilization’s imminent ruin.”¹ The nation’s youth began to find their voice and were slowly shaping the nation’s ideals. Music became “a medium of propaganda, identifying the young as a distinct force in society with unique values and aspirations.”² The counter-cultural movement began in reaction to many different changes in America; the children from the “baby-boomers” after WWII were becoming old enough to form their own opinions about the state of affairs in America and were deciding how they wanted to change it, violence in Vietnam was increasing and more Americans were being drafted, the generation gap between parents and their kids was growing, the Civil Rights Movement was still gaining ground and support, etc. Those who were considered bohemians in the fifties, known for their free love, drug use, and rejection of the general public, became known as “hippies. These accumulating events led to new attitudes amongst the hippies: “New attitudes towards jobs, towards education, towards entertainment and the arts. Basic shifts in the relationships between man and his environment, shifts that have affected every facet of the environment. Rock was at the center of these developments which were changes that best can be communicated not in words, but in music.”³ Symbols and music were sent to Vietnam to try and cheer up the soldiers that were fighting for their lives.⁴ The movement and music of the movement soon spread across the country and across the world.

Even popular music groups in Saigon began to perform the latest rock hits. The fusion of American music with Vietnamese bands was exactly what the movement was all about; peace, love, and rock 'n' roll. There were American bands that were making popular music prior to 1965 such as Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Janis Joplin, the Byrds, and others. These artists began to make music that protested the poor choices the government was making about handling the major events in America and the world. The Civil Rights Movement was still going on and tensions were rising.

In 1963, a major campaign was being held in Birmingham, Alabama where there were nonviolent protestors on one hand and police with clubs, fire hoses, and dogs on the other. Seeing these events, the movement really gained support from those sympathetic to their cause.⁵ However, this is just one example of police brutality on a harmless crowd. Dylan wrote an album called, "Times They Are a-changing" in which he writes of his political views concerning segregation and unjust acts of violence and murder against African American citizens.⁶ Violence was also increasing in the Vietnam War.

Creedence Clearwater Revival took a personal hit when lead singer, John Fogerty and drummer, Doug Clifford were drafted into the military in 1966 (however, his time in the service inspired the song "Fortunate Son" that depicted the view of the draft, which was released in 1969). The Byrds covered a song in 1965 that was written in 1962 by Pete for everything, including war and peace. The third verse portrays their view the best: "a time of love, a time of hate/a time of war, a time of peace/a time you may embrace/ a time to refrain from embracing."⁷ A lot of people already shared <https://assignbuster.com/music-and-the-counterculture-assignment/>

this belief, but this song put it into music, spreading it to those who did not see things this way. Music began to expand and bloom starting in 1964. The British Invasion began when The Beatles came over from the I-JK, bringing “Beatlemania” with them. They not only ushered in a new type of style for the world, in clothing, hairstyles, and music, they also brought with them the obsession and fan craze they experienced in the I-JK. In the midst of Beatlemania, Ed Sullivan travelled to London and saw the craze firsthand in 1963, before the Beatles came to the US.

Upon his return to New York, Ed Sullivan set up a meeting with the manager for the Beatles to have them appear on the show, arranging three show appearances. ⁸ These appearances led to more public knowledge of the Beatles in the US, the beginning of Beatlemania in the US, and to the beginning of the British Invasion. A multitude of British bands followed the Beatles to the US; Led Zeppelin, the Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd, the Who, the Zombies, the Kinks, Ten Years After, and so many more. Different styles were brought to America and brought out different genres in American bands as well.

Jefferson Airplane, the Doors, the Grateful Dead, Jimi Hendrix, and others began to develop a new style of music they called “psychedelic rock” or “acid rock,” named for the influence of drugs, especially acid, and the “trip” they took while listening to the music. Pink Floyd became one of these bands as well. Led Zeppelin brought in a style of “harder rock,” the Who brought in a new style of “punk rock,” in the late sixties, Black Sabbath brought “metal” to America. While many bands were bringing in a new genre, quite a few were conforming to popular American artists’ style.

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The Zombies and Ten Years After started making protest/" hippie" music, the Rolling Stones were performing songs that sounded like a mixture of a Led Zeppelin-like sound and a Beatles-like sound. Some American bands took a stronger and hard rock type of sound to protest songs. Janis Joplin used her strong voice to bring a rock edge to the psychedelic band Big Brother and the Holding Company. Creedence Clearwater Revival, upon the return of their band mates, began to use the harder edge to rock to write about their experiences and their view on politics.

So many different sounds and styles were being played around the US, it created a musical revolution. Then, in 1967, what seemed like the pinnacle of rock at the time, the Beatles released the album Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. It is said that Brian Wilson, bass-player and songwriter of the Beach Boys, " heard the album and wept" ⁹ for he knew that the Beatles had won. It seemed as though the intensity in music was growing as the unrest in America was growing. There were so many men that were dodging the draft. Over 200, 000 were accused of draft offenses. ⁰ Some men went out to burn their draft papers in public, others went underground or escaped to Canada. These protests of the draft spurred many to join the hippie movement. Many disapproved of their lifestyle of sex, drugs, and peace. " Of course the hippies were always glad of chances to shock the bourgeoisie, which made them seem more depraved than they were. " ¹¹ All of this built up to what was called the Summer of Love in 1967. Unfortunately, the easy targets for people, even though they had no material possessions. They became victims to muggings, rape, assaults, and even murder.

By October of 1967, the Summer of Love was over and many of the students returned to school. Although it wasn't that easy to kill the lifestyle and many people moved to communes where they could live this lifestyle forever. It seemed as though the hippie movement was dying down, but then the Tet Offensive was enacted in 1968 when the Viet Cong broke the ceasefire and tried to gain land. This broke out in a large battle into the war. Although this was a technical victory for the US (as the Viet Cong gained no territory in the attack), it was not viewed favorably by the public.

National leaders had sold the war as everything but won, and this fight broke out, proving them wrong and worrying the nation. Even newscasters were shaken. Walter Cronkite asked, "What the hell is going on? I thought we were winning this war." 12 Other outlets of media also printed their distrust and distaste. This unrest filtered down into the public and soon Johnson was seen as a liar and a failure. Chants by students were filling his head: "Hey, hey, LB], how many kids did you kill today? When Johnson announced he would not accept the nominations for a further term, people rejoiced thinking there would be an end to the bloodshed. However, that end would not come for years. The greatest culmination and example of the countercultural movement and music was the Woodstock Music festival in 1969. The festival had high hopes of congregating everyone in the nation who believed in peace to create a new society. After long debates with the city, the people around, security, etc. , everything was finally settled and the festival was to be held in Bethel, New York. Even before it began, it was a huge mess.

Staff grew from 200 to 750 as emergency personnel flocked to the festival, water and food soon on short supply, the first band was hours late because <https://assignbuster.com/music-and-the-counterculture-assignment/>

of traffic, and there were at least 300 cases involving adverse drug reactions all of whom flocked to the medical tents. ¹³ Despite this, drugs were considered a fundamental part of the Woodstock experience. By day 2, between 300,000 and 1.5 million people were at the festival. ⁴ There's no way to tell for sure since the ticketing system was proven useless. Due to the lack of space, food, and water, everyone began sharing everything, including drugs and sexual partners.

But rather than responding in jealousy, many just thought of this as the ending of the old world and the beginning of a new. Rain on the third day caused problems for performers, but seemed to just fuel the crowd more. Mel Lawrence, a Woodstock festival goer, said, "the rain created something that nothing else could've done. What it did was, it equalized everybody at that festival. Everybody was full of mud, everybody was wet, everybody was cold, everybody was together. Everybody experienced the same thing at the same time and had to make it work... I thank the Lord for that rain. ¹⁵ After much delay, the final artist Jimi Hendrix, who was supposed to play the day before but was delayed), played on Monday morning to the few thousand that remained. When he finished, Woodstock was over. In retrospect, it was a fairly peaceful festival; there were only three deaths (one from heroin overdose, one from a burst appendix, and one from a tractor running over a man in his sleeping bag), there were 2 births, and no reported violence. Woodstock was the knowledge that so many people had the same views as others, or a cultist following that just wallowed in the cesspool created by drug-fueled hippies.

After Woodstock, the movement lost some of the most influential artists such as Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, and the Beatles (who broke up). Nixon was now in office, but the war was far from over. As the sixties began to end, hippie seemed to be a dying breed, but there were still some that thrived and protested through the seventies. Even today, there are still some hippies that live in the nation. The music of the generation stayed and became an example for many, many bands to follow and also spurred the creation of other genres and sub-genres. It is impossible to imagine the '60s in the United States without rock 'n' roll. The music and now the lyrics were sometimes the backdrop but often the inspiration as well for love-ins, sit-ins, demonstrations, the destruction of draft cards, tuning in, turning on, and taking off. “ 16 The music of the sixties is characterized by the counterculture and vice versa. During one of the most controversial times in American history, music was there to help guide the nation through their feelings and thoughts.