

# Rock and Roll

## The Sound of Music or the Noise of War

By Bill Fortenberry

As Joshua and Moses returned down the mountain after receiving the Law from God, they heard what at first they thought was the noise of war; but as they hurried closer, they recognized that the people were singing rather than fighting. Nonetheless, their song soon proved to be the sound of war as three thousand men of Israel lost their lives in punishment. The church of today faces a similar situation. With the prevalence of rock music in Christian services, those approaching the average church house will often find themselves wondering if the noise that they hear is that of war against God or music praising God. It is a question well worth pondering; for although we sing to a God who inhabits the praise of His people, we also sing to a God who executeth judgment upon all. Let us determine then in which category God Himself would place rock music. Would He consider it to be the sound of music or the noise of war?

### The Definition of Rock Music

Before we can discuss whether rock music is right or wrong, we have to establish a definition of what rock music is. Throughout the course of my research, I have learned that very few Christians are able to properly identify rock music. To most, it is simply another musical genre to be distinguished from classical music, country music, rap music and et cetera. However, the impact of rock music is not confined to a single label; its influence has pervaded every genre from opera to heavy metal. It has become so infused with all aspects of the American lifestyle that many Christians, while decrying the evils of the rock genre, have accepted rock music itself as a normal and indeed natural part of their existence. For the purpose of this article, therefore, I would like to focus on a definition of rock music which encompasses all of its forms without regard to labels.

While American rock music was in its infancy, its defining characteristics were widely known and discussed. The style was new to most people, and they wanted to learn all they could about it. The musicians, eager to share their new knowledge, were very willing to explain the secret of their style. That secret, the single, definitive characteristic of rock music, was an emphasis on the backbeat. This emphasis is the key to identifying rock music, for without it, rock simply ceases to exist.

But what is the backbeat and what does it mean to emphasize that particular beat? All music is set to a pattern or rhythm of beats. The two most common patterns are referred to as 4/4 and 3/4 time. In 4/4 time, the pattern of beats is a repeating count to four: 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4... In 3/4 time, the pattern is a repeating count to three: 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3... These rhythms both have a naturally occurring emphasis on the first beat which is often referred to as the downbeat. 4/4 time also has a secondary emphasis on the third beat. This emphasis can be demonstrated by simply repeating the sequence verbally while stressing the emphasized beat.

**1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4...**

**1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3...**

The effect of rock music is accomplished by emphasizing the unaccented beats or the backbeats either along with or in place of the natural emphasis. This can again be demonstrated vocally by comparing the sound of the natural rhythm above to that of the rock rhythm below.

1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4...

1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3...

This emphasis on the backbeat is vital to all forms of rock music, and it provides us with a structure on which to frame our definition. Rock music can be defined as that form of music which places undue emphasis on the backbeats.

This emphasis can be accomplished through several different methods. The most obvious means of establishing an emphasis on the backbeat is through the use of the drums, and many Christians are under the false impression that the rock beat can be removed from a song by simply eliminating the drums. To recognize and correct this error, one needs only to notice that we did not use any percussion in the above examples of the rock rhythm. We were able to demonstrate an emphasis on the backbeat using just our voices. The same can be done in music. Aside from the beat of the drums, the backbeat could also be emphasized by other instruments, vocal inflection or poetic meter. It is incumbent upon the Christian to learn how to recognize the rock beat in any aspect of music.

### **The Source of Rock Music**

Where did rock music come from? It is not a natural part of God's creation. In all the many forms of natural music – the songs of the birds, the call of the whales, the beating of the heart, even the electromagnetic radiation of the planets and the stars – there is not a single evidence of rock music. All natural music follows the natural rhythm of placing emphasis on the downbeat rather than the backbeat.

The music of birds has been studied extensively for many years, and several people have endeavored to capture the avian sonatas on paper. Simeon Cheney recorded nearly three hundred pages of bird songs in his book, *Wood Notes Wild*<sup>1</sup>, and Xenos Clark also published several bird songs in *The American Naturalist*<sup>2</sup>. Once written out for us, these songs can be easily examined for evidence of rock music, but there is no unnatural emphasis of the backbeat within the songs of the birds. Similarly, one could study the songs of the great whales and come to the same conclusion. David Rothenberg, one of the few people attempting to provide us with written recordings of these symphonies, concluded that their songs were written in the same style as the classical music of medieval times<sup>3</sup>.

Professor Don Gurnett of the University of Iowa has studied the electromagnetic radiation of celestial objects by converting that radiation into sound<sup>4</sup>. The resulting symphony agrees with God's statement in Job that the morning stars sang together with joy, but the singing of the stars is missing any hint of rock music. In the introduction to his book *Wood Notes Wild*, Simeon Cheney explained that all natural sounds produce music. He demonstrated by notating the songs produced from a dripping faucet, a swinging door and a whining clothes line disturbed during a storm that even the sounds produced by inanimate objects follow the same rhythmic pattern that is found in classical music<sup>5</sup>.

Rock music simply does not exist in nature, nor can it be found within the patterns of the human body. Every function of the body operates on a pattern of tension and relaxation similar to that found in classical music. One can readily recognize this pattern by simply listening to a heartbeat. It is this rhythm which makes the Mozart effect possible. Medical researchers have found that exposure to the

patterns found in classical music lessens the amount of time that patients must spend in recovery. The audible reminder of that pattern actually aids the weakened body in maintaining a healthy rhythm.<sup>6</sup>

Many additional examples could be given to demonstrate that the patterns of rock music are inconsistent with nature, yet the question still persists; if rock music does not occur naturally, from whence does it come? Many rock musicians have answered that question by claiming that their music came straight from Satan himself<sup>7</sup>.

Robert Palmer, contributing editor of Rolling Stone magazine and chief advisor for the "History of Rock 'n' Roll" broadcast, openly admits that the rhythmic patterns of rock music are derived from the rhythms of the voodoo religion. He stated that "the idea that certain rhythm patterns or sequences serve as conduits for spiritual energies, linking individual human consciousness with the gods, is basic to traditional African religions... the fundamental riffs, licks, bass figures, and drum rhythms that make rock and roll can ultimately be traced back to African music of a primarily spiritual or ritual nature. In a sense, rock and roll is a kind of voodoo."<sup>8</sup>

Little Richard was very open about where his music came from. He claimed, "My belief about Rock 'n' Roll is this: I believe this kind of music is demonic... A lot of the beats in music today are taken from voodoo."<sup>9</sup> He also believed that he was "directed and commanded by another power, the power of darkness, the power of the devil, Satan."<sup>10</sup> When asked about Christian rock music he said, "Rock 'n' roll doesn't glorify God. You can't drink out of God's cup and the devil's cup at the same time. I was one of the pioneers of that music, one of the builders. I know what the blocks are made of because I built them."<sup>11</sup>

It is important to note that these men are not referring to the lyrics of rock music, but rather to the rhythm or the pattern of beats which is prevalent in that style. In labeling the rhythm itself as satanic, they are claiming that the act of placing an unnatural emphasis on the backbeats of a song is demonic. The claims of these men seem to agree with the teachings of the Bible on music.

According to the Bible, there are certain songs which God associates with sin (Isa. 23:15) and which He does not want to hear (Amos 5:23). The Bible also teaches us that Satan is very wise in the realm of music (Eze. 28:12-19) and that his distinct sound was cast out of heaven with him (Isa 14:11-12). We are also told that the demonic forces cannot abide godly music (I Sam. 16:14-23) thus leading us to the conclusion that Satan's music must have been fundamentally different from the music of God. The idea of a style of music cunningly crafted by Satan to be disruptive of God's natural pattern is fully consistent with the teachings of Scripture.

### **The Evidence of Rock Music**

Since rock music is not found in nature but is attributed to Satan and since the idea of a musical style developed by Satan is consistent with the Bible, we are left with a question. Is rock music really the devil's music? To answer that question, we must look at the effects of the music, not the lyrics but the music itself, to determine if the rock rhythm displays evidence of satanic influence. If rock music is indeed the devil's music, we would expect it to contain fundamental differences from the music of God. We would expect it to be found in places of demonic activity. We would expect it to be destructive of God's creation, and we would expect it to display the wisdom and subtlety of him who was both the covering cherub and the beguiling serpent.

The first of these evidences has already been mentioned. We have already seen that rock music is fundamentally different from the music which God designed into nature in that rock music's characteristic emphasis on the backbeat is completely absent from natural music. The hymns are also indicative of this distinction. The music in the Christian hymnal is almost exclusively written in variations of 4/4 and 3/4 time, and it is noticeably absent of any emphasis on the backbeat. In fact, not a single one of the hundreds of thousands of Christian hymns written before the Americanization of rock music contains rock's unnatural rhythm. Many of the hymn writers were aware of rock music, for it has always been prevalent in the strongholds of Satan. They simply rejected it as a medium unsuitable for the songs of the Lord.

The second evidence has also been mentioned previously, but let us further take notice that rock music has been the music of choice for many satanic cults. For instance, the demonic Process Church had very close ties to both the Rolling Stones and the Beatles,<sup>12</sup> and the Beatles' press officer said of that band that "They're completely anti-Christ. I mean, I am anti-Christ as well, but they're so anti-Christ they shock me which isn't an easy thing."<sup>13</sup> Anton LaVey and the Church of Satan also had very close ties to several rock groups including Black Sabbath, The Who, and Ozzy Osbourne.<sup>14</sup> Clearly, the presence of an unnatural emphasis on the backbeat does not in any way hinder the work of Satan and his demons.

### **The Effects of Rock Music**

But what about the third evidence? Is rock music actually destructive? Since the 1950's many experiments have been performed to study the effects of music on plants.<sup>15</sup> It has been found that while classical music is beneficial to plants, rock music is actually harmful. The most famous of these experiments was performed by Dorothy Retallack in 1973, and the results are recorded in her book, *The Sound of Music and Plants*. In her experiments, she subjected the plants to several different kinds of music and found that those plants which were exposed to rock music tended to flourish less, lean further away from the source of the music and die more frequently than either the control group or those exposed to classical music.<sup>16</sup>

Similar experimentation has been conducted with mice. In 1987, Gervasia Schreckenbergh and Harvey Bird determined that mice exposed to the unnatural rhythms of rock music suffered from significant brain damage resulting in a decrease in intelligence and attentiveness along with an increase in aggression.<sup>17</sup> The results of these experiments and many others demonstrate that rock music is inherently destructive in both the plant and animal kingdoms. Surely, the God who daily provides for the needs of His creation and who sees each sparrow fall would not endorse the use of rhythms contrary to that creation.

Not only is the destructive nature of rock music seen in nature, but it can be observed in humans as well. In his book, *The Secret Power of Music*, David Tame observed that "there is scarcely a single function of the body which cannot be affected by musical tones." He referenced Julius Portnoy who stated that, more than any other influence on our bodies, music can "change metabolism, affect muscular energy, raise or lower blood pressure, and influence digestion."<sup>18</sup> Many studies have found that rock music has a decidedly negative effect on the body, and that this effect stems directly from the rhythm itself rather than the lyrics.

The effects of rock music on the human body can be categorized in two groups, mental and physical. The mental effects include poor coordination, memory loss, emotional disorders, and brain damage; and the physical effects can be as mild as hormonal imbalance and addiction or as severe as immune disorders and premature death.

In a 2004 study, Ibrahim Basoglu et al. conducted a series of tests in which they assessed the influence of rock music on high school students. During those tests, they found that “the precision of voluntary action decreased in pop music, and it increased in classical music.” In other words, they found that the rhythm of the rock music produced a lack of coordination whereas the rhythm of the classical music increased the student’s coordination.<sup>19</sup> Similarly Joseph LaVoie and Betty Collins found that listening to rock music can cause memory loss. In their study of high school students subjected to periods of rock rhythms, classical music, and silence, they found that “retention was significantly lower in the rock music condition.”<sup>20</sup>

Many studies have demonstrated that rock music causes emotional and behavioral disorders. Most of them have tended to place the blame on the language used in the lyrics of the songs; but in a 1989 journal entry, two scientists, Wanamaker and Reznikoff, tested this theory by playing the lyrics of the aggressive songs with softer rhythms and vice versa. They found that the intensity of the emotional disorders paralleled the intensity of the rock rhythm regardless of the lyrics.<sup>21</sup> From their results, we can postulate that the use of strong negative lyrics in rock forms such as heavy metal and gangster rap is very likely the result of the excessive influence of the rock rhythm on the performers.

Examples of research confirming the emotional effects of rock music include a study by Weidinger and Demi which found that “hospitalized adolescents who primarily listened to heavy metal music had a history of more preadmission, dysfunctional psychosocial behaviors than adolescents who primarily listened to other types of music.”<sup>22</sup> A study by Harris, Bradley and Titus found that after subjecting patients to a month long diet of rock music they tended to display more inappropriate behavior than they did after a diet of music with classical rhythms,<sup>23</sup> and research by Eliana Tropeano demonstrated that watching rock music videos significantly increases the subject’s likelihood to display negative behavior.<sup>24</sup>

In many cases, the mental effects of the backbeat can also cause significant brain damage. We have already seen that the brain can be harmed by this type of rhythm in that Schreckenber and Bird discovered significant brain damage in mice subjected to rock rhythms, but it can further be stated that the human brain is equally as vulnerable to musical influence. The Russian scientist Malyarenko tested this idea by taking EEG measurements of children who had listened to music every day in school and comparing the results with children who had not listened to music. He discovered that those who listened to music showed significant changes in their brain functions.<sup>25</sup> Another Russian study by Pavlygina et al. demonstrated that the changes produced by rock music are significantly different from those produced by classical music, thus demonstrating that those who listen to the unnatural rhythms of rock music are risking the same brain damage as that which afflicted the mice.<sup>26</sup>

As for the physical effects of listening to rock music, Dr. Weinberger has found that the rhythms in rock music cause the body to produce an increase in the hormones cortisol and epinephrine. Both of these hormones are designed to help the body withstand stressful situations by affecting changes such as increasing blood flow to the muscles, increasing the level of oxygen in the brain and increasing blood sugar. The influence of these two hormones in a non-stressful situation can generate a natural high, producing a feeling of euphoria in the listener; but there are many negative side effects as well. Excessive amounts of these hormones can cause headaches, palpitations, arrhythmia and hypertension. Both cortisol and epinephrine suppress the immune system and inhibit digestion thus leaving the body vulnerable to numerous pathological attacks.<sup>27</sup>

One of the greatest dangers associated with these hormones is that they are addictive. As high levels of cortisol and epinephrine are maintained for great lengths of time, the brain and muscles become dependent on them desiring that those levels continue to be maintained; and, as with any other drug, the body eventually develops a tolerance thus requiring the listener to consistently progress toward music with a greater intensity of the rock rhythm.<sup>28</sup>

The combined dangers of the physiological and psychological effects of rock music produce among its most ardent followers a society well known for misery and death. Of the 339 rock stars who have died within the past 60 years, 316 of them died before their 55<sup>th</sup> birthday. If we add to that the 19 who died at ages greater than 55 and the 98 who are still living at ages greater than 55, we can determine that only 27% of all rock stars live to see their 55<sup>th</sup> birthday. The average age of death for rock musicians has been determined to be a mere 37 years – approximately half the national average.<sup>29</sup>

To put these figures in perspective, we could compare them with similar statistics from a group of people in the same industry as rock musicians and under similar amounts of stress to produce for the public – classical composers. Among this class of musicians, 44% of them passed the age of 70 before they died making them nearly twice as likely to reach the age of 70 as rock musicians are to reach the age of 55. The average of death for classical composers is also nearly twice that of rock musicians at an average of 66 years.<sup>30</sup> This difference greatly increases in significance when we consider that most of the classical composers obtained long life without the aid of modern medicine.

The unnatural rhythms of rock music have proven to be destructive to every class of life in God's creation: plant, animal and human; and yet those rhythms have been gladly accepted by many Christians. The acceptance of rock music by Christians provides the fourth evidence: that rock music displays the wisdom and subtlety of Satan. The same Bible passage which speaks of Satan's great musical ability also explains that he seeks to defile sanctuaries, and in II Corinthians 11:12-15, God further explains that one of Satan's primary tactics is to deceive the church into accepting his philosophies as if they were God's. Nowhere else is this tactic more evident than in the Christian music industry of the past 50 years.

In reference to these false ministers of righteousness, Jesus informed us in Matthew 7:15-20 that we can recognize the ministers of Satan by their fruits. From the adulterous relationships of Amy Grant, Sandi Patti and Michael English to the occultic imagery of Michael W. Smith and Third Day to the open blasphemy of P.O.D., the corrupt fruits of rock music's infiltration of the church are abundantly obvious.<sup>31</sup> We have demonstrated already that rock music is fundamentally different from the music of God, that it is found in places of demonic activity and that it is literally destructive of God's creation. Is it any wonder that those Christians who advocate the use of this music in the church are often found to be false prophets?

### **The Solution to Rock Music**

And yet Christians continue to be deceived, and those who most loudly denounce the evils of rock music regularly allow it to creep into their lives unawares. Today's Christians are too often ignorant and gullible in this realm, believing that only that music which is actually labeled as rock is evil. But it is not the label that makes the music. As was mentioned at the beginning of this article, the unnatural and indeed satanic rhythms of rock music are pervasive throughout many different genres. It would indeed be naive of a Christian to assume that a song is acceptable to the Lord because it is labeled as Southern Gospel instead of Contemporary Christian Music or that a popular Christian rock song could be made pleasing to our holy God by simply excluding the use of the drums.

The Christian who truly wishes to please God with his music must learn to recognize the defiling presence of the rock rhythm. To do this, he must learn how to count time in the song and how to read music. He must be able to recognize the natural downbeats in order to detect the unwelcome emphasis on the backbeat. Church musicians must be especially capable of detecting Satan's influence; for once a song is permitted in the church, it will be forever in the houses of its members. The founders of our great nation recognized that if the knowledge of the holy is understanding, then ignorance must produce a knowledge of the profane; and to this end they passed the Ole Deluder Satan Act establishing schools throughout the country for the education of its citizens. In like manner also, the church must recognize the need for musical training, for knowledge is the only sure means of checking the spread of rock music among Christians.

This training must be accomplished in four ways. Since the song leader of a church usually has the final say in all matters of church music, then it is necessary that a successful attack on the stronghold of Satan's music begin with the education of the song leader. The church should see his continued training as an investment in their own safety. The church musicians and the choir should be the next consideration. The congregation often looks to this group for recommendations in their personal music choices. An investment in the continued enrichment of the churches music program will pay great dividends in the homes of the members. Furthermore, as children are both more susceptible to the influence of wickedness and more receptive to the knowledge of righteousness than adults, any successful music program in the church must also include special training for the children. And finally, to properly maintain a defense against the music of Satan, the church must regularly inform the body as a whole of the attributes and dangers of rock music as well as the benefits to be gained in choosing that music which is pleasing to the Lord.

Imagine for a moment how different would have been the reactions of Joshua and Moses had they heard the distinct sound of godly music coming from the camp rather than that which sounded of war. Imagine the effect Christians would have on this world if their churches, their homes and their vehicles resonated with the praises of our Savior rather than the rhythms of His enemy. How much greater would this nation be were our youth to seek after that music which promotes a long life of wisdom and health? Let us rise to the challenge, reject the noise of rock music, embrace the songs of the Lord and teach others to do the same.

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<sup>1</sup> Simeon Pease Cheney, *Wood Notes Wild: Notations of Bird Music*, Boston, MA: Lee and Shepard Publishers, 1892

<sup>2</sup> Xenos Clark, B.S., "Animal Music, Its Nature and Origin," *The American Naturalist*, vol. 13, April 1879, pg. 209-223

<sup>3</sup> David Rothenberg, *Thousand Mile Song: Whale Music in a Sea of Sound*, New York, NY: Basic Books, 2008

<sup>4</sup> <http://www-pw.physics.uiowa.edu/space-audio/>

<sup>5</sup> Cheney, *Wood Notes Wild*, pg. 1-4

<sup>6</sup> "Music's Surprising Power to Heal," *Reader's Digest*, August, 1992

<sup>7</sup> Bro. David Cloud and Dr. Terry Watkins have both published extensive research on the satanic origin of rock music which can be found at their websites, <http://www.wayoflife.org/> and <http://www.av1611.org/> respectively. I have met both men on multiple occasions and have personally verified much of their research in this area.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Palmer, *Rock and Roll An Unruly History*, Harmony Press 1995, pg. 53

<sup>9</sup> Charles White, *The Life and Times of Little Richard*, New York, NY: Da Capo Press 1994, pg. 197

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 205

<sup>11</sup> *The Dallas Morning News*, Oct. 29, 1978, pg. 14A

<sup>12</sup> Donald Phau, "The Satanic Roots of Rock Music"

<sup>13</sup> Derek Taylor, *Saturday Evening Post*, Aug. 8, 1964

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- <sup>14</sup> Donald Phau, "The Satanic Roots of Rock Music"
- <sup>15</sup> Nuran Ekici, et al., "The Effects of Different Musical Elements on Root Growth and Mitosis in Onion Root Apical Meristem," *Asian Journal of Plant Sciences*, vol 6, no. 2, 2007, pg. 369-373
- <sup>16</sup> Dorothy Retallack, *The Sound of Music and Plants*, Devorss and Co., June 1973
- <sup>17</sup> Gervasia M. Schreckenber and Harvey H. Bird, "Neural Plasticity of MUS Musculus in Response to Disharmonic Sound," *Bulletin*, New Jersey Academy of Science, vol. 32, no. 2, Fall 1987
- <sup>18</sup> David Tame, *The Secret Power of Music: The Transformation of Self and Society Through Musical Energy*, Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1984, pg. 136-138
- <sup>19</sup> Ibrahim Basoglu, M. Tunaya Kalkan and Nil Sari, "The Physiological Effects of Classical Music and Pop Music on Female High School Students," *Yeni Symposium*, 2004, Cerrahpasa Medical Faculty, Istanbul, Turkey.
- <sup>20</sup> Joseph C. LaVoie and Betty R. Collins, "Effect of Youth Culture Music on High School Students," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1975
- <sup>21</sup> Wanamaker CE and Reznikoff M., "Effects of Aggressive and Nonaggressive Rock Songs on Projective and Structured Tests," *The Journal of Psychology*, vol. 123, no. 6, Nov. 1989, pg. 561-570
- <sup>22</sup> Weidinger CK and Demi AS, "Music Listening Preferences and Preadmission Dysfunctional Psychosocial Behaviors of Adolescents Hospitalized on an In-patient Psychiatric Unit," *J Child Adolesc Psych.*, vol. 4, no. 1, Jan-Mar, 1991
- <sup>23</sup> Harris CS, Bradley RJ and Titus SK, "A Comparison of the Effects of Hard Rock and Easy Listening on the Frequency of Observed Inappropriate Behaviors: Control of Environmental Antecedents in a Large Public Area," *Journal of Music Therapy*, vol. 29, no. 1, Spring, 1992, pg. 6-17
- <sup>24</sup> Eliana Tropeano, "Does Rap or RockMusic Provoke Violent Behavior?" *Journal of Undergraduate Psychological Research*, vol. 1, 2006, pg. 31
- <sup>25</sup> T. N. Malyarenko, "The Development of Brain Electric Activity in 4 Year Old Children by Long-Term Sensory Stimulation with Music," *Human Physiology*, vol. 2, 1996, pg.76-81
- <sup>26</sup> R. A. Pavlygina, D. S. Sakharov and V. I. Davydov, "Spectral Analysis of the Human EEG during Listening to Musical Compositions," *Human Physiology*, vol. 30, no. 1, Jan. 2004, pg. 54-60
- <sup>27</sup> N. M. Weinberger, "The Musical Hormone", *Musica Research Notes*, vol. 4, no. 2, Fall 1997
- <sup>28</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>29</sup> Dr. Terry Watkins, "Premature Death of Rock Stars," <http://www.av1611.org/rockdead.html>
- <sup>30</sup> Based on a random sampling of 650 classical composers. There are over 2200 known classical composers, and my research into their lifespans is currently ongoing.
- <sup>31</sup> Dr. Terry Watkins, "Christian Rock Exposed," <http://www.av1611.org/crock/crockex1.html>