

# Thoughts on music

## Introduction

### **A modern problem**

This subject never troubled our Christian forefathers. The diversity and ubiquity of all genres of music is only something that has been possible to broadcast in recent decades. Before, say, 1955 most people would have heard very little music encompassing very little variety.

### **Some historical background**

For centuries, even millennia, the only instrumental music people experienced was very pragmatic. In ancient times, people heard music associated with religious rituals and customs; this varied according to location and type of religion. So this type of music was only heard when you were attending a temple or a rite on a hillside or a grove. Then there was martial music, simple double-time instrumentals (mostly drums and horns) to accompany infantry and drive up adrenaline. Finally there would have been social music; that is, music which accompanied social events in the town or village, such as a wedding, a birth, a joyous event (e.g. wining a battle) or a funeral. Apart from the last item, dancing would have accompanied the music. Only the very rich, such as kings, would have been able to employ a musician whose sole job it would have been to entertain; such as a group of musicians at a monarch's dinner party or to impress a visiting ambassador.

In general, music was very similar within national confines. There would have been the various types of pragmatic music and national folk music. Many tunes that are familiar to us as nursery rhymes or simple melodies have a long international history. 'Frère Jacques' is a tune that has a similar counterpart in almost every nation. This is because it is a simple structure based upon a simple pentatonic scale. Thus the types of national folk music would have been familiar to people in that nation and they would have heard little else. Many would have heard music only rarely.

This began to change with the development of new music types as a few things advanced. The first was the development of new instruments and the improvement of old ones. Simple trumpets (such as ram's horns) later developed into crumhorns,<sup>1</sup> and later, valve trumpets and trombones. Keyboard instruments were devised, such as clavichords, virginals and spinets. Guitars developed from early lutes and harps.

In the Renaissance, families of instruments of similar qualities were developed and were used to correspond to voices of a similar range. In the Baroque period, string instruments were made in great variety and compositions for solo instruments began to arise, sometimes with vocal accompaniment. In the classical period instruments from each type were gathered to form orchestras.

By the Renaissance, small travelling ensembles were playing to various audiences with crumhorns, lutes, cymbals, tambourines and so on. Monarchs would have larger bands with more varied instruments. Music was beginning to be associated with mass

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<sup>1</sup> 'Curved' horns; similar to the reed of a bagpipe. A double reed is mounted inside the windcap. Blowing through a slot in the windcap produces a buzzing musical note. The pitch of the note can be varied by opening or closing finger holes along the length of the pipe.

entertainment; though for ordinary folk this was probably only experienced in annual fairs or big social gatherings.

It was with the development of musical notation and the orchestra that regular instrumental music began to arrive for the rich. Wealthy rulers began to sponsor composers and have permanent orchestras to impress their friends and provide music for dances and social functions. The composer began to be a prized member of the community. Thus the great works of classical music began to be developed that led to Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms and so on.

However, the ordinary working class people would not have had much access to this sort of music. It also tended to be localised around artistic centres, such as Vienna or Paris. Up to modern times most ordinary middle class and working class people had little access to intellectual music. It was for this reason that Sir Henry Wood instigated the Proms so that classical music could be made more accessible to ordinary people, and this only began in 1895.<sup>2</sup>

So right up to the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, ordinary people still only had local folk music, martial music, perhaps colliery brass bands, and some music heard at large social events. The scope of musical entertainment was very limited. If you lived in the Mississippi Delta and worked as a cotton picker, you would have heard none of this – ever! All you would hear of music would be a local, or itinerant, blues picker providing backing music on his own in some juke joint (bar) or whore house. This was why many of these bluesmen took up a national steel guitar or a resonator dobro, which had natural amplification and was much louder than an archtop or flattop wooden guitar.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century there was the development of musical halls and Variety in England. Here popular songs (often bawdy or humorous; sometimes with moral lessons) were sung by famous actresses and some comedic men, accompanied by a single piano or perhaps a very small orchestra. Often performers would accompany themselves, the greatest example (though 20<sup>th</sup> century) being George Formby who earned the equivalent today of millions of pounds even before his movies. Like many other Variety artists he got rid of his wooden ukulele for a banjo-ukelele, with a metal resonator diaphragm, to have four times the volume (necessary without a modern PA).

With the arrival of films, music started to more widely accessible. First there was the silent movies with a single piano, or perhaps an orchestral, accompaniment. But then with the talkies we began to have a huge range of orchestral pieces, often composed by classical composers. In time, movie music began to have credence among the intellectuals with people like Vaughan Williams' *Sinfonia Antartica* to accompany a film about Scott of the Antarctic.

Songs also proliferated, being the main constituent of Musicals. These were then distributed via the recent take up of radios in every home. Until the 50s, the Hit Parade was based upon the sales of music. Few had cylinder records and windup 78 rpm Bakelite records didn't arrive till the 40s. The popular appreciation of music was at home where everybody (even poor people) had a piano. Local singsongs would happen frequently where all the locals would gather at a house for a party, drinking and singing Variety (Music Hall) and Movie standards. I have heard stories of London families taking out windows and

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<sup>2</sup> The Henry Wood Promenade Concerts is an eight-week summer season of daily concerts aimed at the ordinary man. It consists of over 70 concerts, mostly at the Royal Albert Hall. A Promenade Concert originally referred to an outdoor concert where people could stroll around at their pleasure.

heaving a piano on ropes through first storey window frames just in order to have such a party.

But it was the radio that mostly made music universal unto the late 50s. For the first time working class families could have all sorts of music in their living rooms, albeit on tiny speakers or (at first) earphones. However, still there was quite a limitation on the variety of music played, usually at the discretion of quite stuffy BBC producers. In the 50s you never heard any blues and rarely heard any type of folk song (unless sung by Joan Sutherland in a classical way). In fact, you rarely heard any avant-garde classical music either. The music was very middle class and 'light'.<sup>3</sup>

The next technical development changed all this – the invention of the portable record players and vinyl 45 rpm (singles) and 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  rpm (LP, 'long playing') records. Before long, pianos had gone from most working class living rooms, replaced by a radiogram, a wireless radio combined in a large wooden box, on legs, with a record player. But more important still was the small Dansette record player, which could be carried around easily and was used in thousands of teenager's bedrooms. Another key invention was the transistor radio, enabling people (especially teenagers) have portable music available anywhere, from the bathroom to the countryside.

These technological developments allowed ordinary people to listen to any music of their choice, from Stravinsky to Max Miller. But at the same time as this technical revolution there was a musical and social revolution at the same time – Rock and Roll and the development of teenage culture. Teenage culture did not exist before the 1950s and it expanded rapidly since it was a commercial gold mine to be tapped.

Surely, this much is known to my readers and does not need extensive comment.

Early Rock n' rollers and Rockabilly players began to unite Gospel music, blues, and country into a new form. Other technical advances (the guitar amplifier and new types of electric guitar) allowed guitarists the necessary volume to be heard in a band. This had begun with jazzers Charlie Christian, Les Paul and others but eventually coalesced in the rock and roll band.<sup>4</sup> Though quiet by modern standards, it still had the ability to stir up the soul something rotten. Early Elvis records (the best ones – up to 1960) only have Scotty Moore on a Gibson Super 400 CES<sup>5</sup> and L-5 archtop jazz guitar (not a Les Paul or a Telecaster)<sup>6</sup> through a small amp (The Ray Butts EchoSonic amp); Elvis occasionally on an acoustic flat top; a string bass with no amplification; and a small drum kit. Yet the combined sound was electrifying. Elvis, reared in the Deep South, combined a love of Blues with an ability to sing ballads and country with a modern beat and a powerful charismatic persona. Nothing would be the same after this.

The rest is pop history that we need not develop. Instruments got better and louder, equipment got more powerful, and in ten years, rock musician trios (like Cream or Jimi Hendrix Experience) could literally blow the roof off certain venues and played the Royal

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<sup>3</sup> In fact one of the BBC channels was called 'The Light Programme'.

<sup>4</sup> Charlie Christian's single-note riffs prefigured rock n' roll guitarists by ten, or more, years. Other influential guitarists include: Eddie Durham (Jazz), T-Bone Walker (jazz/blues; the Hendrix of his day), and country guitarists Junior Barnard of 'Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys' and Bob McNett with 'Hank Williams and the Drifting Cowboys'.

<sup>5</sup> CES = 'Cutaway Electric Spanish'. It had two P-90 singlecoil pickups.

<sup>6</sup> Early guitars included Fender Broadcaster of 1950 (later Telecaster), the Gibson Les Paul of 1952, or the Fender Stratocaster and the Gretsch Duo Jet (actually a semi-solid design) of 1954.

Albert Hall with no difficulty to crowded audiences.<sup>7</sup> From this point modern pop music proliferated in every direction to the huge variety found today in every genre.

### **Back to the point**

Until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, most Christians had a restricted ability to hear musical forms and heard music comparatively rarely. In any case, music was entirely pragmatic and had little to do with personal choice or even personal entertainment. Musical forms were not an issue that needed to be addressed by theologians.

Neither did musical forms create an occasion for sin (or perhaps very rarely and only by context).<sup>8</sup> Most instrumental music did not carry with it certain baggage or the agenda of the composer or performer. Only occasionally would music have had an attachment to sin, such as bawdy songs sung after rugby matches or in a pub late at night. Most church people had no contact with suchlike.

Now the situation is entirely different. Individuals have a wide array of music, which they can carry around with them on their Ipad or even their smartphone. Radios have an enormous choice of radio stations, each one playing a very wide choice of instrumental music. Television programmes and adverts produce large amount of music of all types, some in the background, others up front.

Ordinary people today are assailed by music in every format, of every style, in every application. Some of this music is innocent, some is edifying, some is stimulating, but a great deal of it is damaging. What is the Christian to do?

Since this is a new phenomenon, it behoves teachers to give this some consideration and come to some conclusions. This is where there is great confusion and not a little controversy. It is a very subjective and difficult matter, with believers in disagreement.

## **The wrong approach 1 - over simplistic condemnation**

What does a Christian do in the face of the many genres of modern music? What is damaging and what is edifying?

The easy answer is to simply condemn all modern music as satanic, with an especial reference to rock and rock n' roll music. This is exceptionally stupid. Do we condemn computers because they are a modern invention that is often used to view pornography? Do we condemn electronic books because most of the content is un-Christian? Christians are not automatic Luddites or Philistines.

This approach is so fallacious that it is laughable. Just where do you draw the line as to what is modern and satanic? 1960? 1950? 1940? What about 1890? Some of the avant-garde classical compositions of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century are far more insidious to me than an innocent Elvis song lamenting a train taking his girlfriend far away. Such modern classical works often use extreme dissonance and odd tempos, or even lack any root key, and seem to me possibly more negative and damaging than the Beatles singing, '*All you need is love*'. Some polyphonic free Jazz from the 40s and 50s drew no accusations of being satanic at the time (as far as I am aware) but are very uncomfortable to listen to and are not edifying.

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<sup>7</sup> Before amplification, volume was gained by multiple instruments playing the same notes; hence large orchestras of up to 100 musicians.

<sup>8</sup> By this I mean songs that were unedifying, such as could be sung in Music Halls or brothels.

In fact, what about the performances of classical composers like Liszt or Paganini<sup>9</sup> whose lightning fast solos were just sheer displays of pride and demonstrations of their abilities. This is just the old nature of man being displayed to an audience; is that not satanic?

What about some of the works of Wagner, which were celebrations of jingoistic national pride, to say nothing of his abuse of women or his portrayal of the devil in the *Faust Overture*. Then there is the overt astrology and spiritualism of Holst<sup>10</sup> in the *Planets Suite* or Hinduism in his chorales. What about the hedonistic and foolish lifestyles of Mozart, or the homosexuality of many composers?

The life and character of most baroque, classical and romantic composers is not edifying in the least. Is all this not satanic at root? Yet many Christian apologists demand that rock music is satanic and exhort people to listen to classical music. What nonsense!

The fact is that all musicians are fleshly and most are non-Christians. We have to make a decision about what to listen to on an individual basis.

Many American Christians are big fans of Country and Western, Country, Americana and Bluegrass, believing that these are far less spiritually dangerous than rock music because they arose in conservative religious states. Are they joking? Check out the scandals of many Country artists: their multiple divorces and adulteries, their drug abuse, their womanising, their alcoholism, their fraudulent business practices. Some singers and players literally drunk themselves to death. Only a few (like Johnny Cash) saw the light and repented of this, changing their ways.

All music genres have their good guys and bad guys. Some characters, with shady lifestyles, perform fantastic music while some artists who are clean-living are not especially gifted. Sometimes God gifts a useless person (like Mozart) just to show that the gift of music is divine and not human.

### **Conclusion**

We cannot make simple generalisations about most music genres without a sound reason;<sup>11</sup> that is just plain foolish. Actually, it is a far more complicated matter. One either has to shut their ears to all music (which is impossible today; it is everywhere) or come to some sane conclusions as to what to listen to and why.

There are no simplistic answers to the original question.

## **The wrong approach 2 - universal inclusion**

The second approach is to simply accept virtually everything on offer. This is the method of many in the New Evangelical movement, represented by writers for *Christianity Today* magazine, for example. Columns have appeared in this journal extolling the virtues of Rap music in church. [I will explain later why this is wrong.] It may be difficult to come to a

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<sup>9</sup> Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840): Italian violinist and composer. His virtuoso violin recitals, including widespread use of pizzicato and harmonics, established him as a major figure of the Romantic Movement. He was so proud that he would often deliberately and ostentatiously break a string and still complete the part.

<sup>10</sup> Gustav (Theodore) Holst, (1874–1934), English composer, of Swedish and Russian descent. He made his reputation with the orchestral suite *The Planets* (1914–16). Other notable works: *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda* (1908–12).

<sup>11</sup> Some genres celebrate darkness, evil, negativity and even Satan for the sake of it. Such can be dismissed as dangerous. This is discussed later.

conclusion regarding some music genres, but Rap is not one of these; indeed, Rap music is one of the most easily evaluated genres due to the repeated formats used in lyrics, let alone textural attitude.

Along with a laissez faire attitude to many worldly influences, many modern Christians do not even think about evaluating any sort of music, other than by their own taste. Indeed, many modern churches have loud music bands dominating their worship times with various modern genres playing out. In fact, it is common to hear that old-fashioned hymn tunes are a turn-off for young Christians today and rock music is a necessity in church.

However, if some music is damaging (and I maintain that it is) then we have to come to some solution about what to dismiss; we cannot accept everything.

## Foundational Biblical principles

### Regarding church services – there is no instrumental music

We have explained this in many papers on church matters and need not rehearse them here. The simple fact is that the NT does not mention any music in church at any time. The apostles never taught on it, nor gave any precedent to use it. The synagogues had none, which were the early model for church meetings. In fact, instrumental music did not appear in any church for about 150 years and was not widespread in Roman churches until 1250 (organs). Protestant churches avoided instruments for many more centuries, in fact most Reformed churches had no musical instruments even in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Calvin, Luther and Spurgeon condemned them.

The apologetic used today for instrumental church music is based upon Old Covenant forms, which have passed away. The massed choirs and orchestra of David and the temple were an integral part of the Old Covenant system, along with priests, priestly vestments, stone buildings, bloody sacrifices, drink offerings, fasts, festal days and pilgrimages, which have all been rescinded by the cross of Christ. They all had a fundamental symbolic (typological / shadow) meaning and so passed away when the reality of the Messiah came. If you insist that an orchestra is acceptable in church today, then you can also have vestments and bloody sacrifices – they are interconnected integrally. But the NT tells us that these have all passed away (Heb 8:13; 2 Cor 5:17) – all of them!

So, we do not have to worry about what type of music to play in church – there is none at all. But there is singing of godly hymns and spiritual songs. God wants to hear the voices of the Lord's people raised in praise with nothing worldly to mar it.

### Individual choice of conscience

One person esteems *one* day above another; another esteems every day *alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. Rm 14:5

Music is one of those matters that everyone has to come to their own conclusion about. This is exactly the same as deciding which books to read, which TV programmes to watch (if any) and what newspaper to read (if any). No one can make these decisions for you.

There was no multiplicity of genres in the first century and little social musical entertainment; it was all pragmatic. In fact, most people did not have any spare time to indulge just doing nothing, listening to music, even if they could. So Scripture does not address this matter head on.

Therefore, we are left to our own devices to come to conclusions about this, taking general Scriptural principles in mind and trusting in the Holy Spirit who, 'will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.' (Jn 16:13-14)

### **Some have liberty of conscience others have a weak conscience**

Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* no other God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us *there is* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom *are* all things, and through whom we *live*. However, *there is* not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat *it* as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. 1 Cor 8:4-13

Regarding things indifferent, i.e. those things which Scripture neither forbids nor condones, there is variation amongst Christians. Thus certain rules must apply.

- The conscience of someone else does not command my conscience. It is an individual decision.
- No one can force me to come to a certain decision.
- Strong believers can know a certain liberty of choice. Those Corinthian believers who were mature knew that the idols in Corinth were nothing and that the meat offered to them was just meat. Therefore, the cheap cuts in the market (that had been previously offered to an idol) could be enjoyed.
- Weak believers have to be true to their character or they become hypocrites. Though they should seek to develop and strengthen their weak conscience through teaching, they must initially accept their position and this must be respected by stronger believers in fellowship with them.
- Therefore, strong believers must not defile the conscience of weaker believers in their choices. Thus if a Corinthian strong believer invited a weak believer to dine, he should not present food offered to idols which the weak believer could not eat, nor demand that he should eat it. The strong believer restricts his freedom temporarily to help the weak believer.

In choices of music, some believers can find no problem in enjoying music that weaker believer have problems with. In fellowship, the strong believers should restrict their freedom for the sake of the weaker believer.

### **Don't judge others on matters where Scripture is silent**

Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another? Jm 4:11-12

Judging is important in the context of judging error and false ministry, but within the body we do not judge others on matters like music. If a brother seeks to obey the Law of Christ

and walks in the Spirit, but enjoys music that you think is bad, you have no right to judge him or command him to change. He stands or falls by his own Judge, the Lord. However, exhorting him regarding the nature of the problem is a good thing since it is aiding his spiritual development and telling the truth.

### **Don't be legalistic**

'Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.' He answered and said to them, 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, "Honour your father and your mother"; and, "He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death." But you say, "Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me *is a gift to God*' -- then he need not honour his father or mother." Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.' Matt 15:2-6

Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, 'Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?' He answered and said to them, 'Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: "This people honours Me with *their* lips, But their heart is far from Me. In vain they worship Me, teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men." For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men -- the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.' He said to them, '*All too* well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.' Matt 7:5-9

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. Col 2:8

Legalism is where we set up our own human, fleshly rules and regulations and expect other believers to submit to them, even if they have no Scriptural support. Many church traditions are mere legalism.

Some churches make rules about what Christians can do in their own private space, such as what music to listen to or what films to watch. This is legalism. It is beyond the boundary of Scripture. We can exhort, advise, encourage and even admonish, but we cannot make laws.

### **Choose what is honourable**

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy -- meditate on these things. Phil 4:8

This is clear and obvious without any lengthy exposition. For clarity, the words mean the following.

True: *alethes* – true, loving the truth, speaking the truth, truthful.

Noble: *semnos* - august, noble, venerable, reverend, honourable.

Just: *dikaios* - righteous, upright, virtuous, keeping the commands of God, innocent, faultless, guiltless, approved of or acceptable of God.

Pure: *hagnos* - reverence, venerable, sacred, pure, chaste, modest, pure from every fault, immaculate, clean.

Lovely: *prospiles* - acceptable, pleasing.



Of good report: *euphemos* - sounding well, uttering words of good omen, speaking auspiciously.

Virtue: *arete* - a virtuous course of thought or feeling and action, virtue, moral goodness, any particular moral excellence, modesty, purity.

Praiseworthy: *epainos* - approbation, commendation, praise.

### **Do everything to glorify God**

You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. 1  
Cor 6:20

This is a high calling. It forbids doing anything at all which does not glorify God. Therefore, all our motivations, all our thoughts, all our words, all our actions, all our hopes and all our fruit must be based upon the glory of God and not a mere expression of self.

## **Key principles regarding music**

### **There is no such thing as Christian music**

I'll say it again, 'There is no such thing as Christian music', whether a specific style or because it is used in supposed worship. There is good music and bad music; music offered to God and music abused by the world; music used to bless others and music used to puff up the self.

*What is Christian and what is not?*

We first have to ask ourselves, 'what is Christian anything?'

Christians are the people of God who straddle two universes; they are in the kingdom of God spiritually (it has not yet come materially) but they are also in the world. This means that many things they are involved in are spiritual, neutral, worldly or sinful. It is the process of sanctification that enables godly Christians to learn what is what.

### *An example of neutrality*

A neutral action, for example, is the eating of food to stay alive. There is no set Christian diet and no NT dietary laws (apart from not eating blood, which is a creation ordinance emphasised since the flood).<sup>12</sup> The NT makes it clear that all normal food is acceptable, if thanks are given for it. Those who insist on being vegetarians can choose this for themselves but not demand that others follow suit. God enjoys meat (Gen 8:20-21; Ex 29:18; Lev 1:9), so did Jesus who ate the Passover roast lamb and Paul tells us it is acceptable (1 Tim 4:3-4). So food is neutral. We choose what is best for our bodies.

Now because we are to glorify the Lord in our bodies, we should do some research to find out what is damaging and avoid it. Excess transfats are dangerous and ought to be avoided, for example. Things that were safe once are not now (e.g. fish that has excessive levels of mercury and heavy metals). Fish diets are now out of the question.

So, food is neutral to the believer, but he should still take care to discriminate in what he eats and use caution. You reap what you sow. [Of course, greed is a sin but that is a problem of addition not of food.]

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<sup>12</sup> Gen 9:4, 'you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.' Cf. Deut 12:16; Acts 15:20, 29.

### *Another example*

A newspaper that is just good journalism and news reporting is another example of a neutral object. Newspapers that have soft-porn images, salacious stories and tell lies are not neutral but sinful. So, a believer does not have to read only a certain conservative newspaper but can choose any genuine one (if he can find one). UK Christians do not have to read the Daily Telegraph or the Daily Mail for example. No one can tell you what newspaper to read (excepting to avoid sinful ones).

So, much in this life is a matter of choice based on knowledge and experience.

### *Artistic forms*

When it comes to art it becomes more difficult, especially as individual's sensibilities are very different.

Artistic things are, mostly, very subjective. Sure, some features are crude and plainly wicked but most are not obvious in their design. In this section we must consider, poetry, writing, art works, graphics, and music.

First we must remove that which is clearly wicked because it is obvious. In art, the graphic images of Aubrey Beardsley and the life studies of Egon Schiele are obviously pornographic and compatible with the lascivious lifestyle of the artist – despite being technically brilliant. In writing, the works of The Marquis de Sade, Gustave Flaubert or Charles Baudelaire require similar condemnation. Such works should obviously be avoided by believers. The works of Aleister Crowley stand condemned for its wickedness and Satanism. All this is clear (though I know of believers that do not see this).

Then there are forms that are neutral but provocative to some. In classical art this can include nudity that is depicted in an entirely asexual way, often to symbolise something like truth or grace. The only way that such works can be seen as pornographic is in the mind of a sick person. Then there are written works that include descriptions of something unpleasant, such as fornication, adultery, torture, capital punishment etc. that are not written to titillate but to describe an event, explain a subsequent action or make a political point. The torture and capital punishment of Robert-François Damiens, described in *Tale of Two Cities*, is a case in point.<sup>13</sup>

After these obvious matters, it becomes very difficult to make general counsel. Individuals have to make up their own mind and suffer the good or bad consequences. Is this object before me neutral, good or dangerous?

### *No inert object is Christian in and of itself*

What is certain is that there is no such thing as Christian art, music, poetry or writing, unless it is very plainly obvious. The Scriptures are Christian because God wrote them by inspiration through men. Commentaries on Scripture may be 'Christian', but they are marred by the mistakes and weaknesses of men. Some are plainly wicked, since they deny the authority of Scripture.

The only thing in this life that is truly Christian is that which is in Christ, guided by the Spirit of Christ and performed in holiness. That leaves very little that is truly Christian.

Even things done by Christians in the name of Christ may not be 'Christian' at all.

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<sup>13</sup> Charles Dickens; *A Tale of Two Cities*, Book the Second, Chapter XV.

The worship of Charismatics that is dominated by worldly and fleshly forms, participated in by many who are not really believers and which is used as an occasion for fleshly emotionalism is not Christian in the slightest. In fact, it could be demonic (and often was in the Toronto Blessing period).

TV programmes dominated by televangelists demanding money in the name of Christ is not Christian in the slightest. Churches centred upon powerful men hosted in big buildings that wasted millions of God's money which practice unbiblical rituals is not Christian.

If outwardly Christian things involving supposedly evangelical churches may not be Christian at all, then other things certainly are not either.

There are no Christian CDs. I suppose there are two types of this: supposed worship CDs, which are recording of churches worshipping, and recordings by 'Christian' artists seeking to say things about God. Now to be Christian, such things need to be entirely in Christ and led by the Spirit in every detail. Firstly, the lyrics need to be absolutely Biblical in every respect (even with worship CDs this is not the case). Then all the people involved in making the sounds must not only be Christians but must be in the Spirit and not the old man. This is impossible. Then all the people involved in producing both the recording, manufacturing the CD and marketing the product must all be believers in the Spirit. This is not possible. Therefore, it can never be possible that a Christian CD could ever be produced. But in fact, the qualities of most 'Christian' CDs have nowhere near this complement. Producers are often non-Christians, record companies are run by wicked corporations and even the Christian life of the artists is questionable. Thus even CDs supposed to be based on the Bible and Christian in ethos cannot be truly Christian. And this is the best that can be offered. [All this is apart from the fact that the concept of marketing what is worship (if it were) to be used as easy listening entertainment after the fact is utterly unbiblical. Worship is not entertainment; and entertainment is never worship.]

Then there is the 'Christian' music scene. This has nothing to do with Christianity at all. This is the recordings of people who are supposed to be believers (many are not) who make recordings, but not specifically about Christian things. They are merely mimicking the secular pop charts but staffed by 'Christians'. This is a purely commercial enterprise. Now Christians may choose to listen to this, there is nothing wrong with that (normally) but it is not Christian.

Nothing inert is Christian; whether music, art, writing. Anything made by man is subject to sin, frailty and foolishness. Why? Because of total depravity.

Scripture tells us that man can do no good work whatsoever (Rm 3:10-18). Nothing man can do can please God in any way. God is only pleased by Christ and what is in Christ. However, Christians today have a new nature and an old nature. When they are in the new nature, in the Spirit, abiding in Christ, they please God. When they are in the old man they are fleshly and serve God's enemy. A work done by a Christian may be good or it may be bad depending on the source and motivation of the work. That which is flesh is flesh. Only that which is inspired by the Spirit has any value. Only those abiding in Christ can bear fruit.

No performer can honestly say that all their lyric writing (every choice of word), all their choice of chords and melody, all their recording, and all the mechanics involved in that recording are in the Spirit, 100%. Thus there can be no guaranteed Christian music.

So, let's not talk about Christian music; there is none. So choosing what to listen to is even more difficult. There is music that tries to be good (good taste, good performance, well written, positive subject matter etc.) and music that is just bad (even technically good music is ruined by subject matter that is damaging), and that is the matter of it.

Now all that we have said so far equally applies to movies.

*Aside: What about spiritual songs?*

Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. Eph 5:19

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Col 3:16

Someone will say to me, 'What about spiritual songs; surely they are examples of Christian music.' I am afraid they are not. Paul is talking about songs sung in church services to edify people and we know that there is no instrumental music used in the local church. So Paul does not have instrumental music in mind here. It is 'singing and making melody' and 'singing with grace'.

Paul lists psalms, hymns and spiritual songs as offerings to the Lord in worship. There has been much discussion about what these types actually mean. My view is that psalms mean literally what they say, psalms from the OT. Hymns are religious songs that are not psalms; i.e. songs of praise and worship written by saints (we see snippets of such in the NT). Spiritual songs (or rather 'odes') refer to improvised songs made up on the spot to worship God (e.g. sung prayer).<sup>14</sup> I believe that this was common in the early church and I can personally testify that it is perfectly possible to do this today.

So, these two passages do not hinder my contention that there is no such thing as Christian music.

**People who make good music have a gift from God. The fact some misuse this gift is beside the point; the best musicianship is a gift.**

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Jm 1:17

We need to be clear here; this musical (artistic) gift is not a gift of grace (grace only comes from the cross and goes to believers) but is a gift of creation. There is no such thing as 'common grace', that is a fallacy developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in order to enable Protestants and Catholics work together in an Erastian Utopian cause in The Netherlands. It was then mixed with the equally fallacious 'Free Offer' in American Presbyterian churches influenced by Dutch theologians in 1924, and then universally accepted in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. Neither the Free Offer, nor the concept of common grace as presented today, has any Biblical warrant.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> I believe that the original church chants and plainsong were formalisations of early church improvised singing.

<sup>15</sup> Common grace today is usually presented as enabling sinful men to do genuinely good (and spiritual) things that are approved by God (contra Rm 3:10), that sinners can please God by works; but falls short of imparting salvation. It arises from God's love to all men (an unbiblical notion (see Ps 5:5-6, 11:5). References to a 'general grace' or a 'common grace' in past theologians always means the blessings of providence that fell equally on all men (rain, sun, seasons, food, life) and did not mean what modern people mean.

The gift of being proficient in making music is a gift of creation, just as any other gift in society. Some can build, some can teach, some can paint, some can make music. It is part of the character that God gives all people. While some talents come from training, some people are simply gifted in a certain area; and in the arts gifting is key.

As with all gifts from God, the purpose of them is to be used in God's service and to his glory, and also to be used for the good of people. Now this does not mean that they have to be specifically 'Christian'. A talented chef uses his gifts to teach people how to cook and to provide good quality food for customers. That is serving people. Serving people in the name of Christ, even as a chef, is a good work that honours God. So, a chef does not have to feed a church in order to be doing a good work; he just needs to do his job in the service of God. Of course, the problem with all sinners is that they do their job to make money rather than serve God.

So, being a good musician does not mean playing in church. There is no instrumental music in church meetings. It means playing in a way that glorifies God. This can be done worshipfully on your own or playing to entertain a group of people and doing them good. Nothing encourages people more than a communal good singsong. People who led singsongs in London Underground stations during the Blitz<sup>16</sup> did a good work (as far as unbelievers can) in keeping up the moral of suffering people; it was doing good to others – a clear Christian principle (Gal 6:10).

So the best of music always glorifies God, but good music also helps people in various ways.

### **Art gets straight to the heart**

You shall have a song as in the night *when* a holy festival is kept, and gladness of heart as when one goes with a flute. Isa 30:29

All artistic forms connect to the heart of people directly, but this is especially true of music. One can simply hear a short melody and be immediately transported in one's soul. This means that music is very powerful in affecting moods swiftly. Music can drive soldiers to war but can also soothe a demonic frenzy.<sup>17</sup> A person can be perfectly happy but hear some music associated with a past emotional trauma and be immediately depressed. Music is potent.

This means that Christians need to consider, very carefully, the effect of art forms that they concentrate upon since they communicate directly to the heart without intellectual filters (unless the will is exerted to filter it). The music you let in will change you. If the music is neutral, the effect will be little. If the music is good, it will uplift you. If the music is bad it will damage you.

### **What about gifted people that exhibit bad character?**

And he [Samson] judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines. Jud 15:20

The fact that God uses flawed people is proved from very many OT characters; perhaps the clearest example is Samson. That he was gifted is beyond dispute, that God used him to defeat the enemies of the Lord's people is also beyond dispute. Yet he was a deeply flawed character who consorted with harlots.

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<sup>16</sup> The heavy bombing of London by the Luftwaffe.

<sup>17</sup> 1 Sam 16:23, 'And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him.' [Note 1 Sam 16:14, 'But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him,' i.e. the Lord commanded a demon to distress him.]

It is a moot point as to whether the amazing music produced by a wicked sinner is good to listen to. Does the divine gift overcome the character? Mozart is a case in point. There is no doubt that Mozart's music is not only technically accomplished, innovative, demonstrating purity of form and melody and important in the history of music, but it is also stimulating, evocative and sublime. His gift is manifested in being a child prodigy (he began to compose aged five).

Yet Mozart was a complete wastrel.<sup>18</sup> He was hedonistic, foolish, and struggled with poverty all his life, despite making considerable amounts of money. He drank, caroused and partied and frequently behaved indecently and inappropriately. He had no manners at all; a serious problem in the formal societies in which he mingled at the time.

Many Christians, knowing little of his character, would say that Mozart is acceptable to listen to since the music is so beautiful and edifying. Yet it was the product of a wicked man. The individual must make his own mind up as to whether one can enjoy the divine gift despite the devilish personality behind it.

### **The uses of certain scales, or types of music, does not make it spiritual.**

In different locations, different church leaders consider that music endemic to their locality is acceptable as Christian music. A classic case of this is the Southern Baptist Bible belt in America, which considers that cowboy music is a Christian genre. By this they principally mean Country & Western. Thus many Christian bands play this sort of genre. In England many conservative Christians would apply this to classical music. In Scotland it would be traditional Gaelic folk music.

The fact is that all of this is nonsense. God does not dwell in any of these genres. All of these types of music can manifest good music and bad music, depending on the player / singer.

This means that Christian must be open to other genres and not judge those who disagree with them. Just because a lot of Christians live in the Deep South, it does not mean that the music of the Deep South is Christian.

### **Music is not neutral; certain intervals suggest malevolence.**

Different types of music create different types of responses in people, whatever the lyrics.

Certain runs create a malevolent feel; for instance: E to Bb (once called 'the devil's interval'). Black Sabbath's first song on their influential first album was based upon this interval. The riff was: E E8ve Bb, over a distant sounding bell ringing. This was to accompany their recent decision to emphasise occult features in their stage shows and songs, merely for a gimmick. It worked. Before this they were an ordinary but good local blues band in Birmingham. I saw them there before they were famous and before I was a Christian. Even without any paraphernalia, that riff is ominous.

Minor songs emphasise moodiness and sadness; up-tempo major songs are used for celebration. March time is good for soldiers going to war. The idea that music is neutral is stupid. Bernard Hermann's staccato strings from the Psycho movie shower scene create chills even if just heard on their own. The theme from Jaws also creates tension if heard without images. This means that certain sorts of music have a depressing effect (create a negative feeling) even if the lyrics were positive (in my opinion, Thrash Metal for instance).

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<sup>18</sup> See the film *Amadeus* for a lively retelling of his life story.

You could not conduct a wedding to the tune of the death march. The chords and melody used in the death march are deliberately chosen to create a sombre mood reflecting a melancholic theme. Similarly, playing Sister Sledge's, *We are family*, at a funeral would be appalling, even though the lyric may be appropriate. The up-tempo happy music is not suitable for a funeral.

Music creates moods and specific melodies create specific moods for the western ear.

### **We cannot simply condone one genre and condemn another**

Those who say that pop / rock music is bad and classical music is good are being superficial. Most styles are neither good or bad, it depends on the musician and the music. There is rock music that really glorifies the Lord and there is classical music that was created by really sick sinful people that damages the soul. Certain popular classics, lauded by some Christian apologists, were written by homosexuals, fascists, adulterers, fornicators and astrologers. All genres have good and bad works in them.

Also one person can be edified by a piece of music that discourages another person. Scales that appear discordant to a western ear may be a foundational scale for an eastern ear (e.g. Japanese traditional music). A long raga may be difficult for westerners but it is classical music to Indians. A long blues boogie may have more in common with Indian classical music than western pop. People brought up with classical music find the emphasised 'blue notes'<sup>19</sup> in Blues music jarring; the simplicity of the lyrics also appears trivial and anti-intellectual.

Just because a certain type of music is unfamiliar to us, that does not mean that it is automatically bad for us. I believe that a couple of genres are negative (Rap, Thrash) as I explain elsewhere in this paper, but in general most genres are neither good nor bad.

### **Songs about wicked subjects do not necessarily mean that the song is wicked**

A song can be about a sinful person doing a sinful thing, but be written by a Christian to make a point and tell a story. '*House of the Rising Sun*' is about a derelict person frequenting a brothel and living a destitute life – but it is a song of warning ('*Mother tell your children, not to do what I have done*'). A Christian could sing this old blues song to give a warning and this would be positive.

Thus a song can be written by a Christian, seeking to do good, but telling a story in the first person about a bad situation. People should not automatically think that it is autobiographical. Many bad judgments have been made about innocent people because this principle was not understood. Like fiction writers, song-writers often tell a story.

Therefore, we have to understand the purpose of the song before deciding about its benefits. This means being especially sensible about song titles. I can listen to '*Sympathy for the Devil*'<sup>20</sup> because it is written ironically. It is not actually enticing sympathy for the devil but describing how the devil is behind all sorts of human activity, which is to be abhorred.

'*Matty Groves*' is an old folk song, revamped by Fairport Convention, telling a story about all sorts of misbehaviour. It relates the fortunes of Matty Groves who falls in love with the local lord's wife and consummates an adulterous affair. He is caught in-flagrento by the lord and challenged to a duel, whereupon Matty is killed. However, the wife protests her undying love for the dead Matty. Many Christians would condemn such a song as being

<sup>19</sup> Bent (slurred) minor 3<sup>rd</sup>, major 4<sup>th</sup> and major 7<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> By the Rolling Stones.

poor subject matter; but it is a story, probably based upon historical events. Now Christians would think nothing of reading such a story in a newspaper (and do so many times). Why do they apply stricter rules to the telling of a story in a song than in a newspaper? The song is not endorsing Matty's behaviour, merely telling a story.

Christians who condemn such songs need to consider this. Why is it acceptable to listen to TV or radio news reports about adultery, and fornication in the world today, or read about it in newspapers, but not to listen to such a story with added music? It is hypocritical to accept one but not the other.

### **Honesty and integrity are a key components of lyric writing.**

What is indefensible in song writing is the churned out, manufactured, bubble-gum, mass produced, clap-trap that sells millions to gullible kids. It has no integrity and is written just to get on a bandwagon and make shed loads of money for some producer, who will certainly have his name on the credits even if he never wrote anything (this is common in pop music as well as other forms).

This isn't true music; it is taking advantage of the weak.

Very often, when a teen star has a hit, the next two or three records sound exactly the same to grab the market attention quickly. Often you hear stories of people who wrote copycat songs quickly in studios during a fag break. This is music with no character, no talent, and no integrity; it is just commercial rip off.

Another form of this is muzak; the trite, superficial nonsense that fills elevators, shopping stores and supermarkets. It is music that has no validity, no values and usually no talent. Often it is one poor out-of-work musician doing everything on a keyboard to provide cheap licensed rubbish to people who don't care.

If anything should be outlawed, it is this.

### **Artists perform songs of varying moral quality**

The Rolling Stones are a band that many Christians would condemn out of hand (partly due to a supposed devilish connection). Occasionally they did adopt devilish themes to pursue a provocative advertising campaign but I doubt any band member has any satanic agenda of any kind. If anything they are pragmatists, and some (through the blues) have some Christian influences. In fact Mick Jagger recently said that he wished he had done something more useful with his life, such as being a teacher.

When the Stones adopt a deliberate sinful message, they are to be deplored (even though they often did this for provocative commercial reasons and were not actually advocating this behaviour). When they write a beneficial song it can be enjoyed. I stopped listening to them (apart from a few songs) after about 1971.

I can think of some Stones songs that are far more edifying than certain supposed 'Praise songs'. Some of the worst music on earth arises from the Charismatic praise stable that comes close to blasphemy and encourages a dumbing-down of our relationship with God. Yet there are many Stone's songs that are deeply affectionate, lyrical, loving and even one saying that they want to see Jesus' face. One good song counsels that, '*you can't always get what you want, but if you try sometimes, you might get what you need.*' Good advice to anyone.

Their early pivotal song, '*I can't get no satisfaction*', is not bawdy but tells the saga of the futility of modern life as it was then. Yes it tells about a teenager who can't get a girlfriend with his rushing around, but also that the TV spouts '*useless information supposed to fire my*



*imagination* and that advertising makes superficial promises and promotes foolish paradigms (you need to smoke certain cigarettes to be cool). This could have come straight out of Ecclesiastes.

Despite the caricatures of him, Jagger's public appearances in news / art programmes have always been articulate and rational. Now I am not defending his personal lifestyle, which is clearly repressible (as was many classical composers). I am just saying that some Stone's songs are very good and others very bad. Blanket condemnations just appear foolish.

### **Genres which stand condemned**

Having said all this, there are some genres, which stand condemned by their own obvious characteristics.

#### *Rap*

The first is Rap music. Some extol this genre as being real poetry from the street, usually originating with poor blacks in America. It is a new art-form they say. Indeed, the origins of Street Rap showed early promise being the heart cry of oppressed people like the Blues. Of necessity much of the subject matter was aggressive and angry because it was a modern protest song without music. This soon changed.

Commerce took over and the original street protest poetry became big business.

The origins of Rap has been described in this way:

The first period – when the early hip-hop D.J.'s perfected their craft in parks and house parties – is the hardest to pinpoint, in terms of both exact time period and primary ... The second period, often referred to by rap fans as "The Old School," hip-hop/rap recordings began to be released through independent record labels in and around the New York area ... The third period, the period that proved to be the most creative and progressive in rap music so far lasted from 1983 to approximately 1989 ... The fourth and current period began after 1989 when major labels' overt commercial concerns and the taste and 'morals' (or lack their of) of the general public began to shape the creative climate of the rap music world.<sup>21</sup>

Soon Rap became dominated by certain idioms that were characteristic. It is almost unthinkable that these idioms should be omitted. The problem with Rap is what these idioms consist of.

#### MISOGYNY

The first is blatant misogyny. Rap has a dreadful record in the abusive way that it treats women, even women held in affection by the Rapper. Women are denoted as 'Hos', a shortened form of 'whore' or 'hooker'. If they are not being likened to a prostitute they are called 'bitches'. Song lyrics frequently talk about assault, rape, grievous bodily harm and even murder.<sup>22</sup> Violence towards women is seen as normal behaviour. Videos accompanying songs are filled with mistreatment and exploitation of women.

For example: Eminem's '*The Marshall Mathers LP*' is the fastest selling rap album in history. However, 78% of its content is violent and misogynistic. 82% of his lyrics involve female murders. Of the 11 songs on the album, nine of them depict murders of women.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Mtume ya Salaam; 'The Aesthetics of Rap', *African American Review*, (1995), p303-5.

<sup>22</sup> Beaver, W; 'Rap and the Recording Industry', *Business and Society Review*, (2010), p107-120.

<sup>23</sup> Armstrong, E. G; 'Gangsta Misogyny: A Content Analysis of the Portrayals of Violence Against Women in Rap Music', 1987-1993. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, (2001) p96-126.

With this massive exploitation and denigration of women, it is odd that so many gullible women line up to support it by buying Rap records or working in the Rap music business, especially in Rap videos.

#### FOUL LANGUAGE

Then there is the overwhelming use of foul language. It is de-rigueur to use swear words as often as possible to be provocative in a simplistic and trivial way. Though done to seem powerful, it merely denotes dumbness.

#### VIOLENCE

Then there is the overwhelming violence being celebrated in Rap songs. Shooting people (especially with a Glock 17 pistol – often used by police and security services) is commonplace. For example:

Nothing left to do, but buy some shells for my glock  
 Why? so I can rob every known dope spot  
 I got 19 dollars and 50 cents up in my pocket with what?  
 With this automatic rocket  
 Gotta have it to pop it, unlock it, and take me up a hostage.<sup>24</sup>

I'd do it if I have to  
 bustin caps with this a heat and load it clip up after clip  
 I'm packin my gauge, if I feel it  
 The glock, the gat, the nine, the heaters  
 See I be bustin caps like my amp be bustin speakers  
 So how do you figure that Big Boi be scared to blast ya  
 You 'posed to be quickest draw, but man, I hail em faster  
 1-2-3, you need to think about the future  
 Before I shoot your ass and dilute your blood with lead  
 From my hollow tips, I'll send you to an early grave.<sup>25</sup>

I shot dread in the head, took the bread and the landspread  
 Lil' Gotti got the shotty to your body  
 So don't resist, or you might miss Christmas  
 I tote guns, I make number runs  
 I give emcees the runs drippin  
 when I throw my clip in the AK, I slay from far away  
 Everybody hit the DECK.<sup>26</sup>

I caught him with a blow to the chest  
 My hollow put a hole in his vest  
 I'm bout to send two to his dome  
 Cry babies go home!  
 I just bought some new guns my mama said "it ain't worth it"  
 But I'm at the shooting range just cause  
 practice makes perfect.<sup>27</sup>

This is just the thin end of the wedge. Rap artists are often pictured with a wide array of weapons, from knives and machetes, to handguns and then assault rifles and more. Rap songs contain brutal descriptions of violence that need not be quoted here. This isn't

<sup>24</sup> Snoop Dogg; '20 Dollars 2 My Name', from *Da Game Is To Be Sold, Not To Be Told*, Priority Records (1998).

<sup>25</sup> Outkast; Ain't No Thang, from *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*, La Face (1994).

<sup>26</sup> Notorious BIG - Come On, from *Born Again*, released posthumously, Bad Boy Entertainment (1999).

<sup>27</sup> Ludacris; Cry Babies (Oh No), from *Word of Mouf*, Defjam, (2001).

descriptions of a violent historical scene mentioned to make a political point or worthy thesis, but is mostly gratuitous statements of violence in the first person; either as committed by the person, or hoped for, or threatened.

It is safe to say that Rap music seethes with sadistic, brutal, malevolent, violence.

#### RAP ARTIST LIFESTYLE

Then there is the universal lifestyles of top Rap artists who have been condemned for their assault, drug dealing, illegal weapons possession, money laundering, and even murder. These are no role models for teenagers.

#### EFFECT OF RAP MUSIC

Finally there is the effect of this music on youth. Many studies show time and time again that there is an association between violence among youths and exposure to media violence, especially Rap.<sup>28</sup> Youths get completely desensitised to the actual effect of violence and so perpetrate it on street corners, with the resultant casualties and deaths.

#### CONCLUSION

No Christian can come to any other, than the conclusion that Rap music is negative, damaging and bad. Some artists have recently arisen to reduce the negative effects and promote more moral lyrics but it is too late. Rap music is now forever associated with drugs, violence, misogyny, swearing and everything a Christian should not be. No Christian can endorse Rap music.

Christians could enjoy the earlier form Hip-Hop, which includes prototype forms of rapping without the later connotations; such as ex Fugees singer Lauryn Hill, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*. In fact one of the earliest examples of rapping was by Debbie Harry in a 1980 Blondie pop record, 'Rapture', which was just nonsense lyrics utilised for their sense of rhythm.<sup>29</sup> Nonsense rhymes<sup>30</sup> have an old pedigree, especially in children's nursery rhymes and stories. They are harmless.

#### CHRISTIAN RAP?

Some Rap artists have claimed to be Christian. Is this possible? Clearly not since one has to take on board the idiomatic sinful forms. For example: some years ago one Rap duo came out as evangelical Christians, which shocked many of their hard core fans because they had fully espoused the forms of rap. The Rap duo is 'Insane Clown Posse', comprising of Violent J and Shaggy 2 Dope. They claim to be honouring God by gaining the trust of Rap fans and then adding some Christian messages.

Is this acceptable, Biblical?

No it is not. If Rap is not a clean art form, as I previously explained because of its constant vulgar, violent, offensive and misogynistic connotations, then it cannot be sanctified just because Christians do this.

Then there is the question of the names of these two; one celebrating violence, the other drugs.

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<sup>28</sup> Tropeano, E; 'Does Rap or Rock Music Provoke Violent Behaviour?' *Journal of Undergraduate Psychological Research*, (2006). p31-34.

<sup>29</sup> E.g. 'And out comes the man from Mars ... You go out at night eating cars You eat Cadillacs Lincolns too Mercurys and Subaru ... Cause the man from Mars is through with cars He's eating bars ... Through the sewer, don't strain your brain Paint a train, you'll be singing in the rain.'

<sup>30</sup> E.g. 'the Owl and the Pussycat'.

Then there are the lyrics of their songs, which are just plain unacceptable and offensive. For example:

*I'm hating sluts  
Shoot them in the face, step back and itch my nuts  
Unless I'm in the sack  
Cos I f\*\*\* so hard it'll break their back.*

Even their song written to explain their Christianity [*Thy Unveiling* ] was offensive:

*F\*\*\* it, we got to tell.  
All secrets will now be told  
No more hidden messages  
... Truth is we follow GOD!!!  
We've always been behind him  
The carnival is GOD  
And may all juggalos find him  
We're not sorry if we tricked you.*

This is a masquerade of Christianity! The Lord does not condone or honour tactics that are based upon worldly and sinful components. Only in the modern dumbed-down world of Biblical illiteracy, doctrinal poverty and fake sanctification could this be possible.

### *Thrash Metal*

A second genre that I would condemn is Thrash, a form of Heavy Metal music.<sup>31</sup> While some Thrash bands are better than others (Metallica<sup>32</sup>), the genre itself is founded upon aggression. Lyrics are aggressive and the music is exceptionally belligerent. The drumming is hostile using two bass drums giving a constant thrash beat. Guitar picking (shredding) is fast and chromatic. Bass players often use a plectrum for speed and volume. The tone is heavily distorted; even vocal microphones are augmented with distortion effects and flangers. These gadgets are used to emphasise 'death growls', like animal noises. Some bass players (e.g. Lemmy) use distortion as well. So, you have loud distorted vocals, distorted guitar and distorted bass over exceptionally aggressive drumming. This is not conducive to making music with clarity.

The whole effect is exceptionally loud, distorted, threatening, aggressive and suggestive of violence. Associated with many Thrash bands is a predilection for Black magic and Satanism. I have heard a Thrash band vocalist sing, '*I am the devil*'. While I have no doubt that this was for effect, and I hear that he is a decent bloke, he does not know the danger of his actions.

Songs are frequently designed to inculcate fear, threats, and violence (usually against the establishment). Musical intervals are used which are ominous and threatening (see earlier). There are heavily distorted descending and ascending cadences, adding to an ominous feel. Lyrical themes include isolation, alienation, corruption, injustice, addiction, suicide, murder, warfare, gore and the occult.

Thrash band-names demonstrate what their music is all about: Venom, Bathory,<sup>33</sup> Hellhammer, Slayer, Mayhem, Sodom, Coroner, Megadeth, Black Sabbath, Sepultura, Judas Priest, Motörhead, Angel Witch, Anthrax, Overkill, Annihilator, Dark Angel, Death Angel, Nuclear Assault, Whiplash, Forbidden, Possessed, and Destruction.

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<sup>31</sup> Which has several associated sub-types, Grunge, Death Metal, Black Metal, Metalcore, Deathcore etc.

<sup>32</sup> Their less harsh album '*Metallica*' is Metallica's best selling album.

<sup>33</sup> A reference to Countess Bathory; a cruel torturer of women associated with the vampire legends.

Song and album titles are no different: *Haunting the Chapel, Bestial Devastation, Pleasure to Kill, Spreading the Disease, Beneath the Remains, Eternal Nightmare, Forbidden Evil, Extreme Aggression, Souls of Black, Coma of Souls, Cowboys from Hell* and *Cracked Brain*.

It is clear that this violates the instructions given by Paul to only concentrate on what is good, noble, righteous, pure lovely and virtuous. The format, texture, lyrics and style of Thrash (and associated sub-genres) does not line up with Christian directives.

I have supplied good reasons for not listening to two music types. You will have to make your own conclusions regarding the hundreds of others.

### **Christians have to decide for themselves what music to listen to.**

There is no easy method of determining what art (and music) is good for you and everyone has their own opinion. The key factor is walking in the Spirit and allowing the Spirit to guide you into all truth. Those who are progressing in sanctification will gradually learn what is good and acceptable versus what is bad and damaging (whether in music, poetry, art, movies, books, magazines, newspapers, journals etc.).

If a person cannot judge what newspaper to read<sup>34</sup> or what books to buy, then they are not likely to discriminate in music. I despair of people in church who condemn certain musical forms out of ignorance, but go home alone and read *'Fifty Shades of Grey'*.<sup>35</sup>

### **Doing everything to God's glory**

This deeply affects both listeners to music and musicians.

#### *Words to musicians*

Christian musicians must produce music that is centred in the glory of God. This means, at least, that it must have integrity and a purpose that is honouring to God. I would say that this is not the case in 90% of music, even music in church circles. So often I see that music is the expression of the self, leading to a demonstration of the proud flesh. You don't have to be a virtuoso like Liszt or Paganini in order to make a proud demonstration of your musical abilities. Some people show hubris just in playing a few simple chords.

Firstly, music should be service. Music that is full of self and pride does no one any good. It might look flashy for a moment, but the glory fades very quickly. Look at the most beloved guitarists. Those that have stood the test of time, and are still hugely popular everywhere, are the most lyrical players, like Eric Clapton and Dave Gilmore. There were people faster than them, even in the 60s, but no one remembers them (I will not name names). In the Blues, it is BB King who is called 'King of the Blues' and yet he is not a fast or audacious player but is very lyrical. Indeed he often plays the same notes in the same way – but with a great feel for emotion within the song.

Fast, audacious and proud playing doesn't serve anybody but the musician. It is just a demonstration of hubris. A player who cares and seeks to affect those listening plays with a

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<sup>34</sup> In my view there are virtually none that are completely trustworthy and one should get their news from a variety of trusted sources and weigh up the facts. Much that is in the news is misinformation, exaggeration and pure lies. In fact, if you stick to a single newspaper, you are certainly going to be brainwashed along the lines of the proprietor's editorial policy.

<sup>35</sup> A media sensation and the fastest selling modern novel, which is nothing but salacious, sado-masochistic, sexual rubbish, badly written by a first time author using scandal to titillate (so the better critical reviews tell us). I learn that it has led to an alarming rise of incidents involving the fire brigade to release people trapped due to sexual experimentation upon reading it (such as a man needing to be freed from a toaster).

sense of feeling. This much is good. But a Christian goes even further and plays not only to serve but to honour God.

Music that honours God involves many facets. The lyrics must be honouring to God. This does not mean that they have to be Biblical doctrine. They may tell a story of warning, of exhortation or even a story of experience, revealing faults and lessons learned. In short, any subject can honour God if it is based on truth and doing good. Clearly, the best sort of songs will be a testimony to Jesus Christ in some way.

Then the artistry must honour God. That is, the music should fit the lyrics and be played well. God does not demand virtuoso performances from everyone, but he wants honesty, integrity and righteousness. The song construction should be beautiful and well crafted. Needless to say, there must be no plagiarism of words, music or concept (music is filled with these things)<sup>36</sup>.

There is a way of playing that does glorify God and each Christian musician has to find this out for himself. One lesson is that silent prayer can easily accompany a performance throughout. Another is not to accept the glory of audience response but offer it to God in silent prayer, acknowledging your frailty and worthlessness.

#### *Words to listeners*

One of the key tests of any music is – could I listen to this whilst sat next to the Lord Jesus? The fact is that when you listen to any music you are seated with Christ who lives in your heart. You take the Holy Spirit with you to a concert.

While much music is fairly neutral and needs no deep agonising over, some music would definitely fail this test.

Another test is – is this music compromising to my testimony? If we want our lives to glorify God, then does this music help or hinder? If I had a dinner party and played this music, what would they think of my Christian credentials? The new Folk band Mumford and Sons are now big time; hugely popular. Perhaps because of their Folk credentials and intelligent songs they have become popular with many Christians. Indeed, I like much of their stuff. However, a key song on their first album contains the ‘F’ word. It is said in an ordinary, self-condemnatory manner (i.e. not merely for effect), ‘*I really f... it up this time*’. I have read Christian blogs that accept this simply as a part of normal life. However, I maintain that I could not play this song at a dinner party and appear to condone swearing. This fails that particular test.

If listening to music is a vital part of our lifestyle, then consideration has to be made as to whether what we listen to glorifies God and honours the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **An example**

The song: *Axis – Bold As Love*, by Jimi Hendrix.

I have deliberately chosen a provocative song to illustrate a number of points.

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<sup>36</sup> The entire early career of Led Zeppelin was based on stealing music, riffs, words and ideas from old Bluesmen and ramp them up with volume. Sometimes virtually entire songs were stolen but given a new name so that the royalties could go to them and not the poor original composer. This is where they differed from Cream and Clapton, who always credited Bluesmen. For example, ‘*Whole Lotta love*’ is ripped off from Muddy Waters’ ‘*You need love*’.

Many Christians would condemn Hendrix, out of hand, for being a typical hedonistic, drug-taking, womanising, bad-example, raucous rock musician whom believers should never listen to. That is the tabloid headline portrayal; but Christians should base their choices on facts. Let's examine the person and the song.

- Firstly, Hendrix was not the complete reprobate that newspapers made him out to be. I am not saying that he was pure as the driven snow, but no one is. Hendrix took typical 60s low-level drugs like most of the 60 celebrities (the Beatles, Bob Dylan, Princess Margaret etc). In fact, he probably took a lot less drugs than some of his peers and did not get hooked on hard drugs like his friend Eric Clapton (it took years for Eric to get clean; thankfully he is now).
- Everyone I know who ever met Hendrix said the same; that he was the nicest, quietest, humblest, self effacing, shy, but generous and pleasant man that they ever knew. All his friends and colleagues testified decades later that they still missed him terribly. His interview on an American TV chat show<sup>37</sup> demonstrates his deeply humble, self-effacing, winsome personality. Bob Fripp (shy, retiring guitarist with King Crimson), not given to hyperbole, said that Hendrix was the most charismatic person he ever met.
- Some of the bad things associated with him had nothing to do with him (such as the original UK *Electric Ladyland* album cover with naked women, rushed out by his record company against his will. Hendrix's design was the American sci-fi artwork.).
- Hendrix had been a womaniser (though he had a serious girlfriend when he died of natural causes – not illicit drugs);<sup>38</sup> but so were many of his peers. Almost every 60s rock / pop star were womanisers at one time – this was the period of the 60s sexual revolution. We need to be clear on this. The moral qualities of talented people we use in the world do not determine whether we use them. We do not ask our plumber if he has ever been a fornicator before we let him into our house to fix a leak. We do not check to see whether the newsreader that we listen to and trust has a tarnished life. We do not investigate the personal ethics of newspaper journalists before we read a newspaper. In fact, we rely all the time upon fornicators, adulterers, alcoholics, drug users and so on to keep our homes going. It is hypocritical to use a sinful bathroom fitter and then condemn someone for listening to music played by a womaniser.
- The fact is that everyone in the world is a sinner; including you and me. It is impossible to get any worker to do anything that does not involve sin. Even if you could find a Christian workman, he could still be in the flesh (i.e. sinning) when he fixed your problem.
- The Lord Jesus sat in the company of sinners and enjoyed their offerings time after time. He ate with tax collectors and sinners; he ate with religious hypocrites and enemies of God. He did not refuse their food because they were sinners. Jesus also participated in the wedding music provided at the wedding of Cana (and probably other weddings); he even provided the wine. The musicians at this wedding party were sinners; but that did not hinder the value of their offering in a social situation, which Jesus tolerated.
- Every musician is a sinner, some more obvious than others. All classical composers were sinners; but some were extravagant sinners who set a terrible example. And yet many Christians endorse their music.
- So, if we are to avoid music played by sinners, then we should never listen to any sort of music at all.
- What about the argument of avoiding the company and bad example of sinners? We are not doing that here. It is necessary to avoid music that is obviously wicked and not

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<sup>37</sup> It was the *Dick Cavett Show*.

<sup>38</sup> There are claims that he was murdered.

fellowship with that. But what we are considering here is music that is noble and beautiful, though composed by sinners. That is completely different. We are fellowshiping with something overtly good.

- Regarding this song: the lyrics are neither good nor bad. They are not overly important, being typical psychedelic poetry common at the time; but neither are they meaningless which many contemporary songs were. They speak of the conflicting emotions (denoted as colours), which this person had upon meeting a girl. The arbiter of these emotions was the 'axis', which is a symbol for the heart, the centre of the emotions and the judge of them, like the axis point of a colour wheel is the centre of various colours. Basically it is a simple love song expressing vulnerability. The person determines to override his conflicting emotions and be as bold as love is. There is nothing evil in the lyrics while there is some intellectual value.
- The musicianship is just sublime and very powerful. This is Hendrix at the height of his dextrous, imaginative chord work; to say nothing of lyrical lead playing. At the time it was completely original but it is still evocative (and difficult to play).
- In the 60s this song (and others on the album) inspired me to higher things, though I was not yet a believer. When I listen to this song today it still makes me look to God in thankfulness. I often get driven to prayer and worship when I hear this song. I do not consider the workman, I consider the value of the music which has a divine origin in the gift to the musician.
- Any music that drives you to consider the creator can't be all bad.

I believe that this example sets out a number of principles that we can work on.

Now Christians often refuse to listen to music constructed by an overt sinner. For instance, many believers will not listen to an Elton John song because of his publicised homosexuality. [Even though the lyrics are written by the heterosexual Bernie Taupin.] That is their choice and it is not my job to change them. However, it is the position of 'the weaker conscience' because all musicians / composers are sinners. Why should one type of sin be ruled out while other sins are acceptable? In fact, some of these believers listen to music that I would consider to be very harmful, while they deny the very well-written and well-performed songs by Elton John.

Taking such a simplistic view leads to charges of hypocrisy.

The fact is that God gifts sinners as part of creation and their work, though not godly since they have no spiritual life in Christ, reflects the gift God gave them in creation. The fact that Italian sculptor, painter, architect, and poet Michelangelo Buonarroti [1475–1564] was homosexual does not alter the fact that his painting and sculptures are sublime; many Christian tourists go to marvel at them. Italian painter (Michelangelo Merisi da) Caravaggio [1571–1610] was not only a homosexual but was also a murderer, yet he was a fabulously talented painter who reinvigorated religious art. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, the great classical composer, was also a homosexual.

It is odd that some Christians will applaud Michelangelo, listen to Tchaikovsky, and watch a Noel Coward play, yet condemn Elton John; but all are homosexual artists. There is a great deal of hypocrisy in all this.

### **Bad examples**

The gullibility of many Christians, who take seriously claims of Christian music, is exemplified in the many scandals that have overtaken supposedly Christian artists.



The most popular Christian singer of her time (late 1960s) was Marsha Stevens. In 1971, she recorded the first Christian rock album, *'Come to the Waters'* with the band 'Children of the Day'. Her song *'For Those Tears I Died'* initiated the Contemporary Christian Music [CCM] business. Her songs were so popular that they were included in church hymnbooks. However, in 1979 she revealed that she was a lesbian and started the group B.A.L.M. ('Born Again Lesbian Music'). More recently another Christian singer did the same (Jennifer Knapp). Apparently, one 'bishop' has stated that Gospel music is 'gay music' since homosexuality is rife amongst those circles, and has been since Sister Rosetta Tharp in the 40s.<sup>39</sup>

Other famous Christian artists include Sandy Patty who confessed to committing multiple adultery in 1995;<sup>40</sup> she was committing adultery with married men during her Christian music career. A similar case is Amy Grant who was unfaithful and divorced her husband. Clay Crosse went on record confessing he had numerous extra marital relationships while touring.

Michael English was arrested for 12 counts of illegal drug use and pleaded guilty. English quit Christian music in 1994, just a week after being named Artist of the Year and winning six Dove Awards,<sup>41</sup> when his adulterous affair with Christian singer Marabeth Jordan was revealed (both were married).<sup>42</sup> Despite this, English won another Dove the next year with the Bill Gaither Group. After this, English dated a stripper and was arrested for assault on his girlfriend; but this did not stop him having his own show on TBN.<sup>43</sup>

A very popular CCM group is 'King's X', even though member Doug Pinnick is a proud homosexual. Pinnick told *Aquarian Weekly*, in May 2000, *'Yeah, I'm gay; big deal.'*<sup>44</sup>

Hugely popular<sup>45</sup> and influential 'Christian' rock band Styper sported a wildly effeminate stage presence (mascara, lip gloss, eye shadow, earrings, spandex and big hair) while Tim Gaines (of Stryper) revealed, *'From the end of 1988 'til February of this year [1997], I was drunk every day.'*<sup>46</sup>

In 2001, Hip Hop band 'Raze' singer, founder and former dancer for Carman, Ja' Marc Davis was arrested and charged with five counts of lewd molestation, three counts of rape by instrumentation and three counts of forcible sodomy on minors (i.e. paedophilia). After his arrest Raze achieved two Dove awards.

So, while Christians were applauding these CCM artists and condemning secular ones, the 'Christian' artists were committing the same (or worse) sins. Using the word 'Christian' as an adjective does not prevent wickedness. All singers and musicians are sinners – every one. You cannot presume that certain music is good because it claims to be 'Christian'.

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<sup>39</sup> Bishop Yvette Flunder; by VorJack, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/unreasonablefaith/2010/05/history-of-scandal-in-ccm/>

<sup>40</sup> *Christianity Today*, Sept. 11, 1995 p72.

<sup>41</sup> The US 'Christian' equivalent of a Brit award.

<sup>42</sup> [http://www.crossrhythms.co.uk/articles/news/Scandals\\_Hit\\_US\\_CCM/29718/p1/](http://www.crossrhythms.co.uk/articles/news/Scandals_Hit_US_CCM/29718/p1/)

<sup>43</sup> *Trinity Broadcasting Network*, a 'Christian' TV channel.

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.av1611.org/crock/crockex3.html>

<sup>45</sup> They had two platinum and four gold records.

<sup>46</sup> *HM* magazine; Mar/Apr 97, Number 64, p47.

## An analysis of a typical Christian apologetic on secular music

To show where I differ from many commentators,<sup>47</sup> here is a typical apologetic regarding music in popular Christian magazines, which can be applied to secular music also. I will add my comments after each point in turn in italic, sans type.

- Christians disagree about music style as much as any other issue in the body of Christ.

Conflicts over music have been common through out church history.

*I disagree that there have been many conflicts over music. This is mistaking conflicts over church music not secular music. The teaching of many pastors regarding music in church is flawed in that Scripture gives us no reason to have any instrumental music at all in church services. The apostles never mentioned it or practised it. Instrumental music was not widespread in Reformed Protestantism for nearly 2,000 years. Disagreement about what a Christian can listen to is a modern phenomenon.*

- It's possible to evaluate music using God's word. Examine the words of the song and consider its message. Does this song communicate the Word of God?

*While this may be useful for evaluating Christian hymns in church it is less useful regarding secular music choices. Secular music does not pretend to be a commentary on Scripture and many themes occur within it that are completely innocent and acceptable. Even stories about bad people doing bad things can be helpful if they tell a moral story with a warning.*

*Christians do not use this test to determine what newspaper to read or TV programme to watch.*

- Does the message appeal to our higher nature, or do the words appeal to our lower nature?

*Apart from very obvious and extreme cases (which are rare) most songs fall somewhere in the middle of the range, neither overtly sinful nor overtly righteous. Therefore, this test is only helpful to determine that we should not listen to bawdy or pornographic songs, or songs celebrating evil or supporting the devil. Such songs would rarely be heard on any radio. So this is not really a helpful test.*

- All music was written with a purpose in mind.

*Music is not always written for a purpose. In fact, most songs are written out of artistic necessity; people feel driven to write a song for a variety of reasons, often to express their pain. It is cathartic and not written purposefully for others. The song, 'Love Hurts' expresses the grief that arises from a recent break-up. It is entirely subjective regarding what a person learned ('I really learned a lot') – that being in love involves pain. It is not preaching, it expresses personal vulnerability.*

- Determine whether the music is sad, joyful, uplifting or soothing.

*There is nothing wrong with listening to sad music or uplifting music. Sad songs can have a greater value than superficial up-tempo songs in a major key.*

- Some music may be intended to promote sinful choices or ways of thinking.

*If this is true, then avoid such music. However, it is very difficult to know if this is the case. People don't usually like preachy songs (other than political protest songs) so they are not common. People like honest contemplation and personal expression.*

- An otherwise good song may be rejected because of its specific associations.

*This is not a Biblical principle. Food offered to idols had bad associations but those with a strong conscience could eat the cheaper meat at the market that had been offered to idols without sin.*

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<sup>47</sup> For example: Ed Stetzer: '7 Biblical Tests for Christians and Music', *Christianity Today*, Culture, 5 June 2013.

*Bad associations amongst people is damaging (1 Cor 15:33) but not bad associations regarding inert objects or concepts.*

*For example, the Beatles song 'Helter Skelter' is associated with the murders of Charles Manson because he made that association. This does not mean that I cannot listen to it. Paul McCartney had no evil or murderous intent when writing that song. In fact it does not have any great significant meaning at all. McCartney often wrote lyrics based on their rhythm and how they sounded rather than meaning (e.g. Ob La Di, Ob La Da).*

*Another example is the use of Mike Oldfield's first album, 'Tubular Bells', as the soundtrack for the appalling film, 'The Exorcist'. Some have associated the album with satanic overtures as a result. This is nonsense. Oldfield wrote the instrumental long before the film appeared and it had no such association in his mind. The music stands on its own.*

*However, there are forms of music that are overwhelmingly associated with bad things because the lyrics repeatedly mention them. In fact, a certain language prevails in such songs. For example Rap. In this genre women are treated with constant abuse and are nominated as 'Hos' (hookers) or 'bitches' and are described in revolting ways. Also violence is celebrated in a heinous manner and swearing is obligatory. Christians cannot endorse such music.*

*Despite this principle, many pastors accept modern music forms that do have bad associations, such as the connection of drugs, violence and misogyny with Rap. One writer says of Rap, 'The form of rap is no less godly than the form in most of our hymns'.<sup>48</sup> This is sheer superficial folly.*

- Does the music stir up negative or sinful feelings? If music causes you to crave sin, or stirs up past hurtful memories, it is wrong; no matter how innocent it may appear.  
*Agreed.*

## Conclusion

At the end of the day what music one listens to is a question of 'each one being fully convinced in his own mind'. However, one lesson that is clear is that the value of music is not determined by the righteous state of the musician because no one is righteous, 'no not one'.<sup>49</sup>

Testing music is really the same as testing anything else – does the piece of music under inspection work, is it good, is it worthy?

It we get a plumber in to fix a leak, does his work do good; is the leak stopped? If so, then that is a good piece of work. The moral state of the plumber is irrelevant; all plumbers are sinners. It we listen to a piece of journalism on the TV news, the test is – is the reporting true, honest and relevant. If it is, then that report is valuable, whatever the ethics of the presenter.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Rm 3:10, 'As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one".'

Music is just the same. All musicians are sinners, so we cannot discriminate on that basis. We test pieces of music on their own merits; is this song good, true, and praiseworthy? Does it help me or hinder me? On this basis some of the work of musicians will be good and some bad. That is normal in life. Also, the judgment of different believers will differ; some will accept one piece of music that another dismisses; that too is normal in life.

So, all pieces of music must be judged on their own merits by individuals.

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## Appendix One

### A short history of western music

A history of global music would require an entire book, indeed there are several large books covering this subject. While Persian, Indian, Chinese, Japanese and Russian music have a long history and variety, we cannot cover these here. All we can hope to do is give a short summary of how western (chiefly European) music developed.

The originator of musical instruments is Jubal, because God tells us:

And Adah bore Jabal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother's name *was* Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute. And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain *was* Naamah. Gen 4:20-22

This is very early on in human history and before the flood.

The first example of social music is given in the lifetime of Jacob:

Why did you flee away secretly, and steal away from me, and not tell me; for I might have sent you away with joy and songs, with timbrel and harp? Gen 31:27

In Samuel's time (c. 900 BC) we see diversity of religious instruments associated with worship.

After that you [Saul] shall come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison *is*. And it will happen, when you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with a stringed instrument,<sup>50</sup> a tambourine, a flute, and a harp before them; and they will be prophesying. 1 Sam 10:5

By the time of David and Solomon (1010-931 BC)<sup>51</sup> we have evidence of whole orchestras and choirs.

Then David and all the house of Israel played *music* before the LORD on all kinds of *instruments of fir wood*, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums,<sup>52</sup> and on cymbals. 2 Sam 6:5

All these *were* the sons of Heman the king's seer in the words of God, to exalt his horn. For God gave Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. All these *were* under the direction of their father for the music *in* the house of the LORD, with cymbals, stringed instruments, and harps, for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman *were* under the authority of the king. So the number of them, with their brethren who were instructed in the songs of the LORD, all who were skilful, *was* two hundred and eighty-eight. 1 Chron 25:5-7

Thus instrumental music occurred fairly early on in man's development. Many evolutionary inspired history books are wrong when they posit that instrumental music began after a long period of oral tradition until writing developed after the Stone Age.

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<sup>50</sup> 'Nebel' (Strong's 5035); translated 'psaltery' in the AV. It means a skin-bag, jar, pitcher, skin-bottle, jar, pitcher (earthen), harp, lute, guitar, musical instrument. We cannot be certain what it was, probably a cittern - a stringed instrument similar to a lute, with a flattened back and wire (originally gut) strings; from the Latin *cithara*, and Greek *kithara*, denoting a kind of harp.

<sup>51</sup> That is from the beginning of the rule of David to the division of the kingdom.

<sup>52</sup> 'M@na`na`' [men-ah-nah'; Strong's 4517] cornet in AV. Meaning: a kind of rattle used as a musical instrument.

None of this is true. Writing, and other technological advancements, were made very early on, inspired by God. Indeed, some technological achievements (such as the pyramids)<sup>53</sup> occurred before the deluge and long before secular historians believe writing to have started (in 3400 BC).<sup>54</sup>

So, musical instruments, like writing, are from the beginning, or pretty near to it.

Classical western music can be organised in a variety of ways. However, the most respected commentaries divide music into six historical periods: Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic and the Contemporary.<sup>55</sup>

### **Medieval (including antiquity); 0-1400 AD**

- Pope Gregory [pope from 590 to 604] is credited with developing chanting during the first centuries of the Christian church; hence the term ‘Gregorian chant’. This choral music dominated the period.
- Gregorian chant is monophonic, [a melody without accompaniment]. Its impressive character is in the undulating shapes of the melody. There were only small intervals between notes, which followed modes (modal scales).<sup>56</sup>
- Polyphony [two or more melodic lines together] began (or at least was written down) in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. This required the ability of a composer and notation.
- The first examples of musical notation date from around 900. For several centuries, notation only indicated what pitch (or note) to sing. The system for notating rhythm started in the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century. Early notation was called ‘Neumatic notation’ and notes were called neums.
- No instruments were used in chanting and musical instruments of any sort in churches were exceedingly rare until after 1250.
- No women participated in chanting, only monks.
- There were no chords used in chanting. However, simple chords were probably used in folk music; but there is little historical evidence regarding such folk music.
- Chanting rhythm was free with no set metre within a slow tempo for reverence.

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<sup>53</sup> The Great pyramid of Cheops built at Gizeh in about 2570. The flood began about 2319 or 2348.

<sup>54</sup> Writing: A system of inscribed signs replacing or recording spoken language. Various writing systems worldwide have developed independently. Writing is closely associated with the appearance of civilisation, since in simple societies speech and memory were sufficient and there was no need for writing. It was essential, however, for the administration on which civilised states depend. ... The earliest forms of writing are non-phonological; that is, they do not represent the sounds of a language. The first pictogram system (direct representations of simple objects and notions) was that of the Sumerians in c.3400 bc. Pictographic writing evolved into ideographic. Ideograms depict more abstract concepts, ideas, and expressions. Egyptian hieroglyphs are an example of ideographic writing, which typically is a mixture of pictograms, ideograms, and representations of certain sounds of the language (phonograms). In logographic writing systems, such as Chinese, logograms represent words or their parts (morphemes) and usually include semantic and phonetic components. There are two purely phonological writing systems: syllabaries, (e.g. in the linear scripts of Minoan Crete and modern Japanese) in which the symbols correspond to the syllables of words; and alphabetic systems, in which the symbols directly correspond to individual sounds (phonemes). Oxford Encyclopaedia.

<sup>55</sup> In this section I am indebted to ‘*History of Music*’ [library.thinkquest.org/16020/data/eng/text/education/.../history.html]. Westrup & Harrison (eds.); *Collins Music Encyclopaedia*; and the *Oxford Encyclopaedia*.

<sup>56</sup> A way of ordering the notes of a scale. Church modes dominated European music up to about 1600. The earliest description of these modes, from the 8<sup>th</sup> century, lists only eight modes, but with the evolution of polyphony in the 15<sup>th</sup> century the number grew to 12. The modes were thought to be based on scales used by the ancient Greeks, but scholars now believe that the church modes evolved independently. The Ionian and Aeolian modes have survived as the major and minor scales.

- Names that have come down in history for this period include: Pope Gregory, Augustine, Boethius (an important theorist), Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179), Perotin (c. 1155-1377), Guillaume de Machaut (c. 1300-1377), John Dunstable (c. 1385-1453), Guillaume Dufay (c. 1400-1474).

### **Renaissance; 1400-1600**

- The rediscovery of Greek artistic ideals led composers to consider new ways of expressing character in music. This led to a greater dependence upon composers who began to achieve fame.
- The printing of music began to evolve enabling better preservation of compositions. This was dependant upon the recent invention of movable printed type by Gutenberg.
- Secular music, in addition to religious chanting, began to increase.
- As new instruments were invented (e.g. clavichord, virginal), the sound of instruments and their versatility improved.
- Music became polyphonic and interactive with different parts weaving in and out of each other. Developments of harmony (perfect octaves, perfect fifths, and perfect fourths). Intervals larger than Medieval. Canons appear (start verse at different times). Plainsong: monophonic chant re-written for polyphonic ensemble.
- Polyphonous sacred singing began to accompany instrumental music in masses. There were madrigals<sup>57</sup> and motets<sup>58</sup>, accompanied by a lute or small ensemble. Short polyphonic pieces accompanied dancing.
- Women and instruments added to songs.
- Important people: Palestrina (c. 1525-1594) the greatest composer of the Renaissance; Monteverdi did a lot of instrumental work, laid the ground work for Opera. Gesualdo (1560-1613), ahead of his time, not afraid to use dissonance. Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1410-1497). Josquin Desprez (c. 1440-1521). Andrea Gabrielli (c. 1510-1586). Orlande de Lassus (1532-1594). William Byrd (1543-1623). Giovanni Gabrielli (c. 1554-1612). John Dowland (1563-1626). Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625).

### **Baroque; 1600-1750**

- Baroque music (like Baroque architecture) is ornate, colourful and opulent (see the Palace of Versailles).
- Opera (a combination of music, poetry and theatre) began in this period, around 1600.
- The expression of music to convey emotions and the divine in nature was commonplace and best expressed in Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*.
- Homophonic writing became important, which features a distinction between the melody line and the subsidiary accompaniment. This style was important in opera and solo vocal music. It concentrates on what the singer is singing. This style also

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<sup>57</sup> A musical composition for several unaccompanied voices. The words are usually secular and light-heartedly amorous. Pastoral, allegorical, and satirical subjects are also to be found. The madrigal, which is mainly contrapuntal, took shape in 16th-century Italy, achieving its finest flowering in the work of Marenzio, Gesualdo, and Monteverdi. It also took root in England, following the publication in 1588 of an Italian collection, *Musica transalpina*. Byrd, Morley, Gibbons, Wilbye, and Weelkes are among the many British composers who made outstanding contributions to this genre. Oxford Encyclopaedia.

<sup>58</sup> A short, unaccompanied polyphonic setting of sacred words. It came into existence in the 13th century when new words (*mots*) were added to the lively upper parts in certain cadences (*clausula*) in which the main lower part moved in the slow notes of plainsong (chant). The motet reached its greatest development in the music of Palestrina, Victoria, Byrd, Tallis, and their contemporaries, being in effect the sacred counterpart of the madrigal. In Baroque music the motet sometimes acquired an instrumental accompaniment. In the Anglican service the motet was replaced by the anthem. Oxford Encyclopaedia.

influenced instrumental music where a backing ensemble (e.g. harpsichord, plus cello or bassoon) extemporise on chords that support the melody.

- Canons and fugues,<sup>59</sup> two forms of imitative polyphony, were extremely popular.
- The orchestra begins to develop beginning as an accompaniment for operatic music.
- Concertos were popular where a soloist played against the orchestra. Other forms include suites, fantasia and toccata.
- In this period instruments became dominant.
- Rhythm is more complex.
- Thirds and triads become common while major and minor scales are well used. Modes disappear from harmony, major and minor dominate. Chord progressions are now used.
- Intervals ii - V - I begin (common in Jazz turnarounds, e.g.: Dm G7 C).
- Tuning improved: Equal Temperament tuning started and the octave is divided evenly into 12 half steps. Before this different tuning systems didn't work. Chromatics introduced.
- Notation is almost standardised.
- Seventh chords developed (major, minor, dominant, half diminished, fully diminished).
- Improvisation develops.
- Famous people include: Archangelo Corelli (violin). Johann Sebastian Bach (keyboard skills). Heinrich Schutz (1585-1672). Archangelo Corelli (1653-1713). Henry Purcell (1659-1695). Francois Couperin (1668-1733). Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741). Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767). Jean Phillippe Rameau (1683-1764), realised the formation of triads. George Frederic Handel (1685-1759). Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757).

### **Classical; 1750-1800**

- Compositions more simple, symmetrical and lyrical. Structural clarity and emotional restraint.
- Homophony (melody and accompaniment are distinct) dominated the Classical style, and new forms of composition were developed; the sonata being the most important (a different form from the Baroque sonata).
- The essence of the classical sonata is conflict, often using two themes of contrasting character that would intensify and then be finally resolved. This enhances the drama of a composition. All major instrumental forms of the Classical era (e.g. string quartet, symphony, concerto) were built on the dramatic structure of the sonata.
- Public concerts became a major attraction. This enabled composers to make a living without the previous necessary sponsorship of an aristocrat. Concerts were no longer limited to drawing rooms but could fill an auditorium. This led to the growth of the extended orchestra and chamber music was limited to smaller venues.
- The trombone introduced. Piano replaces lute, harpsichord and organ.
- IV - V - I replaces ii - V - I. [F G C replaces Dm G C.]

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<sup>59</sup> A type of contrapuntal, musical composition in which the voices (parts) enter one by one with the same short theme, referred to as the subject. Fugues can be for any number of voices, four being the most frequent. When all the voices have entered, the exposition (statement of material) is complete and the composition proceeds through an exploratory middle section (the middle entries) to a final statement of the thematic material (the final entries). In the exposition, as soon as one voice has stated the subject and the second voice takes over, the first voice continues with a counter-subject, which then passes to the second voice as the third takes over the subject. Oxford Encyclopaedia.



- Important people: Carl Philipp Emanuel (C.P.E.) Bach (1714-1788). Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787). Johann Christian (J.C.) Bach (1735-1782). Franz Josef Haydn (1732-1809). Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791).

### **Romantic 1800-1900**

- More intense emotionalism which sometimes overwhelmed structural clarity.
- Tone poems – orchestral work dependent upon a story being told musically. Sometimes exotic in nature. Rhapsodies.
- Symphonies common.
- Emphasis on nationalism, often incorporating national folk themes.
- New instruments added to orchestras.
- Focus on virtuosos. Liszt, the great Hungarian pianist/composer, reportedly played with such passion and intensity that women in the audience would faint.
- More percussion; trombones and tubas become important. Flugelhorn and muted trumpets.
- All 7ths, 9ths, 11ths, and 13ths were used in this period. Increased chromaticism.
- Poly-rhythms.
- Important people: Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908). Giuseppe Verdi. Franz Liszt (1811-1886). Ludwig van Beethoven. Grieg. Anton Bruckner. Sibelius. Richard Wagner. Guno. Franz Schubert. Hector Berlioz (1803-1869). Johannes Brahms. Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1874). Frederic Chopin. Robert Schumann. Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881). Peter Tchaikovsky. Antonin Dvorák (1841-1904). Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924). Sir Edward William Elgar. Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924). Gustav Mahler - early years.

### **Contemporary; 1900- present time.**

- Historical periods tend towards a pendulum effect; this is also notable in the history of music. For example, the simplified style of the early Classical period was a reaction to the intricacies of the late Baroque. While some modern music mimics the Romantic style, a lot of it is a reaction against it.
- 20th century music is a series of 'isms'. The primal energy of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* has been called neo-Primitivism. The intensely emotional tone of Schönberg's early music has been labelled Expressionism. The return to clearly structured forms and textures has been dubbed neo-Classicism. These terms have been employed in an attempt to organise the diversity of styles running through the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Nationalism continued to be a strong musical influence in the first half of the century. The study of folk songs enriched the music of numerous composers, such as Ralph Vaughan Williams (England), Bela Bartok (Hungary), Heitor Villa Lobos (Brazil) and Aaron Copland (USA). Jazz and popular musical styles have also been tremendously influential on 'classical' composers from both the United States and Europe.
- Technology has played an increasingly important role in the development of 20th century music. Composers have used recording tape as a compositional tool (such as Steve Reich's *Violin Phase*). Electronically generated sounds have been used both on their own and in combination with traditional instruments. More recently, computer technology has been used in a variety of ways, including manipulating the performance of instruments in real time.
- Lots of chromaticism.
- Sometimes there are totally new harmonic systems.

- There are poly-triads- 2 different triads stacked on top of each other
- Polytonality: different instruments are in different keys at the same time and atonal: no tonal centre.
- A lot of it has no melody; if there is a melody, the intervals are insanely large.
- Rhythm becomes extremely complex.
- Important people: David Ott. Ottorino Respighi. Anton Bruckner. John Williams. Leos Janáček (1854-1928). Claude Debussy. Richard Strauss. Carl Nielsen (1865-1931). Jan Sibelius (1865-1957). Arnold Schoenberg. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958). Maurice Ravel (1875-1937). Béla Bartók (1881-1945). Igor Stravinsky. Anton von Webern (1883-1945). Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953). George Gershwin (1898-1937). Kurt Weill (1900-1950). Aaron Copland (1900-1990). Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975). Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992). John Cage (1912-1992). Benjamin Britten (1913-1976). Pierre Boulez. Philip Glass (b. 1937)

## Non-classical modern music

In addition to this traditional academic history we have to add much more to give an appreciation of music for the ordinary man (especially the ordinary teenager).

### Blues

This requires a lengthy exposition because it is the origin of so much modern music.

Despite some fanciful notions otherwise, the meaning of the term 'Blues' is just a reflection of the depressing conditions endured by black slaves. Many Bluesmen have testified that, '*The Blues is a feeling*'; i.e. a condition of sadness. However, Blues songs are not all sad at all, but the beginnings of the blues were based on suffering.

Blues had its origins in the cotton fields of the Mississippi Delta with the call and response 'work songs' of the slaves, which were based on the traditional rhythms of Africa, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>60</sup> However, the modern Blues form has no resemblance to African folk music showing that black slaves developed the Blues on western musical forms (12-bars; 8-bars; major and minor scales etc.) having been influenced by hymns and other western idioms. However, the significant blue melody notes (especially bent notes [i.e. slurred notes], such as a bent 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup>) are typically African.

After slavery was abolished, a number of slaves had difficulty making a living; so some turned to playing guitar and singing, particularly blind people like Blind Lemon Jefferson or Blind Willie Johnson.<sup>61</sup> Sometimes these would busk on street corners, at other times they would play in bars and juke joints (shacks where poor black people would drink and dance) or brothels. Because the basic blues style was simple,<sup>62</sup> poor folk could learn it and

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<sup>60</sup> Also spirituals (Black Christian songs) which predate Blues proper, originating about mid-18<sup>th</sup> century when slaves began to convert to Christianity and sing hymns; field hollers, shouts, chants, and simple narrative ballads.

<sup>61</sup> The first appearance of the Blues is usually dated after the Emancipation Act of 1863. After this date juke joints began to appear and black workers made the difficult transition from slavery to sharecropping, or some other employment, such as railway construction workers or soldiers.

<sup>62</sup> The format is simple, most often a basic 12 bar sequence comprised of tonic, sub-dominant and dominant chords. In an open tuning (such as open D or open G) these chords can be formed by the open strings plus a barre over two other frets (usually with a bottleneck). This also enables simple pentatonic runs between chord changes to accentuate the vocals. However, 8-bar sequences (such as Big Bill Broonzy's 'Key to the Highway') were also common. There is great use made of the harmonic seventh form (e.g. E7).

make money pretty quickly if they had imagination and some skill. Some considered the Blues to be the secular counterpart of religious spirituals. Originally Blues was divided into Gospel (religious songs for church) and Blues songs for juke joints.

### *WC Handy*

Many historians focus on WC Handy [1873-1958], who called himself ‘the father of the Blues’; because he syncretised Blues formats with orchestral compositions, fusing Blues with Jazz and Ragtime and this is not really Blues at all. However, he popularised the idea of Blues songs to the masses and is famous for ‘*St Louis Blues*’.

### *Country Blues*

The Blues of the early rural bluesmen was the ‘Country Blues’ style, which was an acoustic Blues of varying sorts.

Some played emotional songs telling stories or explaining life’s problems, such as Robert Johnson, Lightnin’ Hopkins or Skip James. These men had an enormous influence on later musicians. For instance, one of Cream’s early hits was ‘*I’m so glad*’, taken from (and accredited to) Skip James; the royalties of which paid for his health care in the final year of his life. Eric Clapton has also performed versions of many Robert Johnson songs. Johnson’s two album recordings, done very quickly, have influenced scores of modern musicians, including brilliant bassist Colin Hodgkinson.<sup>63</sup>

Other Country Blues players used fingerstyle (‘clawhammer’ or ‘rocking pick’) without a plectrum; such as (Josh White, Brownie McGhee, Buddy Moss, Mississippi John Hurt, Big Joe Williams, Blind Willie McTell, Blind Boy Fuller).<sup>64</sup> Some took this in a more Ragtime direction, such as Blind Blake and Rev Gary Davis. Other Country Blues players include, Lonnie Johnson, Tampa Red, Charley Patton, Big Bill Broonzy and Son House.

The first slide guitarist to record was Sylvester Weaver in 1923; this is where a knife or bottleneck is used to fret the strings, usually of a National Steel resonator guitar. Though different in sound from the other acoustic players, it is still part of the Country Blues tradition.

### *Pianists, harps and women*

Pianists also demonstrated the Blues, such as Memphis Slim and Leroy Carr, while Skip James was adept at both guitar and piano. Boogie-Woogie piano playing developed in the 1930s, pioneered by Jimmy Yancey and the Boogie-Woogie Trio. Chicago Boogie-Woogie players included Clarence ‘Pine Top’ Smith, Professor Longhair and Earl Hines. There were also many great female Blues singers such as Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey and Memphis Minnie. Neither should we forget the great harmonica (‘harp’) players, like Little Walter, ‘Shaky’ Big Walter Horton and Sonny Boy Williamson (Rice Miller).

### *Race music*

Recordings of many artists were made on cylinders and marketed as ‘Race Records’ from the 1920s. Bluegrass ‘Hillbilly’ records were made for whites and Blues records for Blacks; it was a commercial enterprise. Eventually, Blues became a marketing key-word to signify music for Black audiences. Important female artists were Bessie Smith and Gertrude ‘Ma’ Rainey. Mamie Smith (whose second record, *Crazy Blues*, sold 75,000 copies in the first four weeks) was also the first African-American to record a Blues record in 1920.

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<sup>63</sup> Usually associated with Jazz band, ‘Back Door’ but a Blues aficionado who performs ‘*Come into my Kitchen*’ on his own with gusto.

<sup>64</sup> Also called the ‘Piedmont blues tradition’ or ‘East Coast Blues’.

### *Urban Blues*

As economic opportunities arose in the urban centres like Chicago after the late 20s and 30s and especially after World War II, country blues players, like Muddy Waters, moved to the big city in wave after wave, known as 'The Great Migration'.<sup>65</sup> In time, as they prospered, they were able to form bands with electric guitars. This led (chiefly in the late 40s) to a new form of blues, which is now the most common – electric blues or 'Urban Blues'. Proponents include: John Lee Hooker, Otis Rush, Leroy Carr (piano), Willie Dixon and Jimmy Reed.

After World War II, as Black people earned more money and became a lucrative market, 'Race Records' were replaced by 'Rhythm and Blues'. Chicago became a centre for electric blues from 1948 on, when Muddy Waters got his first hit record. Chicago Blues is really just electrified Mississippi Blues because that is where most Chicago Bluesmen came from, such as: 'Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon, and Jimmy Reed. Others include: Elmore James and JB Lenoir. The great Chicago studios include: Chess Records, Checker Records and Vee-Jay Records. In the early 50s, Sam Phillips' Sun Records company in Memphis, was also very influential. However, after Phillips recorded Elvis Presley in 1954, Sun became dominated by white artists and the more lucrative Rock n' Roll.

### *West Side Chicago Blues*

During the 50s, Blues became much more influential, with artists appearing in films and TV specials, as well as selling lots of records and influencing other genres. Bo Diddley and Chuck Berry both recorded for Chess and developed new Blues styles; the first is a sort of rhythmic swamp style, the latter a more up tempo Rock n' Roll.

A new style in Chicago was also developed by Magic Sam, Buddy Guy, Freddie King, Magic Slim, Luther Allison and Otis Rush on Cobra Records, the 'West Side Sound'. Freddie King was to be a big influence on later guitar heroes such as Eric Clapton and Peter Green. John Lee Hooker's guitar boogie style was also popular.

### *Swamp Blues*

In the late 1950s the 'Swamp Blues' grew up near Baton Rouge with Lightnin' Slim, Mississippi Fred McDowell, Slim Harpo, Sam Myers and Jerry McCain. This style is simpler, slower and more moody.

### *60s Blues*

In the 60s new performers emerged re-issuing old styles revamped, such as Taj Mahal. BB King's virtuoso playing (adored by Jazzer Joe Pass) led to the title, 'king of the Blues'. Also important were Tennessee-born Bobby 'Blue' Bland, and Albert King; both were influential on British musicians.

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<sup>65</sup> The Great Migration was the movement of 6 million African Americans out of the rural Southern United States to the Northeast, Midwest, and West for most of the 20th century. Some historians differentiate between the first Great Migration (1910–1930), numbering about 1.6 million migrants who left mostly rural areas to migrate to northern and midwestern industrial cities, and, after a lull during the Great Depression, a Second Great Migration (1940 to 1970), in which 5 million or more people moved, including many to California and other western cities. Wikipedia.

### *The British Blues invasion*

After a successful (but challenging)<sup>66</sup> tour by Muddy Waters to Britain, others soon followed in his wake. Important British innovators Alexis Korner<sup>67</sup> and Cyril Davies were inspired to start Blues bands and clubs.

Starting in 1962, Chicago players, and other bluesmen, travelled in a package show to Britain and Europe, the 'American Folk Blues Festival', where several great bluesmen would appear in one show doing 20-minute sets (e.g. John Lee Hooker, Mississippi Fred McDowell, Shakey Horton, T-Bone Walker, Big Joe Williams). In one night British blues fans (like me) saw several greats of the blues in one go.<sup>68</sup>

This electrified Britain and led to a host of white copycat bands and musicians trying to play the blues. The prime movers of early 60s British rock (Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Brian Jones, Jimmy Page, Eric Burdon, Eric Clapton, and Steve Winwood) saw this as their watershed moment. It spawned the huge 'Rhythm and Blues' movement which produced a host of great British bands (who were originally just Blues bands): the Animals, John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, the Yardbirds, Manfred Man, The Rolling Stones, Chicken Shack, Fleetwood Mac, The Pretty Things, and many more. American Hippie bands also took up the Blues flame later, such as Canned Heat, Johnny Winter, Janis Joplin, Ry Cooder and The Allman Brothers Band.

### *Progressive Blues and rock music*

From this Rock music developed from what was originally called 'Progressive Blues', featuring such bands as Cream, Savoy Brown, The Jimi Hendrix Experience, Ten Years After, Taste, Led Zeppelin and so on. This, in turn led to more aggressive forms, such as Heavy Metal and Grunge.

### *Modern Blues*

Straightforward British Blues continued to exist, but more quietly after the 60s. British bands like The Blues Band carried the flag from the 70s until today. But many famous names developed huge individual followings as blues players: Eric Clapton, Joe Bonamassa, Gary Moore, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Robert Cray, Rory Gallagher, Derek Trucks etc.

Meanwhile the great American bluesmen continued to thrive, such as BB King, Albert Collins, Muddy Waters and Buddy Guy. Indeed some of these have received presidential recognition.

Movies like 'The Blues Brothers' (I and II) spawned a renewed interest in the blues and created spin-offs such as a theatre production and many local 'Blues Brothers' tribute acts. Thus Blues continues to be alive and well and thriving.

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<sup>66</sup> His newly found loud electric Telecaster sound jarred with audiences just getting used to rural blues and skiffle. In his next tour he featured acoustic Blues but his audience had moved on by them and wanted his Telecaster back!!! Waters was justifiably confused.

<sup>67</sup> Corner was an enormous influence on British Blues, though he was not a good player at all.

<sup>68</sup> A fuller list of performers includes: Muddy Waters, Sonny Boy Williamson, John Lee Hooker, Sippie Wallace, T-Bone Walker, Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee, Memphis Slim, Otis Rush, Lonnie Johnson, Eddie Boyd, Big Walter Horton, Junior Wells, Big Joe Williams, Mississippi Fred McDowell, Willie Dixon, Otis Spann, Big Mama Thornton, Bukka White, Howlin' Wolf (with a band made up of Sunnyland Slim, Hubert Sumlin, Willie Dixon and drummer Clifton James), Champion Jack Dupree, Son House, Skip James, Sleepy John Estes, Little Brother Montgomery, Victoria Spivey, J. B. Lenoir, Little Walter, Carey Bell, Louisiana Red, Lightnin' Hopkins, Joe Turner, Buddy Guy, Magic Sam, Lee Jackson, Roosevelt Sykes, Doctor Ross, Koko Taylor, Hound Dog Taylor, Archie Edwards, and Helen Humes.

### *The Christian evaluation*

Despite many ill-educated Christian pastors deriding Blues songs as being the devilish origin of rock music, many Bluesmen and women were Christians (such as Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Reverend Gary Davis), and even non-Christians wrote songs that had strong Christian themes. Several great Blues performers were Christian pastors (Son House [1902-1988], Rev Robert Wilkins [1896-1987] or Ishman Bracey [1901-1970] for example) or sons of pastors (like Skip James).

Players of Gospel songs run the gamut of Blues performers, including: Boyd Rivers, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Charley Patton, Sam Collins, Josh White, Blind Boy Fuller, Blind Willie Mctell, Bukka White, Sleepy John Estes, Son House, Rev Robert Wilkins, Blind Willie Johnson and Skip James. These are some of the most important Bluesmen in history.

Christian themes fill many blues songs, such as judgment Day, the Second Coming of Christ, Christ as Saviour, the cross, the resurrection, the Bible as the word of God, the need for salvation, fighting the devil, resisting temptation etc. Some have written songs about specific Bible books (e.g. *John the Revelator* by Son House). Blind Willie Johnson is said to have caused a riot at a New Orleans courthouse by singing a powerful rendition of '*If I Had My Way I'd Tear This Building Down*', which was a song about Samson and Delilah.

Some historians try to make blues reliant upon African magic but this does not bear investigation; the Blues is filled with Christian imagery and in the beginning Bluesmen were singing about their release from suffering with the advent of Christ. Salvation is a big theme in the Blues. Indeed, you can make the case that the Blues developed from the songs written by Black slaves who had become Christians. Christian hymns (like those of Isaac Watts) were developed into spirituals and the spirituals led to the Blues.

Skip James [1902-1969] is an example of a man who was brought up in a Christian home (as many Bluesmen) but went off the rails, playing in brothels and such like, only to return to Christian morality years later, having stopped playing for many years. Some of the most powerful Christian songs I know were written by Blind Willie Johnson [1897-1945] in the late 1920s.

Christianity is embedded in the Blues and in its history. It is partially responsible for its origin. There is no stigma in a Christian being interested in Blues music, which often has more integrity than modern music. Indeed, the key Blues programme on radio today (and for many years) is the Paul Jones<sup>69</sup> Show on BBC Radio Two; Jones is a longstanding Christian.

### **Jazz**

Jazz was formed chiefly at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, out of Gospel, blues and ragtime, in New Orleans amongst black musicians. Ferdinand 'Jelly Roll' Morton, claimed to have invented it but also important was Buddy Bolden. Of great importance were the early recordings (1923) of Joseph 'King' Oliver, who numbered among his players the trumpeter Louis Armstrong. Armstrong's imaginative playing marked the emergence of the soloist as a shaping influence on the way Jazz developed. Later Armstrong led his own important band. Jazz heavily features improvisation, musicianship and produced many outstanding soloists.

Early small ensembles developed into the big bands under leaders and composers like Edward 'Duke' Ellington. The big band style led to the development of a much smoother

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<sup>69</sup> Yes, the one from Manfred Mann.

style of playing known as swing. Typical swing bands were led by virtuoso players, such as the clarinetists Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Woodrow 'Woody' Herman, and the pianist William 'Count' Basie.

Swing was overtaken in the 1940s by a more rhythmic style of jazz known as bebop, so called after the practice of imitating its sound by scat singing. Among the leading exponents of the new style were the saxophonist Charlie 'Bird' Parker, and the trumpet-players John 'Dizzie' Gillespie and Miles Davis.

In the 1950s the rise of rhythm and blues and rock n' roll music led to a decline in Jazz audiences. Jazz continued to develop, but along several pathways. Some musicians moved towards a blending of Jazz and classical styles; this cool or West Coast jazz involved such musicians as Miles Davis and Gerry Mulligan; it was further developed by John Lewis's Modern Jazz Quartet. Miles Davis and saxophonist John Coltrane later introduced modal playing, which was used as the basis for improvisation. In the late 1950s such players as Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor abandoned scales altogether and began to play 'free' Jazz, which has continued as a minority form.

In the late 1960s Miles Davis was once again at the forefront of a new development in jazz, fusing Jazz idioms with elements of rock music (Jazz Funk). In the 1970s and 1980s there has been an increasing use of electric and electronic instrumentation in jazz. It is now so varied as to defy compartmentalisation.

### **Pop 1950-2013**

Since this genre is probably well known to all, I need only generalise with some concise comments.

In the 50s music changed forever with the invention of the teenager and many new forms of music, which would only proliferate over the next decades. The youth market is now huge and the music business is a billion of pounds per annum enterprise.

The first revolution was Rock n' Roll, a combination of Blue Grass, Country and Blues, but originally mostly Blues. Elvis' best early songs were plain Blues numbers written by Black musicians like Arthur 'Big Boy' Crudup. In fact, these still stand today, *Mystery Train*, *Hound Dog*, *Heartbreak Hotel*, *That's All right Momma*, etc.; in fact Elvis had recorded most of his best songs by 1956; but it was enough to change a generation.

Rock n' Roll impacted Britain chiefly with the UK tour of Bill Haley and the Comets. It was the first time that venues got smashed up by frenzied kids, even without drugs. A host of British copycat artists (Cliff Richard, Tommy Steele, Marty Wilde, Del Shannon) sought to duplicate their heroes (Carl Perkins, Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Fats Domino, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Gene Vincent).

However, at the end of the 50s a new form of amateur music emerged with Skiffle groups. The key player in this was Lonnie Donegan who brought old Blues songs (like those of Leadbelly) into a popular format. Before long every city had several teenage skiffle groups and in time these became the next generation of rock bands. TV shows like '*6:5 Special*' ensured that what was going on in pop was broadcast to the nation for the first time.

Also heavily featured in the 50s was the impact of movie songs and especially Musical tunes. This was the age of the recording of the great American songbook, which had previously been sold as sheet music. Many great singers (crooners) appeared in the 40s and grew famous in the 50s and later (Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire, Perry Como). While Rock n' Roll was seen as an unwelcome arrival by most adults, movie songs

were a staple diet of the radio, along with various light renditions of classical and romantic music (Semprini's Serenade, Victor Sylvester etc.). Also Big Bands remained popular throughout the 50s and Britain produced its own variants (Joe Loss etc.).

Into this mix came a new type of pop record, in varying formats which started in the 50s and spread into the 60s. Both American and British pop stars were born selling ballads and some up-tempo tunes. Some were directed to adults (Connie Francis, Doris Day, Joan Regan) others were directed to teenage girls (Adam Faith, Cliff Richard) others were just bubblegum (Alma Cogan, Frankie Valley, Bobby Vee, Petula Clark, Frankie Vaughan). Indeed, it was round this time that Tin Pan Alley began to churn out hit after hit from factories like the Brill Building on New York's 49<sup>th</sup> Street (Carole King & Gerry Goffin, Burt Bacharach, Neil Sedaka, Neil Diamond, Boyce and Hart, Marvin Hamlisch, Leiber and Stoller). In 1962 the Brill Building contained 165 music businesses.

As the 60s kicked off, various new forms appeared. 'Trad Jazz' was a resurgence of New Orleans Jazz from the 20s given a new lease of life by Acker Bilk and Kenney Ball's Jazzmen. These had huge hits, such as, *Stranger on the Shore*. Novelty songs were common, such as Rolf Harris', '*Tie Me Kangaroo Down*' or Bernard Cribbens, '*Hole in the Ground*' and '*Right said Fred*'.

We must also mention the Folk revolution that began with home grown singers (like Ewan McColl) and American imports (like Pete Seeger). Before long Bob Dylan and Simon and Garfunkel were topping the charts with traditional and new folk songs. Folk clubs grew up all over Britain producing many artists that would later become famous (John Renbourn, Bert Jansch, Davy Graham, Donovan).

But the real change came with the 'Merseysound' (though not limited to Liverpool) where home grown pop began to come into its own. As groups like the Searchers, the Hollies, Gerry and the Pacemakers, revamped American Blues and country, things changed. But it was the Beatles that set the world on fire. Their well-written, well-performed, original songs changed pop music forever. This is well known.

The Blues revolution also kicked Britain into an R and B revolution at the same time with the arrival of many old American Bluesmen on tour after tour after 1962. Thus some bands copied the Beatles but other bands copied the Bluesmen (The Rolling Stones, The Kinks, and The Animals). Pandora's box had been opened and music was diversifying in every direction. On the back of the Blues and Gospel was also a new sort of ballad / dance music developing that would become Soul. We must also not forget the arrival of Surf Music with bands like the Ventures and the Beach Boys.

By 1966, after the Flower Power revolutions and Hippy Music (Scott Fitzgerald, Mamas and Papas), new developments in amplification and instrument accessories enabled new volume levels and new sounds. Cream played at huge volumes while Hendrix used the volume provided by his Marshall amps to create new sounds using feedback and some prototype pedals. The Fuzz Face distortion pedal was first heard (probably) on the Stones, '*I can't get no satisfaction*', and Stevie Winwood's '*Keep on running*'. Other bands started developing out of Blues and early Rock (The Small Faces, The Who). These showed a variety of influences (Pete Townsend was very influenced by Jazzier Mose Allison for instance).

At this time Motown began to get its hooks into the youth with the arrival of '*Baby Love*' by the Supremes. Previous early soul bands had included the soulful pop bands like the Ronettes (*Be my baby, Baby I love you*), the Shangri Lars, the Marvelettes, the Crystals



and others, while Dionne Warwick had straddled the crooner / soul artist boundary for years. Other early proper soul artists were Solomon Burke, Etta James, Otis Redding, James Brown, Sam Cooke, Jackie Wilson and Wilson Pickett. In time Motown produced a whole stable of chart toppers and great musicians who changed pop music, like Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye. These two took soul beyond its earlier hit format into concept albums with political comment that endures today.

Hot on the heels of early rock, with Cream and Hendrix, came many bands bringing the arrival of full-grown Rock music. Rock bands proliferated. Some had their own unique and fascinating qualities (like King Crimson or Jethro Tull). Crimson was heavy Jazz (*'21st Century Schizoid Man'*) mixed with lyrical Jazz (*Moonchild* part 2) and lyrical folk (*Moonchild* part 1), boosted by mellotrons. Tull was heavy Folk with a medieval ballad sort of edge, mixed with Blues and Rock. In fact they took their name from an agricultural pioneer who helped bring about the British Agricultural Revolution by perfecting a horse-drawn seed drill in 1701. Tull was also unusual in boasting solos by a flautist (Ian Anderson). Anderson generously made no complaint when the Eagles (supporting them on a US tour) stole the basis of *Hotel California* (one of the most lucrative songs in history) from his song, *'We used to know'* (off the *'Stand Up'* second album).

More diversity was found in quieter circles in the inventive ballads and folk tales of the Incredible Band or the new type of folk-rock of Fairport Convention. In different circles the sound of the West Coast (America) was preferred (Jefferson Airplane, The Doors, The Grateful Dead). Unable to compete with the dominating force of Rock music, Jazz fell on hard times. Great players were playing to small crowds in clubs and not selling records. So Miles Davis said, 'if you cant beat 'em, join 'em' and started a new type of fusion jazz with *Bitches Brew*. Jazz would not be the same.

So the 60s were an amazing hotch-potch of new sounds and music genres, all piling up on top of each other. This in turn gave pop music a new gravitas. In the late 60s pop music was very mixed. On TV pop shows (*Ready Steady Go* especially) one could hear a crooner like Long John Baldry, a folkie like Donovan, Blues rock from the Stones, new pop from the Beatles, London Blues from the Kinks, Albert King type Blues from Fleetwood Mac, soul from Diana Ross, American West Coast from the Doors, a ballad from Petula Clark, a pop song from Cilla Black, Memphis soul from Dusty Springfield, hard rock from Hendrix and Cream and sappy bubblegum music (e.g. *Judy in Disguise*), all on the same program. Those were the days.<sup>70</sup>

The 60s needed this much space, they were so important, but later developments will be more concise.

The 70s were, mostly, less eclectic. Rock diverged into Hard Rock (Led Zeppelin), Prog Rock (Yes, ELP) and Heavy Metal (Black Sabbath) which later evolved into Grunge (Nirvana) and Thrash (Megadeth). Some US bands were noteworthy, such as the Eagles and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, and Frank Zappa. Some forms virtually vanished (Trad Jazz, Big Band music) while others languished (Folk, Blues). The Punk revolution was a reaction against the Hippie movement and the self-congratulatory extravagances of Prog Rock. But this was short lived and itself developed into the New Romantics (Duran Duran, Spandau Ballet) and Glam Rock (David Bowie, Queen, Slade, but prefigured by Marc Bolan). Then the Indie movement, mostly involving Manchester Bands (Oasis) and London groups (Blur) took over. Morrissey survived band arguments in the Smiths and still thrives today, while his guitarist, Johnny Mar, is well respected and busy.

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<sup>70</sup> A reference to Mary Hopkin.

But plain pop wasn't finished. Abba took the world by storm from the early 70s to the 90s with their well-constructed songs and melody lines that stretched scales. It didn't hurt that they looked great as well. Elton John continued to be successful from the late 60s to the present day with well-written ballads. American artists were influential also in the guise of people like Bruce Springsteen, Tom Petty and Neil Young. Rock continued to develop with many famous bands (Guns n' Roses, Def Leppard, Motorhead) while some rock became more focused on hit power ballads (Boston, Europe, Toto, Asia).

There were also developments in Jazz, which were often fusions with Rock (Weather Report, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, The Mahavishnu Orchestra, Back Door). But various forms of earlier Jazz still survived, sometimes fused with soul (George Benson), sometimes a more traditional style (Winton Marsalis), sometimes just solo virtuoso playing (Keith Jarrett).

The 80s had exploded with new inventions and technology based around synthesisers. While it gave great new sounds (everybody had a DX7 at first) it tended to lead to over-produced compressed sounds and sterility. At first all bands were keyboard dominated (Pet Shop Boys, Genesis, Eurythmics, Depeche Mode, A-ha). However, some went back to old time rock n' roll and pop (Travelling Wilburys).

In the 90s, guitar based bands came back into the ascendancy and still dominate music today, which is very varied. Clapton got his act together and had a new lease of life with some great albums and is still a dominating force today. Other guitarists, like Jeff Beck, John McLaughlin, Joe Satriani, Steve Vai, Eric Johnson and many others have big followings, though are not well known in popular music and often ignored by pundits.

However, it has to be said that pop music today, while varied in forms, is stale in construction. I analysed a number of pop songs in vogue recently and found that most had the same chord progression(s) e.g. G D Em C; C Em Am F, in various tempos. However, this has always been the case with pop. Most 50s and early 60s songs were constructed as C Am F (or Dm) G [I vi IV (II) V] and in a recent statistical poll of the top ten songs of all time, this C Am F G format dominated several songs.

While this is a very restricted and subjective history of pop (mostly from a UK perspective), it is the best I can do in a short compass. I am aware that many important people have been omitted (not intentionally).

### **World music**

This is another extremely varied and complex genre that covers all sorts of styles. It was originally a term for the traditional Folk music of various indigenous countries, but it later became a catch-all term for a wide variety of music that involved global cultural themes. Thus Folk music from Africa, India or the West Indies could be 'World Music', but so could the later Jazz developments of Joe Zawinul (ex-Weather Report and, earlier, Miles Davis bands).

World music often involves combinations of styles from different countries to produce a new sound. A good example of this is Paul Simon's groundbreaking album, *Graceland*.

### **Country**

The term 'Country Music' appeared in the 1040s but is now a catch-all term that covers a number of sub genres, including, Country, Hillbilly Music, Country and Western, Cowboy Music (e.g. Gene Autry, Roy Rogers), Western Swing (Bob Wills), Hillbilly Boogie (e.g. Merrill Moore), Bluegrass (e.g. Alison Kraus), Honky Tonk (e.g. Al Dexter), Rockabilly (Country mixed with Rock n' Roll), Country Rock, Outlaw Country (protest songs; e.g.

Willie Nelson), Country Pop (e.g. Dolly Parton) and so on. Cajun arose in similar circumstances but remains a predominately French themed music genre all on its own. The term 'Western' is simply denoting the location of the sound (same as 'cowboy' movies), i.e. the western pioneer states like Texas in the period when the US population was mostly based on the East Coast.

The origins of Country Music lie in the music of the immigrant communities that settled in the southern Appalachian Mountains region (USA). Settlers from Ireland, Scotland, France, Italy and many other places brought their music traditions and their treasured instruments with them as they sought a new life in the New World. Musical instruments included the Irish fiddle, the Italian mandolin, the French accordion, the German dulcimer and the Spanish guitar. But also included in this mix was the interaction with exiting Black African Americans who gave Country a Blues tinge and added the use of the African banjo.

Songs began as homeland Folk tunes, such as Irish jigs, national ballads, Folk-dance melodies or Scottish reels, which slowly metamorphosed into new musical forms with the interracial customisation. Irish music is the most important origin. The earliest term for this mish-mash was 'Hillbilly Music', typified by the banjo theme music for the 60s TV show, *'The Beverley Hillbillies'* played by Lester Flat and Earl Scruggs. A modern example of this is the music in the movie, *'Oh Brother where art thou?'*

Hillbilly music began to be accepted as a new music form in the 1920s, associated with the American south. An early record in this style is *'Turkey in the Straw'*, by fiddlers Henry Gilliland & A.C. (Eck) Robertson, released in 1923. Some Hillbilly musicians recorded Blues tunes. Another innovation was the inclusion of the newly invented Hawaiian guitar in 1922, the precursor of the Lap Steel guitar played with a slide.

Early famous Country players are: Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family, recording in 1927. Rodgers fused Hillbilly, Gospel, Jazz, Blues, Pop, Cowboy, and Folk; especially in his own compositions, such as *'Blue Yodel'*. The Carters recorded 300 ballads, traditional tunes, country songs and gospel hymns, representing the south-eastern Folk heritage.

In the 30s Barn Dances became popular as a form of cheap entertainment during the Depression along with the increasing popularity of the radio. The famous Grand Ole Opry started in 1925 in Nashville and continues to this day. In the 1940s crooners like Eddie Arnold became popular. However, movies in the 30s and 40s began to make stars out of singing cowboys, such as: Gene Autry, The Sons of the Pioneer, and Roy Rogers. Singing cowgirls joined, like Patsy Montana.

Bob Wills also appeared in movies and mixed Country with Jazz as dance music, which became known as Western Swing. At its most popular, Western swing rivalled Jazz big band swing music. Wills also made another innovation by introducing drums, previously considered too loud and impure. This appeared in his band 'The Texas Playboys' in 1935, however the Grand Ole Opry would not let the Playboys' drummer on stage even in the mid-40s. This policy continued into the mid-50s, but by 1960 drummers were common in Country bands.

Wills also was a pioneer in introducing an electric guitar into Country Music in 1938. In 1948 Arthur Smith had a Country hit with *'Guitar Boogie'*, which crossed over to the pop charts. Initially, as in Jazz, the warm humbuckers<sup>71</sup> of Gibson and Gretsch archtops

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<sup>71</sup> A type of double-coil pick up on a guitar.

prevailed but in time the twang of single coil Fender Stratocasters and Telecasters took over from the 50s onwards.

Emerging out of Texas / Oklahoma Honky Tonk (stripped down bar room music with guitar, bass, dobro or steel guitar (and later) drums) in the late 40s came what is called Traditional Country, featuring important singers like Hank Williams and Webb Pierce. Williams would influence not only later Country singers like George Jones but also many of the major early Rock n' Roll stars.

Rockabilly emerged in the 50s, influenced by Rock n' Roll; this led directly to Elvis's sound and, in turn, Elvis made Rockabilly prosper. Others were Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins. Nashville Sound was also important in the 50s developing with Chet Atkins, Patsy Cline Jim Reeves and others. It tended to add Pop influences and strings to make a smoother, warmer sound. More mainstream artists were Tammy Wynette and Lynn Anderson. Bucking the Nashville trend were more traditional Country players such as Loretta Lynn, Merle Haggard and Porter Wagoner (Wagoner would later introduce Dolly Parton to the world).

In the mid-60s there were various crossovers in reaction to the British invasion (the Beatles etc.). Pop and Folk artists went Country in the late 60s, such as The Byrds, Bob Dylan (*John Wesley Harding, Nashville Skyline*), the Flying Burrito Brothers, Michael Nesmith (First National Band), the Grateful Dead, Neil Young, Poco, Buffalo Springfield, and The Eagles. Gram Parsons (ex Byrds and Flying Burrito Bros) was named as the father of Country Rock. His partner in song, Emmylou Harris continued this form (often with guitarist Albert Lee) after Parson's death in 1973. Various sub-genres came out of Country Rock. Today, hordes of singers and players are key performers in various shades of Country and Country Rock, such as Dolly Parton, Shania Twain, Faith Hill, Garth Brooks, Dwight Yoakam, Steve Earle, Rosanne Cash and Linda Ronstadt.

Today it is impossible to categorise all the variants and styles of Country, it has become a mish-mash of all genres. Some players have reverted to more traditional styles, while others are really pop singers (such as Taylor Swift). Ironically, some Rock musicians (such as Robert Plant of Led Zeppelin) have taken to making successful Country records with Country players, producers and singers (such as Alison Kraus or Patty Griffin).

This is the simplest way in which we can, concisely, summarise the extremely complex and variegated history of Country Music.

## **Rock**

See comments in Blues and Pop. Rock music was a development of Blues given a harder, louder edge by pop music. It is said that the first rock song was The Kinks' *'You Really got me'* in 1964. The band Cream blurred the lines between progressive Blues and emerging Rock in the mid-60s. This was then taken further by bands such as Deep Purple, Uriah Heep, Nazareth, Judas Priest, Iron Maiden, Black Sabbath (especially *'Paranoid'*). The sound was made possible by the new range of amplification, such as Marshall 100w amps and speaker stacks.

For many people Led Zeppelin epitomises the best of Rock music (I disagree). Some early contributors to Rock (Jethro Tull) veered off into other directions (Folk). Others defy categorical description (Pink Floyd). Some early Rock bands stuck to a single groove that was popular, such as Status Quo (three chord heavy Blues), and merged with pop; while some pop bands became virtual Rock bands (Slade, Suzy Quatro). In addition, many Jazzers blended their music with Rock (Miles Davis, Mahavishnu Orchestra).

Today the Rock world is exceptionally varied and defies simple description.

### **Heavy Metal, Thrash, Grunge**

The comments made earlier regarding Rock and Thrash can suffice.

### **Hip hop and Rap**

We have already mentioned the problems with Rap in an earlier section; Hip Hop was the earlier from that Rap grew out of.

### **Protest songs**

This is an important song type that actually encompasses any musical genre. It is usually associated merely with the Folk protest songs of the late 50s - early 60s that accompanied CND anti nuclear war demonstrations.<sup>72</sup> This grew with the protests against the Vietnam War. Figures dominant in this sort of protest song were Pete Seeger ('*We shall overcome*'), Woody Guthrie (an early pioneer, '*This land is your land*'), '*Where Have All The Flowers Gone*' by Peter, Paul and Mary, and Bob Dylan ('*The Times they are a changin*', '*Masters of War*', '*Blowing in the wind*').

Many British folkies were inspired by these men who produced a British form of protest song such as Donovan singing '*The war drags on*' (written and also performed by Mick Softly). However his cover of Buffy Sainte-Marie's '*Universal Soldier*' unusually became a hit record in 1965. Another later Folk hit was Ralph McTell's '*Streets of London*' in 1969. Americans had huge crossover hits as well such as '*Eve of Destruction*' by Barry MacGuire, '*Woodstock*' by Joni Mitchell and '*Freedom/Motherless Child*' by Ritchie Havens.

In fact British Folk songs, from the earliest times, contained many themes of protest. The oldest extant European protest song is dubiously claimed to be '*The Cutty Wren*', a coded anthem against feudal oppression dating to the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. Other genuine old protest songs include: '*The Diggers' Song*' (17<sup>th</sup> century), '*The Maunding Soldier*' and '*The Black Leg Miner*'. Carrying on this tradition, Folk singer Ewan MacColl wrote '*The Ballad of Ho Chi Minh*' in 1953 inspiring a host of British Folk singers.

A modern performer, who is a key protest songwriter in the Folk style, is Billy Bragg, ('*Between the Wars*', 1985) although he uses an electric guitar for effect instead of the tradition flattop acoustic; despite this he is still reminiscent of Woody Guthrie.

But any style can be used to make a political message of protest. Perhaps the best anti Vietnam War protest song was '*19*' by Paul Hardcastle in 1985. This was far from being a Folk song but was a synthesiser based pop song with early scratch effects on the vocals, sample effects and real news coverage. More usual protest Pop songs were something like '*In The Ghetto*', by Elvis Presley, Labi Siffre's '*Something inside so strong*', '*Shipbuilding*' (written by Robert Wyatt but recorded by many including Elvis Costello) or '*Talking about a woman*' by Tracy Chapman, chosen because they were just good songs.

Many protest Pop songs arose as performers gained a social conscience, such as John Lennon's '*Give Peace a Chance*' or '*Woman Is the Nigger of the World*'. Others include: '*Peace Train*' by Cat Stevens (1971), '*Revolution*' by the Beatles or Kate Bush's '*Army Dreamers*' (1980), Leonard Cohen's '*Democracy*'.

Soul music also produced its share of protest songs. Notable are '*What's Going On*' and '*Inner City Blues*' by Marvin Gaye, '*A Change is Gonna Come*' by Sam Cooke, The

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<sup>72</sup> The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) organised a 53-mile march from Trafalgar Square to Aldermaston in 1958, to protest the Britain's participation in the arms race and recent testing of the H-bomb.

Temptations' *'Ball of Confusion'* and several by Stevie Wonder (*'In the city'*, *'Heaven Help Us All'*, *'Village Ghetto Land'*).

Some Rock songs must also be included, such as *'War Pigs'* by Black Sabbath (1970), The Who's *'We Won't Get Fooled Again'*, Bruce Springsteen's *'Born In The U.S.A.'*, The Stones' *'Gimme Shelter'*, Pink Floyd's *'Money'*, Jefferson Airplane's *'Volunteers of America'* or U2's, *'Sunday Bloody Sunday'* (1983). Reggae produced *'Get Up Stand Up'* and *'Redemption song'* by Bob Marley.

Jazz music also featured many great protest songs; notable among them is: Billie Holliday's *'Strange Fruit'*, and *'God Bless The Child'*, Nina Simone's, *'Go Limp'*, *'Mississippi Goddam'* & *'Black Is The Colour Of My True Love's Hair'*, An example of the ironic protest song is Randy Newman's Jazz/Pop *'Let's Drop The Big One Now'*.

Country also produced strong protest songs, such as *'Not Ready To Make Nice'* by The Dixie Chicks, Travis Tritt's *'Lord have Mercy on the Workin' Man'*; plus Johnny Cash's *'Why I'll Always Be The Man In Black'*. Neil Young straddled various genres with *'Alabama'*, and his more rocky *'Southern Man'* and *'Rockin' In The Free World'*. Perhaps the best Country protest song of the 60s was Country Joe and the Fish's *'I Feel Like I'm Fixin' To Die Rag'*, popularised at Woodstock.

So, the protest song has always been a key ingredient in popular music of all types. Though its form varies, its message is often very similar: help the poor, stop fighting wars, greed is bad, consider those worse off than you, and treat other people properly.

## Conclusion

There are many other genres and sub-genres, but this group is sufficient to have an understanding about modern music.

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