

Hard Rock and Christianity

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Fact

Using stasis theory, this paper will examine research on the topic of hard rock music, also sometimes known as heavy metal. The sources used are reliable sources determined by the CRAPP method, which validates the credibility of each website and the content presented. Hard rock has been shaped and reshaped by the many sub-genres that have emerged from it over time, as well as the popularity of online streaming sources. The musical genre has also been influenced by the issues created in relation to major religions, such as Christianity, which find the musical genre abhorrent and against their beliefs. Many religious leaders and parents find hard rock to be corruptive of young minds, despite the musical genre not having any true affiliation with Satanism, which has increased the debate on its acceptability.

Definition

The overall genre of rock is a music genre that originally emerged in the 1950's and has a wide variety of sub-genres within the one, which makes it so popular to begin with. It can have gentle, ballad-like songs in the soft rock sub-genre, heavy and angry songs in the hard rock sub-genre, and all different types of songs in the numerous sub-genres. Many artists, such as Elvis and The Beatles (pictured right), are credited with the creation and rapid fame of rock music in general (Frith). It was mostly popularized by American teens that sought to use themes that were deemed as unacceptable for conversation by the white American middle class (Hamilton). Many hard rock bands used iconography like pentagrams, which created “[one] of the most famous,



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prolonged mass media scares in history, [the] Satanic Panic” (Romano) in the 1980’s. The entirety of the rock genre has, therefore, nearly always been extremely controversial in America.

Hard rock is one of the sub-genres of rock, which emerged in the late 1960’s, and is said to be influenced by British blues and general rock. The consensus is that hard rock is “highly amplified rock music with a heavy beat” (Dictionaries). Despite the discord it has faced since its beginning, people have still flocked to hard rock music because of the intense feelings it generates in its listeners. People connect to it because “most metal songs come from the heart”



(Shijin). The music inspires people in a wide range of ways, such as painting their faces, although it is not always in a fashion that is deemed “appropriate” by society. [“Down With The Sickness,”](#) by the heavy metal band Disturbed, is a good modern example

of a hard rock song with its angry and scandalous lyrics, heavy drumbeats, and hard electric guitar rhythms. Guns n’ Roses’ [“Welcome to the Jungle”](#) is a good example of a hard rock song from the height of the genre’s popularity.

Quality

Hard rock is still quite popular today, but not as focused on by mainstream media as it was during its prime in the 1970’s-1980’s. Its falling-off can be partially attributed to online streaming services and music popularity charts that it “hasn’t been able to necessarily keep up with,” so says Beyond ARTV’s John (5:21-5:28). Online streaming services have been equating single-song streams as an entire album purchase, so artists like Ariana Grande and Chris Brown

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have been adding numerous songs to online albums to keep their albums up on the music charts.

John goes on to say that fans create built-in revenue for these hard rock bands by going to their shows, buying their merchandise on-site, and buying their music physically; which is a

Top 5 most popular genres in 2024

1. Hip Hop
2. Pop
3. Orchestral
4. Trap
5. Ambient/Chill Out

major advantage to the genre (8:27-8:43). Without these fans buying physical products directly from the bands, they would have a much more difficult time surviving the digital age we live in now.

Even if hard rock did not have these ailments hindering its fame, it would still have the Christian community to contend with. In the 1960's, the popular pop music of the era provided a stark contrast to the newly emerging hard rock music. The sexuality that hard rock flaunted was a bolt from the blue for the conservatism that was so common at the time. It had been opposed by Christianity for decades, but it is now being incorporated into some Christian bands. Many parents would say that rock is the devil's music, and that their children should not be listening to it.



Some Christians believe that rock music in general is fine to listen to as long as the lyrics do not encourage 'sinful' behavior or oppose God. There are many hard rock songs that hint at disdain or contempt for Christianity, and there are some songs that show blatant disregard for the

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religion. Occasionally, the contempt for Christianity is shown in the album artwork of hard rock bands, but it is usually shown in the song titles and lyrics. Some musicians, such as the Beatles, even went as far as to say that they were bigger than God or Jesus or Christianity as a whole. Bob Dylan has been quoted saying that “God is a woman,” and Ariana Grande went on to title one of her songs on her 2018 album *Sweetener* the exact same as this quote.

According to Got Questions Ministries, “Christian rock music has always drawn a bit of controversy” because “not all music glorifies God.” It is the belief that “True godly music, will be composed of three elements... MELODY, HARMONY, and RHYTHM... [but rock] “music” has... only fragments of melody endlessly repeated,” (Reality). This is only one of the beliefs that steer Christians away from hard rock. Some people, such as the band Saint, still create hard rock songs whose lyrics are about the bible and the ‘final judgement day’ that the bible refers to. Despite the existence of many Christian hard rock and heavy metal bands, such as [Saint](#), some people believe that ‘true Christians’ should never listen to rock music, no matter how biblical the lyrics sound.

The biggest problem that most people, especially the religious community, had with hard rock was the drug use that most ‘Rockstars’ participated in and consequently encouraged during the 1970’s. “[Hard rock] has found drugs to be a consistent bedfellow...it would be inconceivable to think of finding one without the other” (Balmforth pg. 44). Probably one of the most notorious lines of the era was ‘sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll,’ which increased the desire for hard rock music in teens that wanted to feel free or in control. However, the line also aided in the argument against all forms of rock.

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The rampant drug use and subsequent encouragement by rockstars is, thankfully, not as frequent nowadays. Consequently, recent times have seen hard rock musicians with the ability to continue producing music without sever backlash from the public and the religious community. Presently, the musical genre is less focused on in the religious community and people are not as intensely against hard rock as they were back then. Despite this, many religious people still prefer that their children do not listen to it.

Another major issue with hard rock in the 1960's and 1970's was its promotion of sexuality. "The leading rock groups agree there is no division between rock and [sex: the] clothes, the stage, the instruments, the sound, the beat, the audience response, the language -- all is sex" (Balmforth pg. 40). Hard rock is said to have the goal of tension relieving, and that it is very "visceral" (Balmforth pg. 20) and fun. This went against the staunch beliefs of the conservatives, so it became the largest reason to forbid the listening to of hard rock.



The popularity of rock and hard rock has declined over the last 20-30 years, despite their broad range in musical styles. This use of 'forbidden subjects' and the overall heavy feel of the music has generated a lot of hate for hard rock and, in the beginning, it was generally thought of as 'death music' or 'evil music' by most religious conservatives. The ensuing conflict created by this shocking music also fueled its popularity. If a teenager wanted to rebel against their parents, they would aspire to be a 'Rockstar' and listen to nothing but hard rock music. However, this

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gave parents, especially the strictly religious ones, more reasons to denounce the music genre altogether.

Policy

This ‘inappropriateness’ that hard rock aroused in people has played a part in the decline of its popularity as well. The variations and adaptations of the genre have also played a part in the waning interest of its listeners. There are people that believe that “real rock n roll has kinda died in the mainstream” (r/listentothis), but others believe that “gems continue to emerge” (r/listentothis) in the hard rock genre. While some listeners enjoyed the inappropriate feelings and scenes the music encouraged, others felt that these emotions and depictions were inane wrong.

Since its rise to fame in the 1970’s, the hard rock sub-genre has had a rollercoaster reputation of popularity and hate, of inspiration and mischief. It has been loved by anxious and rebellious teens, meanwhile being hated by their parents and religious groups. Hard rock has inspired drug use, lust, and intense emotions, both positive and negative. Despite its decline in popularity over the years, hard rock remains a relatively popular musical genre. With its adaptation to the continuously changing world, it seems as though hard rock may continue to be fashionable.

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