

HOW TO EVALUATE MUSIC

A Course for Leaders



Ours is a spiritual warfare that demands a keen understanding of the enemy's tactics, and total commitment to combat them.

General Douglas MacArthur wisely observed that "it is fatal to enter any war without the will to win it." In any battle, there is no substitute for victory. Victory demands excellence, and excellence has a high price tag.

The Olympic competitor must sacrifice far greater time and effort than the high school track runner or the person desiring to exercise for physical fitness. The hygiene procedures observed before eating are vastly different from the scrubbing which a physician does prior to performing surgery.

The concert pianist must render much more diligent study and practice than the person who wants only to learn about music appreciation or play a few songs for his own enjoyment. In any walk of life the requirements of commitment and discipline vary according to the scope of influence and effectiveness desired.

The message shared in this course is designed for those who want to be on the "cutting edge" of Christian leadership and service. God often tells His choice servants, "Others may; you may not." The reasons for the restriction include the servant's need to disallow anything which would dull his sensitivity to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and the understanding of God's ways as outlined in Scripture, and the ever-present possibility of creating stumbling blocks for those who are watching and seeking to emulate the servant's example.

In his farewell letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul commissioned his spiritual son with a specific task to accomplish, and explained the single-minded dedication and discipline which would be required to complete it:

*“Thou therefore, my son, **be strong** in the grace [the desire and ability to do God’s will] that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

*“Thou therefore **endure hardness**, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. **No man that warreth entangleth himself** with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

*“And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he **not crowned, except he strive lawfully**” (II Timothy 2:1–5).*

We live in a day when there is much debate over the use of contemporary idioms in music as a tool of evangelism and as a means of edification for the Body of Christ.

What should be said to the person who explains that he didn’t feel *Contemporary Christian Rock Music* was right until he went to a few concerts and saw the witness being given for the Lord Jesus Christ, and then had to conclude that it was acceptable?

We would have to direct such a person to a principle Jesus taught His disciples. With a simple rebuke, He pointed out that the life and practice of the one giving the witness must be in harmony with the message.

Perhaps the clearest witness of the identity of Jesus Christ given during His earthly ministry was from the demons who said publicly, *“Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou **Jesus of Nazareth?** art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, **the Holy One of God.**”*

That was a clearer statement than many others were giving at the time, including the disciples, but *“Jesus rebuked him, saying, **Hold thy peace. . .**”* (See Mark 1:23–27 and Luke 4:33–37.) Jesus desired that His disciples be empowered with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost so they could preach the truth about Him, and He was willing to wait for that time.

The apostle Paul responded in a similar fashion when *“. . . a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination . . . followed [him*

and his company], and cried, saying, *These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.*” Scripture reports that “. . . *Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.*” (See Acts 16:16–18.) Paul recognized the impropriety of a message coming from a source representing its opposition.

Examination of seven key elements of music—melody, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, form, text (in vocal music), and performance—together with careful application of the principles in each area will allow any Christian to be on the “cutting edge” of excellence in his or her own personal life and ministry.

1 A MELODY IS A SERIES OF TONES HEARD AS A MUSICAL THOUGHT.

Melodies do not just happen. Rather they are specifically designed to move in certain ways. A composer arranges a few pitches to make a short melodic formula called a **motive**. These motives are combined to produce **phrases**, and the phrases are combined to create **themes**.

From motives . . .



To phrases . . .



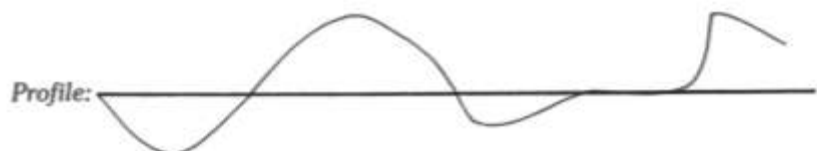
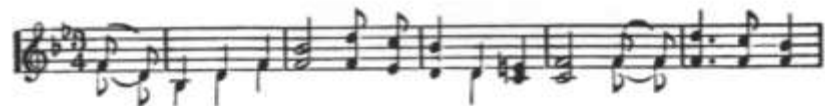
Ludwig van Beethoven

To themes . . .



Melodies can move two ways: **up** or **down**. Within that description, the melody can move by **step** within a narrow pitch range or by **leap** and, thus, cover a wider range of pitches.

Each individual melody has its own **contour** or outline of ascending and descending pitches. The melody of a song is like the profile of a person or the line of a drawing. Its shape provides recognition; thus, we usually identify a song by its "tune."



A good melody will have a definite high place near its conclusion so that a sense of **climax** and **resolution** can be achieved. Melodies must be balanced in their design of rising and falling pitches.

A melody line which descends for too long a time before an upward turn creates a sense of despair in the listener. A rising line that is too long builds tension in the listener, and **static** movement, or constant repetition of pitches, gives a chant-like quality which produces a hypnotic effect or trance in the listener. Much of the music of the New Age culture is designed to elicit this type of tranquillity and euphoric response.

Note that the requirement of balance does not mean equal amounts of rise and fall, just as a balanced diet does not require equal amounts of the various nutrition groups. Any art form demands balance in all aspects in order to achieve beauty.



If a melody is designed to be sung, its rising and falling pattern must match the inflection of the words in the text. It is possible for inappropriate melody lines to neutralize the effectiveness of the textual message if this is not done.

Because the spirit of man is so attuned to melody, use of descants in arranging can be particularly effective in "lifting the spirit." A **descant** is a secondary melody which is performed in a higher register as the main melody is being played or sung.

2 HARMONY OCCURS WHEN TWO OR MORE TONES ARE SOUNDED AT THE SAME TIME.

A melody is usually heard against a background of harmony. **Harmony** relates to **chords** and their **progression** (movement from one chord to another). The word *harmony* is derived from the Greek word *harmos*, which means "joining place." The perception of depth, perspective, mood, color, and atmosphere is joined to a melody through harmony. As a melody provides the "profile" for a piece of music, the harmony provides its "personality."

The existence of harmony in music is cross-cultural, though the means of producing it may vary. During some periods of music history, harmony was introduced to musical compositions as several melodies were heard simultaneously. This music style, known as **polyphony**, was common in the days of Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frideric Handel. Regardless of the texture of a piece of music, harmony occurs whenever two or more different pitches are heard at the same time.

Homophony

world is be-come the King-dom of our
 world is be-come the King-dom of our
 world is be-come the King-dom of our
 world is be-come the King-dom of our

Polyphony

Lord and of His Christ, and of His Christ;
 Lord and of His Christ, and of His Christ;
 Lord and of His Christ, and of His Christ;
 Lord and of His Christ, and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ev-er and

Points of imitation are shaded:

and He shall reign for ev-er and ev-er
 ev-er, for ev-er and ev-er, and He shall

and He shall reign for ev-er and
 ev, and He shall reign for ev-er and
 reign, and He shall reign for ev-er, for

and He shall reign for ev-er and ev-er
 ev-er, for ev-er and ev-er, for ev-er and
 ev-er, and He shall reign for ev-er and
 ev-er, for ev-er, for ev-er and ev-er, for ev-er, for ev-er and

In a well-written piece of music, the harmony will be supportive of the melody and play a subservient, though crucial role. Even the polyphonic techniques of the Baroque composers emphasized a primary melody as each point of imitation was heard in the counterpoint.

A definite procedure exists by which chordal patterns must be applied to melody. Each scale has its own “home base” or **tonal center** known as the **keynote** or **tonic**. Chords may be built on each of the scale tones, and they move through-prescribed formulas *toward* the tonic for resolution or *away* from the tonic to build tension.

A scale is often sung with the syllables

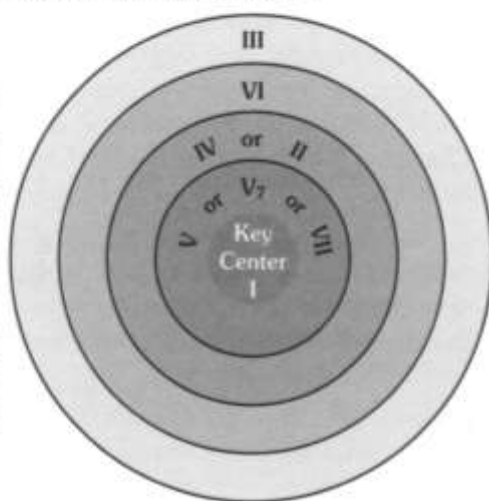
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The chords built on these scale tones are identified with Roman numerals.

I II III IV V VI VII I

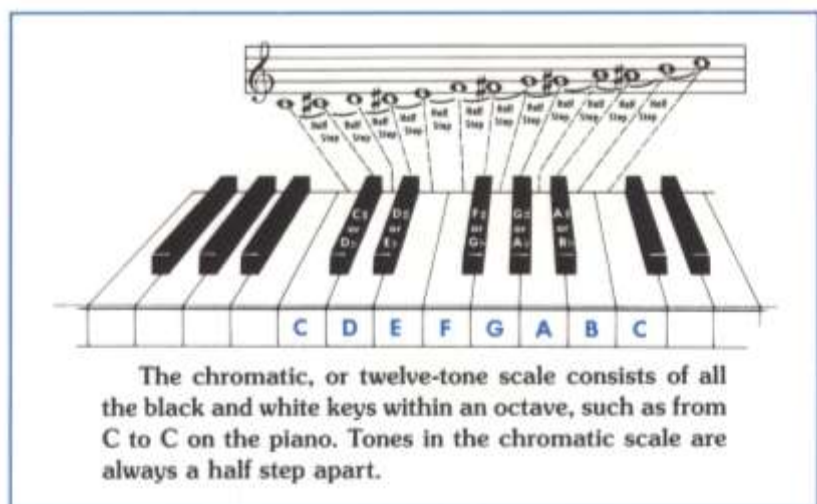
A hierarchy of movement similar to a chain-of-command exists in the harmonic structure of the major-minor tonal system:

The V, V₇, or VII chords are closest to the key center. The IV and II chords generally move through the V, V₇, or VII chord to reach “home.” The chords in each band move in relation to the harmonies in the adjacent band, pushing forward in sequence to reach resolution in a normal cadence. The I chord may relate to any chord.



The longer it takes to reach the resolution point in the tonic, the greater the tension built in the listener. The tonic is “home” or the place of rest.

The entire system of scale tones is built on an octave span of twelve semitones or half steps.



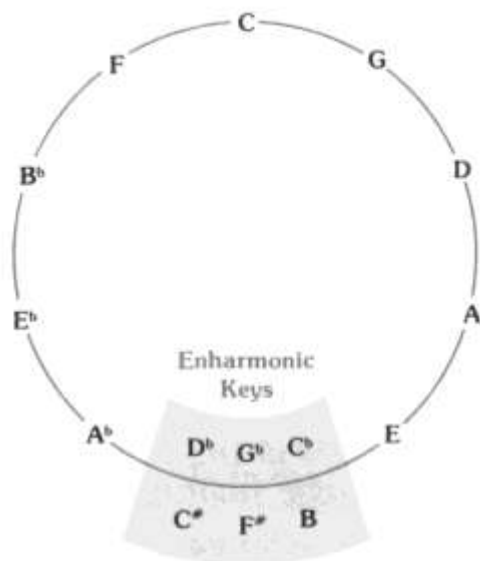
Since this system of “equal tuning” for keyboard instruments was developed during the seventeenth century, new possibilities for **modulation** both within a composition and between pieces were made available to composers. J. S. Bach wrote his *Well-Tempered Clavier*, a series of preludes and fugues, to celebrate this order in tonality.

The term *modulation* refers to changing keys from one tonal center to another. This was made possible on the keyboard when, with equal tuning of the half-step intervals, a V chord of one scale could be the same as the I chord of another scale or **key**.

The relationship of keys to one another can be charted on a circle usually called the **Circle of Fifths**. Keys immediately adjacent to one another on the circle provide simple modulation formulas for greater variety.

**CIRCLE
OF
FIFTHS**
(Major keys)

Enharmonic keys refer to identical pitches written with different notations.



Key signatures indicate the scale or tonal orientation for a musical composition. If a piece has no flats or sharps, the music may be in the key of **C major** or its relative minor, **A minor**. If a piece has 1 sharp, it is in the key of **G major** or **E minor**. Each major key has a relative minor key (which is named, incidentally, by the sixth note of the major scale).

Great regularity and order exist in the relationships between chords, pitches, scales, and tonalities. As with melody, too much **repetition** produces

a hypnotic effect on the listener. Too much **consonance** provides no interest in the composition; too much **dissonance** provokes excessive unrest in the listener. **Balance** is necessary and is the secret to the harmonic structure of well-written music.



3 RHYTHM IS THE ORDERLY MOVEMENT OF MUSIC THROUGH TIME.

Just as the heartbeat is the life of the body, **rhythm** is the life of music and provides its essential energy. Without rhythm, music is dead. Melody and harmony must unfold together, and rhythm makes this simultaneous unfolding possible. There is rhythm in nature—cycles of night and day, tides, seasons, and cycles in the body. All the arts have rhythm patterns of their own in their designs.

Time in music is organized in units known as **measures**. Each measure contains a fixed number of **beats**. The first beat of any metrical grouping is a strong beat or **accent**. Metrical patterns created by accents are heard as **duple** or **triple** patterns. **Duple** patterns have accents every other beat, while **triple** patterns have their accents every third beat. All other rhythmic patterns which are perceived in music are really combinations of these two.

Duple Meter:



Triple Meter:



Duple or Triple Meter:



A **measure** contains a set number of beats. Its time signature appears as a fraction at the beginning of a song, with the **upper numeral** showing **how many beats each measure has** and the **lower numeral** indicating the **type of note which gets one beat**.

Accents can be shifted for emphasis or to create variety in a composition. This shifting is called **syncopation**. Syncopation occurs whenever an accent appears in a place where it is normally not expected or an accent is left out in a place where the listener *does* expect it. The strongest syncopation occurs when both are done at the same time.

Some forms of contemporary music alternate triple and duple measures. This creates a sensation of constant syncopation and thereby produces a great amount of tension.

A well-written piece of music has a subtle rhythm or sense of pulsation with a balance of regular accent patterns and occasional syncopation for variety and interest. Syncopation is to music as spices are to a well-prepared meal. Used sparingly, it provides great delight. Used constantly, the effect is similar to that of deluging your dinner with salt and pepper.

The rhythm of a healthy musical performance does not dominate or overshadow the melody and harmony. Just as a person whose heart was pulsating to the degree that you could see his whole body throbbing would be very ill and in desperate need of medical care, music whose main sound is a "driving" beat is in urgent need of balance and artistic repair.

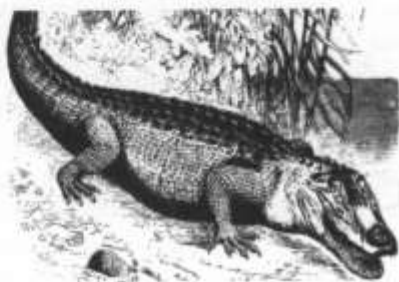
Rock music is noted for this type of driving syncopation through the use of a backbeat and often a breakbeat. A **backbeat** is a pulse which occurs between normally accented beats, and a **breakbeat** is a pulse which occurs between the backbeats. For example, in music that is arranged in four-beat measures, normal accents would occur on beats one and three; the backbeat accents would occur on beats two and four; and the breakbeat accents would occur anywhere between the four beats.

Researchers are finding that certain other rhythmic patterns in rock music actually decrease muscle strength in the body and become addictive to the listener. Experiments in behavioral kinesiology, the study of the interaction between muscles of the body and psychological states, have identified a beat known as "stopped anapestic rhythm" as being enfeebling to the body.

This pattern involves a three-beat figure in which the accent appears on the third beat rather than the first (duh-duh-DAH rather than DAH-duh-duh), as would be the normal rhythm of the body. The effect of this continued pattern creates a mix-up in the alpha waves between the two hemispheres of the brain, resulting in what some researchers call "switching."



Dr. Aronson, Behavior



"Switching" is a phenomenon which occurs in adult schizophrenics to produce regression to infantile, reptilian locomotion (where crawling is done with the same, rather than the opposite, arms and legs). A person's brain waves must be in sync from both hemispheres in order to achieve normal baby crawling.

Dr. John Diamond, the primary researcher in this area, observes that "the casual rock listener's responsive 'bopping' movements are distinctly homolateral." The *Los Angeles Times* report on his work summarized his findings this way: "Millions exposed to rock music hour after hour are being continually switched. This is a severe sociological problem."

Not all rock music has this rhythm pattern, and it has been found in only two classical compositions, "where the composer set out to create chaos." One is the finale of Igor Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, and history records that the original performance of this work resulted in a massive riot and the destruction of the concert hall where it was heard.

The *Wichita Eagle Beacon* quoted Dr. Diamond: "The reason this beat is so bad is that it's the opposite of human physiology. . . . The heart and blood both have strong first-beat rhythm patterns. The rock beat is the opposite of biological rhythms, and I think it triggers off some warning message to the body that something's going wrong." Dr. Diamond went on to explain that "the body responds to the message with muscle weakness, anxiety, aggression . . . and a craving for more of the beat." His conclusion: "The rock beat is probably subjecting us to the most serious form of pollution we have."

Insight magazine recently reported on its science page that "discordant sounds hurt learning and alter brain tissue." The studies were done on laboratory mice and revealed that when the animals were subjected day and night to "discordant sounds," particularly those of incessant drumbeats, "they not only developed difficulties in learning and memory, as compared with a control group, but they also incurred structural changes in their brain cells. The neurons showed signs of wear and tear from stress."



Constant exposure to a heavy rock beat caused mice to lose learning and memory capabilities.

The scientists went on to state that the "culprit" seemed to be the music's rhythm, not its harmony or melody. They reported, "Everything in life goes in a rhythm, even the life of a single cell. All biochemical reactions are rhythmic. If that harmony [of rhythm] is disrupted by some kind of disharmony, then it can cause detrimental effects."

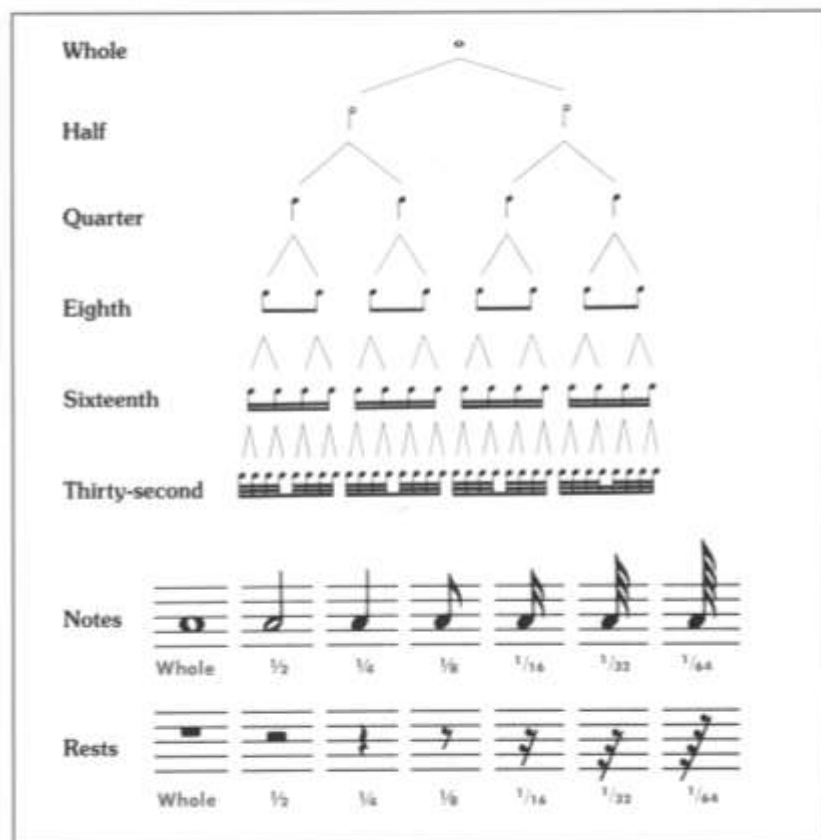
4 DYNAMICS RELATES TO THE VOLUME AND SCIENTIFIC PROPERTIES OF SOUND: ITS GENERATION, PROPAGATION, LENGTH, TIMBRE, AND EFFECT ON PEOPLE.

Mathematical precision and order is portrayed in music, too. Acoustically, pitches sounded exactly one octave lower vibrate at half

the number of vibrations per second. If you reduce by one-half the length of the vibrating element (e.g., a violin string), the resulting pitch is one octave higher than the original pitch. If you double the length of the vibrating column, the resulting pitch is one octave lower.

The notation system for the length of time that pitches should be sung or played is worked out by mathematical fractions. The note values in a given measure of music equal the fraction, or the *time signature*, stated at the beginning of the composition.

Musical Notation: Note and Rest Values



The system for measuring the volume of a sound uses units of decibels. A **decibel** is the smallest difference in sound detectable by the human ear. Decibels increase logarithmically rather than

arithmetically. A sound of 10 decibels transmits 10 times as much energy as a 0-decibel sound; a 20-decibel sound is 100 times the intensity of a 0-decibel sound.

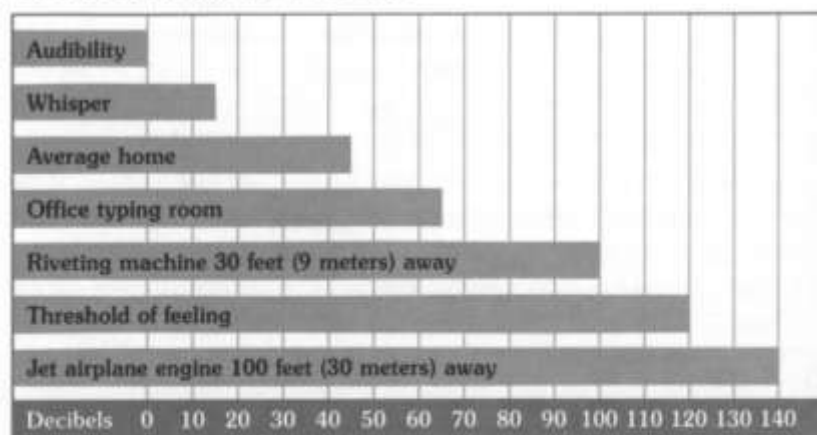
The practice of audio-analgesia in recent years dramatically demonstrates the effectiveness of sound to block out pain. Commonly used in dentists' offices, audio-analgesia involves placing a volume control on the patient's lap and headphones on his ears, with the instruction that as he feels pain, he is to turn the volume up until the sensation ceases. Studies show that this form of "anesthetic" is effective for the majority of patients.

The chart below compares the decibel levels of common environmental sounds. Notice that the threshold of feeling for most people is shown at 120 decibels. The pain threshold for most people is at 140 decibels. Medical doctors warn that prolonged exposure to volume levels over 85 decibels will jeopardize a person's hearing ability.



A decibel is one tenth of a bel, a unit of sound named after Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone.

The Measurement of Sound



Researchers have confirmed Dr. Diamond's studies that the same muscle-weakening response which was present upon hearing the stopped anapestic rhythms also occurred above certain decibel levels regardless of the rhythm. Live rock concerts are often performed at decibel levels above 120, with measurements taken at nightclubs and discotheques consistently showing levels between 110 and 116. Some contemporary Christian performers have acknowledged in interviews that they hoped the stagehands did not turn the amplification above 110 decibels.

Sympathetic vibration is an acoustical phenomenon in which sound is able to set in motion (vibration) any object around it which is compatible with it. For example, when a violin is played, the vibrating string causes the wood and the air space inside it and around it to vibrate in multiples of the original frequency. This provides much of the resonance for the instrument. Apart from the principle of sympathetic vibration, sound would not be carried at all, and we would be unable to hear.



The eardrum was designed by the Creator to vibrate in sympathy with certain ranges of sound so that living creatures could respond to audio stimuli.

While many people would argue that musical sound in and of itself is neutral and simply an amoral vehicle to carry text, we would have to assert that certain kinds of sounds elicit specific physical responses, whether they are culturally programmed or spiritually induced.

The *Chicago Sun-Times* reported a few years ago that scientists were beginning to link music to the chemistry of genes. "By translating the basic chemistry of DNA into musical notes, musicians are performing Dr. Ohno's scores created from cancer genes, genes for antibodies, and those that code for enzymes. When played, a cancer-causing gene called an oncogene, sounds somber, slightly out of control. An enzyme that breaks down lactose, simple milk sugar, sounds like a lullaby. The tune, recorded by a violinist, has been

played in several kindergartens in Tokyo and always helps put the children to sleep at nap time. . . .

“The melody of a synthetic antibody responsible for detoxifying the chemical *phenol* sounds lively, light-hearted. . . . Taking one of the nineteenth century composer Frédéric Chopin’s nocturnes and translating the notes into a genetic sequence, Dr. Ohno found that it surprisingly produced the structure of the enzyme RNA polymerase-II. Chopin’s ‘Funeral March’ resembles a cancer-causing gene.”

As far back as the mid-sixties, leading rock performers claimed that the sound of their music was designed to imitate the sexual rhythms of the human body. The movements of the performers and, in response, the listeners, were natural manifestations of the music itself.

Life magazine carried this description by Frank Zappa in June 1968: “The big beat matches the great rhythms of the human body. . . . I knew further that they [the teenagers] would carry this with them for the rest of their lives. Responding like dogs, some of the kids began to go for the throat. Open rebellion. . . . To deny rock music its place in society was to deny sexuality. . . . I’m sure the kids never really believed all the Beatles wanted to do was hold your hand. . . . [Jimi] Hendrix’s music is extremely symbolic: orgasmic grunts, tortured squeals, lascivious moans, electric disasters . . . are delivered to the audience at an extremely high decibel level. In a live performance environment, it is impossible to listen to what the Hendrix group does . . . it eats you alive.”

The bottom line is that the rhythms and volume of rock music were specifically designed to be the sound of the “counterculture,” symbolizing the rebelliousness of the youth of the sixties, not only to their parents, but also to the whole “establishment” of authority as well. This “badge of identity” was built into the sound itself.

Thus, it could be spiritually applied from the principle of sympathetic vibration that to “vibrate” in sympathy with this sound is to identify with all that it represents. Those who do not entertain the elements of rebellion, immoral liberties, and unbridled catering to appetites for alcohol and drugs will not find the element of commonality necessary for enjoyment of this musical sound.

• *What are the characteristics of rock music?*

While there are many kinds of rock music, they all share three basic characteristics: (1) **excessive repetition** of a melodic phrase, harmonic (chordal) pattern, rhythmic pattern, or any combination of these, (2) a **dominant beat**, often driving in nature, and (3) **intense volume**.

Along with the throbbing beat there is usually a highly accented **backbeat** and often a **breakbeat**. All rock music is intense, whether performed at a fast or slow tempo. The reason for the repetition, dominant beat, and intensity of rock music is that its goal is to totally consume the listener.

Whether the music claims to be Christian or secular, if these elements are present, it is rock music, and it is the antithesis of what God desires in the life of a Christian. As we expose ourselves to rock music, our entire beings must either respond "sympathetically" with the sound, or we must hinder its effectiveness by rejecting it with an act of the will.

5 FORM IS THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE PARTS TO ACHIEVE THE BEST POSSIBLE EFFECT.

An artist shapes his material in such a way that the observer of his work should be able to grasp its outlines or design easily and clearly. **Form** is important in each of the arts, but it is even more crucial in a musical composition. In the visual arts, the entire work lies before the observer as a whole. However, music is always in motion. The composition is never before the listener as a whole. Therefore, the music must be written with a clear design so the listener may easily relate the beginning to the middle, and the middle to the end.

The basic law of musical form is **repetition and contrast**. The composer repeats his material to help the listener grasp the meaning. If there is constant repetition, however, the work soon becomes boring.

Thus, the writer introduces new material. If he continues to provide more and more new material, however, he soon bewilders the listener. **Balance** is necessary between the two. **Repetition** creates a sense of **unity**; **contrast** gives **variety**. Repetition brings relaxation; contrast creates tension.

A well-written piece of music will have a definite **beginning**, build to a **climax point**, and communicate a definite sense of **conclusion**. Good music will leave the listener satisfied that a “statement” has been made and completed, and the artist’s intended communication has been received and understood.

Each of the elements of music affects the other elements. Balance in designing the role of each element is important as well as balance in combining the elements. The chart on the following page summarizes the interaction of these elements. Note that in the creation of a musical composition, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The final entity supersedes any of the individual ingredients.



Permanent Mission of the Hungarian People's Republic to the United Nations

The Esterházy Palace, one of the most splendid in Europe, was built in Austria during the Age of Classicism. This era emphasized symmetry and balance in design. Very similar to musical compositions of the eighteenth century, this building’s architecture has an ABA form—two matching sides with a contrasting middle section.

"ELEMENTS OF MUSIC" SUMMARY

ELEMENT OF MUSIC	ANALOGY TO ART AND LIFE	POSSIBILITIES
MELODY	Line Shape Profile	2 Movements: Up—Down (Step—Leap)
HARMONY	Depth Perspective Context Mood Personality	2 Kinds: Consonant—Dissonant
RHYTHM	Animation Energy Life Pulse	2 Patterns: Duple—Triple 2 Effects: Subtle—Driving (Supportive—Dominant)
DYNAMICS	Color Intensity Power	2 Levels: Loud—Soft
FORM	Composition Design Organization	2 Directions: Repetition—Contrast (Unity—Variety)
TEXT	Thesis Syntax Ideas Concepts	2 Messages: Truth—Error (Honesty—Deception)
PERFORMANCE	Communication Expression Impact Outreach	2 Identifications: Godliness—Worldliness 2 Effects: Acceptance—Rejection ("Sympathy"—Abhorrence)

6 TEXT (IN VOCAL MUSIC) IS THE MESSAGE OF THE WORDS, INCLUDING BOTH STATED AND IMPLIED COMMUNICATION.

Text is not usually considered to be one of the basic elements of music, *per se*. However, we are going to isolate it here for analysis because the whole purpose of sacred or Christian music is to convey a Biblical message.

There are two requirements that must be met in order for a song's text to be Scripturally accurate. First, the actual words of the text must be honest. This requires accuracy in the words selected. Both dictionary definitions (denotation) and associative meanings (connotation) must work together to form a Scriptural message. Then, all implied ideas must be examined to ensure that no ambiguity exists and that the intent of Scriptural teaching and principle is satisfied.

Many people learn doctrine by the subtle messages of the songs they sing and hear. Truths left unsaid also communicate a message by their conspicuous absence. Often this "selective silence" speaks louder than any words.

The conscientious Christian will guard against the following textual compromises.

• Humanistic Philosophy

Realistically speaking, each of us is much more attuned to "the lie" of humanism than we realize because it has so completely permeated our culture and our educational system. Many assumptions we make are born out of the deception that all men are brothers, God is our Father, and everything will be all right if we just don't "get uptight" with anyone and allow each other the freedom to "do our own thing."



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King Solomon observed that "there is no new thing under the sun." Humanism is as old as the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve thought their way was better than God's.

Phrases like “It can’t be wrong when it feels so right” capture the essence of moral relativism in an era when values clarification allows every man’s opinion to be “right.” This philosophy leads us to defend even our means of performance along with the erroneous text, because the “end” of reaching people with God’s love (rather than the whole Gospel) “justifies the means” by which we make them want to hear us.

Humanistic tenets cause people to emphasize the love of God while downplaying His holiness, to focus on social causes rather than man’s need for brokenness and repentance, and to glorify man’s accomplishments apart from God’s grace. More than any other sin, believing “the lie” of humanism hinders a person from accepting the Biblical way of salvation.

Humanism’s primary lie is that man is “not so bad,” and given enough positive reinforcement to bolster his self-image he can make himself fit for God’s Kingdom by the power of his own sincerity. All of the other miscommunications in text are simply different forms of expressing this glorification of man known as humanism.

• *Ambiguous Object of Worship*

Many Christian artists of our day are writing and performing “crossover songs”—songs which will be acceptable to both the “secular” and the Christian communities. Thus, some of these songs have no direct reference to the Lord, and others are written so that substitution of the words “baby,” “sweetheart,” or “honey” wherever God’s name is mentioned would turn them into tender or even passionate love songs.

The love of God embodied in the person and sacrifice of Jesus Christ should never be brought to the level of romantic familiarity. There is a delicate balance between the “. . . *friend that sticketh closer than a brother*” (*Proverbs 18:24*) and the requirement to “. . . *worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth*” (*Psalms 96:9*). This balance must be maintained if spiritual growth is to be experienced in a person’s life.

The term *crossover* is also used to refer to an artist’s ability to reach both secular and Christian markets with his or her product. The desire to have their recordings sold “beyond the confines of the Christian bookstore” has been cited as a goal of several well-known performers.

• *Association With Worldly Images*

The technological developments in the media of our day have brought incredible visual images and subtle symbols into our view almost daily. The result is that the local church is often put under extreme pressure to provide activities for the congregation (particularly in children's and youth programs) which will have the same "holding power" for their attention which these other forms of entertainment have.



This situation leads to the frenzied race to always outdo the clever sights and sounds of the last presentation. Sound effects of the science fiction and Saturday morning cartoon genres are brought into children's songs to titillate the imagination. The problem is that these communications often produce messages with double meanings that are not consciously perceived and, thus, not questioned or clarified.

In a culture addicted to new thrills and greater sensations, discernment regarding the total message is often short-circuited.

• *Familiarity in Lieu of Reverence*

While this textual problem is readily evident in crossover songs, that is not the only place where it occurs. The humanistic tendency of our society to focus on personal experience leads many composers to emphasize the humanity of Christ so man can identify with Him.

The mystery of the simultaneous deity and humanity of our Savior offers another delicate balance for understanding. Violation of that balance has brought about rock operas like *Jesus Christ Superstar* and blasphemous commercial movies like *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

Note that even the passage which explains our Lord's humanity invites us to respond to His deity in the prayer relationship: "*Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of*

our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14–16).

• ***Incomplete Truth***

Many songs both in contemporary Christian music and the more traditional gospel literature “grab” a catch phrase that tickles the ears, but does not communicate the real story of the Christian’s walk with the Lord. These texts are often frivolous, being designed for entertainment rather than edification. As a result, they also violate the line between familiarity and reverence.

Ditties like “Help Yourself to Happiness (there’s plenty to go ’round)” communicate that feeling good and being happy is a Christian’s right, and God is like a “big, warm daddy” in Heaven waiting to pour out only good experiences on His children. The part the text never tells the listener is that happiness (really, true joy) is the fruit of an obedient walk with the Lord.



When our forefathers drafted the Declaration of Independence they stated that the “pursuit of happiness” rather than happiness itself was an “inalienable right.” In contrast to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” Jesus promised joy to those who would die to themselves, be conscripted as bondservants to Him, and dedicate their lives to “the pursuit of” His glory.

The other aspect of this message which is omitted is that God often calls His children to experiences of suffering in which He maintains their joy by His grace as they respond correctly to the trial. Note the confirmation of this truth in the testimony of the apostle Paul's life. The epistle to the Philippians encouraging them to rejoice was written from a prison cell.



Through suffering, Paul learned about God's sufficiency; he then encouraged others to rejoice.

A wise listener and performer will always check the implied communication of a song's message to verify its total accuracy before delivering it and, thus, identifying with it.

• *Focus on Subjectivity*

Our culture is very conscious of personal feelings and internalized self-analysis. This characteristic is often manifested in the Church through many types of charismatic ministries which tend to emphasize music designed to express these personal responses. A Christian's testimony should emphasize what God has done in His life rather than focusing on his feelings.

Focusing on feeling reinforces the need to have a "bigger and better" experience the next time and easily leads to the syndrome of "itching ears," in which a person's doctrine is dictated by his perceptions. *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables"* (II Timothy 4:3-4).

The key to a truthful presentation of text is **balance** and careful examination under the Holy Spirit's direction that our words are "pure." The Psalmist wrote under inspiration that *"the words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times"* (Psalm 12:6). We can test the words of our songs by examining them in the light of seven, basic, non-optional principles which are threaded throughout Scripture.

Violation or ambiguity of any part of these principles should render a text inappropriate for ministry:

- **Design**—Understanding God's precise purposes for each person, object, and relationship He has established. This will bring us to healthy **self-acceptance**.
- **Responsibility**—Understanding that God holds us personally responsible for every one of our words, thoughts, actions, attitudes, and motives. This will lead us to proper confession and restitution for sin so that we can experience a **good conscience**.
- **Authority**—Understanding that God has established a structure of authority and a balance of power so that those under authority can have far-reaching influence when they make wise appeals with proper attitudes. This will result in **proper submission**.
- **Suffering**—Understanding that God has ordained that we receive grace for personal cleansing, growth, and achievement by learning how to respond properly to those who offend us. This will allow us to experience and extend to others **full forgiveness**.
- **Ownership**—Understanding that God allows us to conquer anger and worry as we acknowledge that all we have is from Him and belongs to Him. This will enable us to experience blessing as we **yield our rights**.
- **Freedom**—Understanding that Godly freedom is not the right to do what we want but the power to do what we ought. This will cause us to love one another properly and maintain **moral purity**.
- **Success**—Understanding that God conquered the world, the flesh, and the devil through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. As we engraft Scripture into our souls and renew our minds with these truths day and night, we enter into His power and live above the law of sin. Thus, we experience victory as we **meditate on God's Word**.

TEST QUESTIONS TO EXAMINE TEXT

Does any part of the text, by direct statement or implication, put forth an inaccurate view of . . .

	YES	NO
. . . How God made each person, object, and relationship and designed them to fulfill His purposes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
. . . Our total responsibility for our words, thoughts, actions, and attitudes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
. . . God's established order of authority in family, church, and government relationships?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
. . . Our need to fully forgive any offender even as we experience God's grace in forgiving and cleansing us?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
. . . God's ownership of everything, our stewardship and accountability to yield our rights?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
. . . Our need to love properly and maintain moral purity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
. . . The importance of meditating on God's Word because it is the ultimate standard for our faith and practice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7 *PERFORMANCE IS THE RENDERING OF A MUSICAL MESSAGE BY SINGING OR PLAYING AN INSTRUMENT.*

When the text is accurate, it needs a worthy vehicle so the message can be transmitted without distraction or neutralization. Martin Luther is the man who is credited with returning congregational singing to the Church. The Early Church sang, as did the disciples when they were with Jesus at the Last Supper. (See Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26.)

Then came the years of the Dark Ages when the Word of God was obscured in Latin text for the eyes of Roman priests only, and singing was relegated to the dirges and chants of formal liturgy.

*“Next to the Word of God,
music deserves
the highest praise.
The gift of language
combined with
the gift of song
was given to man
that he should
proclaim
the Word of God
through music.”*

Martin Luther



Martin Luther translated the Scriptures into German so the people could read and study the Word for themselves. Then he gave them meaty texts matched to singable tunes so they could have a means of personally praising the Lord. Those who were illiterate learned Bible doctrine through these great hymn texts.

John and Charles Wesley did essentially the same thing with hymn texts for the common people of England as the Methodist Church was founded. In order to be efficient in teaching the people many hymns quickly, these Reformers often used familiar, secular melodies of their day for the settings of their texts.

The practice of Martin Luther and the Wesleys in selecting those tunes has often been used by modern-day composers, artists, and consumers to excuse the use of rock idioms in contemporary Christian music. The argument proceeds that the Reformers “used the drinking songs of their day, much to the dismay of the Church in their times”; therefore, the Church’s reaction to contemporary styles is nothing but a repeat performance from history. The implication is that the sooner Church leaders “calm down and accept the modern practices,” the sooner we will be able to move forward in ministering to people.

We need some clarification in this analogy before it can be used to guide our musical practices today. There is a tremendous difference between rejecting that which is new and rejecting that which is sensual. What modern critics are calling the “drinking songs” of

sixteenth-century Germany and eighteenth-century England were really common folk songs sung in wayside inns to entertain travelers.

Those folk songs honored the melodic and harmonic rules of singability, inspiration, and solid musical expression. The experience of singing the tune with new words would be something akin to singing "O For a Thousand Tongues" to the tune of "The Happy Wanderer." The only potential difficulty one might experience in doing that would be to meet a Christian who had had a negative experience with that particular folk tune, in which case, another tune could be substituted which would not be offensive to that believer. This is the spirit of Paul's instruction in Romans 14. The bottom line is that the musical sound itself did not detract from the message of the words.

Because musical sound itself communicates a message, it is possible for the performer's ideology to affect the listener, even though the performer never says a word. The therapeutic qualities of music are no secret. In the Old Testament, David was summoned to minister to King Saul when the king suffered from an attack by an evil spirit. (See I Samuel 16:22-23.) Saul was refreshed as he heard the skillful playing because David was a man whose heart was "in tune" with God.

Music therapy is so well established today as a legitimate means of treatment that there are approximately seventy degree programs in this field among America's colleges and universities. Rapid advances in this field have been made since 1955, and doctors are learning more about it all the time. Many patients who were unreachable any other way are responding to musical treatment.

As therapy programs have continued, it has been observed that music influences a person through the subcortical centers of the brain, often without touching the conscious mind. One study indicated that "the personality of the performer seemed to exert a definite influence upon the response of the patient." Beliefs that are overt in a person's lifestyle are going to show in his communication of musical sound.

God had definite qualifications which musicians in the Old Testament service of the Tabernacle had to meet. These musicians were to be chosen by God (I Chronicles 15:1-2), commissioned (Nehemiah 12:24), appointed to specific ministries (I Chronicles 15:16-22, 16:4-6, 37, 41-42), clean (Numbers 8:5-14), pure

(II Chronicles 5:11–12), mature (Numbers 4:46–47), skillful (I Chronicles 25:1–7), dedicated to their work (I Chronicles 9:33), and were to make their living from their work (Numbers 18:21, Nehemiah 11:23; 12:44–47).

Since God obviously numbered the musicians of the Tabernacle (and later the Temple) among the ministers in Israel, we can conclude that requirements similar to those spelled out in the New Testament for teachers of Scripture (pastors, elders, deacons, and Godly women) can be applied to those who minister musically. (See I Timothy 3:1–13, Titus 1:6–9, and 2:1–5.)

Certainly, in light of the tendency of youth to emulate contemporary performers through “hero worship,” it would behoove us to examine the manner of living of anyone who claims his ministry is designed to bring others to know the Lord Jesus Christ. This consideration forces us to distinguish between would-be ministers and entertainers.

Paul confirmed the teaching ministry of music in his letter to the believers at Colossae: “*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*” (Colossians 3:16).

The Israelites knew the importance of music and realized that the “Lord’s song” could not be sung “in a strange land.” In Babylon they hung their “harps upon the willows,” and “wept” as they remembered former times of blessing in Zion. (See Psalm 137.)

Many contemporary performances sound like the “Lord’s song” is being forced into compatibility with the “songs of Babylon.” The conscientious Christian will avoid defiling his spirit and also causing confusion in his influence by identifying with the following performance techniques.

• **Sensual Appeal**

The sliding and sagging pitches of the “blues” style in jazz performance were designed to suggest erotic movement. Syncopated rhythms which slide the timing of pitches slightly away from the main pulse points reinforce this communication. The sound itself calls to mind the picture of a nightclub performer under the spotlights in a smoke-filled, after-dinner atmosphere.



Violation of territorial rights will cause animals to attack one another.

• *Impertinent Intimacy*

Heavy breathing close to the microphone or the breathy sound of a secret whisper creates the impression of intimacy. A microphone is capable of transmitting this breathiness, causing the listener to perceive it as being right next to his ear. Rock musicians openly admit that this tactic is used to enhance the sensual qualities of their performances. One female performer said it this way: "We are aware of our own sensuality as we kiss the microphone with our lyrics."

All animals and human beings have an innate sense of "private space" around them. Intimacy from sources not permitted into that space calls for protective responses of rejection unless the receiver has decided to accept the "temptation" of the "forbidden fruit."

• *Entertainment Orientation*

Many contemporary Christian performers have experienced the sad violation of being "pressed" into service prior to sufficient spiritual growth in their Christian lives. They sing or play on the secular stage one week, are saved the next, and are scheduled for Christian concerts in the near future. Thus, they carry the only style they know to their new audiences. The lush orchestrations of "Hollywood" are simply added to the new words, creating a strange mixture of messages between the text and the music.

Paul warned Timothy to avoid such appointments to ministry, lest they result in tragedy: "*Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil*" (1 Timothy 3:6).

• *Worldly Identification*

Within the past decade there has been a decided acceleration in "closing the gap" between what was considered sacred and what was considered secular music. This pressure for acceptance of "upbeat"

musical styles into the mainstream of performance has been noticeable between classical and "pop" idioms since the 1920s and 1930s.

Jazz did much to pave the way for that change, though many in the "serious" musical community do not espouse jazz or its offspring, the subsequent rock styles, as even being music. The screaming voices of hard rock, the "heavy metal" sound of the bands, and all the trappings of lighting and atmospheric effects, smoke machines, and strobe lighting are producing Christian celebrities who are identified even by the world as being just like their own!

As far back as 1985, *Time* magazine carried an article on its "Show Business" page entitled, "New Lyrics for the Devil's Music."

The writer describes "heavy metal missionaries" who "create sounds that have never been heard in churches—sounds that range from Stryper's heavy beat to Michael Card's folk, from Undercover's punk rock to the mellow pop of Amy Grant. . . . Indistinguishable—except for their lyrics—from their secular counterparts." The author goes on to quote Amy Grant: "I want to play hardball in this business. I want to be on the same level professionally with performers in all areas of music. I love to hear Billy Joel, Kenny Loggins and the Doobie Brothers. Why not? I aim to bridge the gap between Christian and pop."

Columnist Gerald Nachman reprinted an article from the *San Francisco Chronicle* in the February 17, 1986, edition of *The New American*. In it he describes the effects of rock performances on audiences: "Rock doesn't enter through the ears or the soul; it comes in through the eyes, not to mention the lungs and the nose. I won't say rock isn't entertaining, or, on a jungle level, exciting. What I do say is that most rock isn't music. . . ."

"Fans and critics talk about a band's 'sound.' Rock isn't music, it's sound. The sound crushes all else—melody, rhythm, substance, and subtlety. Rock is anti-content, anti-nuance. It wipes out anything that's not aggressive, obvious, crude, raw and raucous. . . . When rock tries to go tender, it turns wimpy. . . . Rock is loud because it has little else to offer. The longer it exists, the noisier it has to be to justify its existence. . . . Rock celebrates violence and dope; it couldn't have survived without audiences being stoned. Because it has no conscience, artistic or otherwise, rock coarsens all it touches."

• *Subliminal Messages*

As Christian performers are succumbing to the temptation to cross over into recording for a secular market, they are beginning to identify themselves with secular record labels. This affiliation associates them with occult symbols and practices which are known to accompany many of the hard rock groups.

A relatively new technique in rock recording (though no one knows for sure the first time it was used) involves the backward recording of evil lyrics after the performance has been laid on the sound track. Undiscernible to the conscious mind, this technique, called **backmasking**, is able to influence a person through subliminal persuasion.

The only way to determine the content of such messages is to play the recordings in reverse, a practice not recommended because of its ability to open a person's spirit to demonic oppression. Much more to be desired would be total abstinence from performers who identify themselves with the hard rock culture through both their sound and their dress.

The Psalmist cries out to the Lord for deliverance ". . . *from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood: That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace*" (Psalm 144:11-12). He concludes with the observation, "*Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord*" (Psalm 144:15).

One Christian rock performer acknowledged that his style of dress identified him with the world by stating that "we are sheep in wolves' clothing so that we can reach the young people who only like rock 'n' roll music." Another likened the outfits of his group to the unusual appearance of John the Baptist in his day, saying, "Jesus called him the greatest man who was ever born."

Several key problems can be identified in the Christian rock culture's emphasis on evangelism. First, Scripture does not teach that the goal of Christian music is reaching the lost.

*"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of **preaching** to save them*

that believe" (I Corinthians 1:21). Music is to be used for worship, edifying ourselves, and encouraging one another in our Christian walk. (See Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16.)

Second, carnal music is ineffective in achieving lasting results. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). A changed life is not going to come about from a conversion which is rooted in the deceptive message that "Christianity is not so different from your present way of life. You can have your music, enjoy your entertainment, and just feel loved." The prophet Jeremiah strongly warned the people of his day that God would curse the one who did His work in such a deceitful manner. (See Jeremiah 48:10.)

The futility of trying to bring about the lasting fruit of changed lives by using worldly music is graphically illustrated in Scripture. When the Babylonians were resettled in Israel and began to be devoured by lions, they asked the king to send them a priest of God so they could learn how to worship Him. The priest came and taught the people how they should fear the Lord. However, he did not require them to destroy their gods. The result is described in II Kings 17:33: "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods. . . ."

Another contributing factor to stunted spiritual growth in the lives of newborn Christians is that there is in each believer a distinct sense of love and loyalty for the "vehicle" of the Gospel message which was used to bring him to Christ, whether it be a person or method. Thus, if a genuine decision is made at a Christian rock concert, that believer (apart from God's grace) will be greatly hindered in his discipleship by his allegiance to something which must be rejected if he is to "... come out from among them, and be . . . separate . . ." (II Corinthians 6:17).

Finally, Scripture gives the clear mandate that God's work is to be done in God's way in order to receive God's reward. King David attempted to transport the Ark of the Covenant



The success of a worldly method is no vindication for its use by Christians to accomplish God's work.

to Jerusalem. He was sincere in his desire; however, he used the wrong method. He put the ark on an ox-drawn cart, a method he had copied from the heathen Philistines.



God's work must be done God's way.

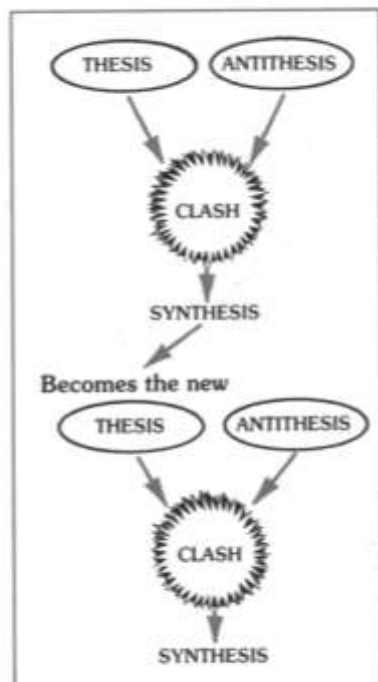
The results were disastrous! One man was killed; David became angry with God; and the procession came to an abrupt end. The reason God could not bless David's mission was that He had clearly specified that the Ark was to be moved only by being carried on the shoulders of the priests. David had clearly disobeyed God's instructions, and he and his people suffered the consequences. (See Numbers 4:4-15; 7:9; Deuteronomy 10:8, and II Samuel 6:1-11.)

Rationalization is not new to mankind; it, too, is as old as the Garden of Eden. The Hegelian Dialectic illustrates all too clearly the process described in II Timothy 3:7.

Someone asserts an idea or **thesis**; another person has a conflicting idea or **antithesis**. Apart from any standard of measurement, each is as valid as the other. So, in order to function together, there must be a **synthesis**. But as soon as the synthesis is determined, it actually becomes just another **thesis**, and a conflict arises to start the process again.

Paul told Timothy that the "perilous times" of "the last days" would bring men who have "... a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof..." and who would

The results were disastrous! One man was killed; David became angry with God; and the procession came to an abrupt end. The reason God could not bless David's mission was that He had clearly specified that the Ark was to be moved only by being carried on the shoulders of the priests. David had clearly disobeyed God's instructions, and he and his people suffered the consequences. (See Numbers 4:4-15; 7:9; Deuteronomy 10:8, and II Samuel 6:1-11.)



be "... ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." He warned that they would "... be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection... Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." (See II Timothy 3:1-7.)



Ernie Orlowski

"... Through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you..." (II Peter 2:3).

Much of the contemporary Christian music scene is becoming dominated by the accoutrements of big business. Concerts are drawing crowds numbered in the thousands at ticket prices of \$10, \$15, and \$20, and up! One artist reportedly was promised \$20,000 plus half of the gate for a one-evening program.

This is not without its problems, however. According to the July 1987 edition of *Contemporary Christian Music* magazine, the industry is in for "tough" times. "The problem? Some say that too many albums are being released; that the Christian music market can only absorb a limited amount of product. Others say that there is confusion among record buyers regarding the spiritual intent of many of the artists."

The editorial goes on to report that "the novelty factor of contemporary Christian music is gone, and now the Christian marketplace is being more selective about which artists they buy into." Quoting the president of a recording company, the final observation cites, "It seems that things have gotten so that there's a very thin line between a Christian record and a non-Christian record from a lyrical standpoint... I think we've confused the consumer. We've started giving them, in some cases, secular records in a Christian package."

A feature article in the same magazine comments, "Contemporary Christian Rock is at a crossroads in its relatively young life. A direct descendant of the flowers-and-beads Jesus movement of the early 1970s, religious rock has developed a significant economic base, estimated by members of the industry to be in the area of \$80 to \$100 million per year and growing." A representative of a major recording

company complains, "You wouldn't believe the problems we have trying to get even a halfway serious review in a general market magazine. It's as if these records do not exist. Amy Grant is selling over a million records; we have artists who sell up to 300,000 units. And *Rolling Stone* looks at it and says, 'So what?'"

The laws of the marketplace—supply and demand—are becoming the guide for what should be produced. After all, one of the most popular assumptions of democracy is that the majority is right or that the majority opinion should rule. The secular rock industry has determined that sensuality is what sells. The contemporary Christian rock industry claims it is meeting the needs of young people by giving them "their own music"—an experience-oriented sound with lots of physical appeal.

However, there is a point at which we must recognize that a vicious circle exists between answering the demands of consumers and creating those demands. In every historical age, a discerning observer can detect a familiar pattern in the relationship between the arts and the society at large. The arts **reflect** the attitudes of the people while simultaneously functioning as a **catalyst** for new attitudes which will become the expression of the coming era.



The consequences of being a reflector rather than light

Christ's commission to the Church is to be a *catalyst* for Godliness in the society. The believers at Corinth *reflected* the culture of their wicked city, making it necessary for the apostle Paul to write several letters of rebuke to them.

As each period progresses, individual artists (musicians) become saturated with the extremes of the style and begin to demonstrate their discontent by a different spirit of expression.

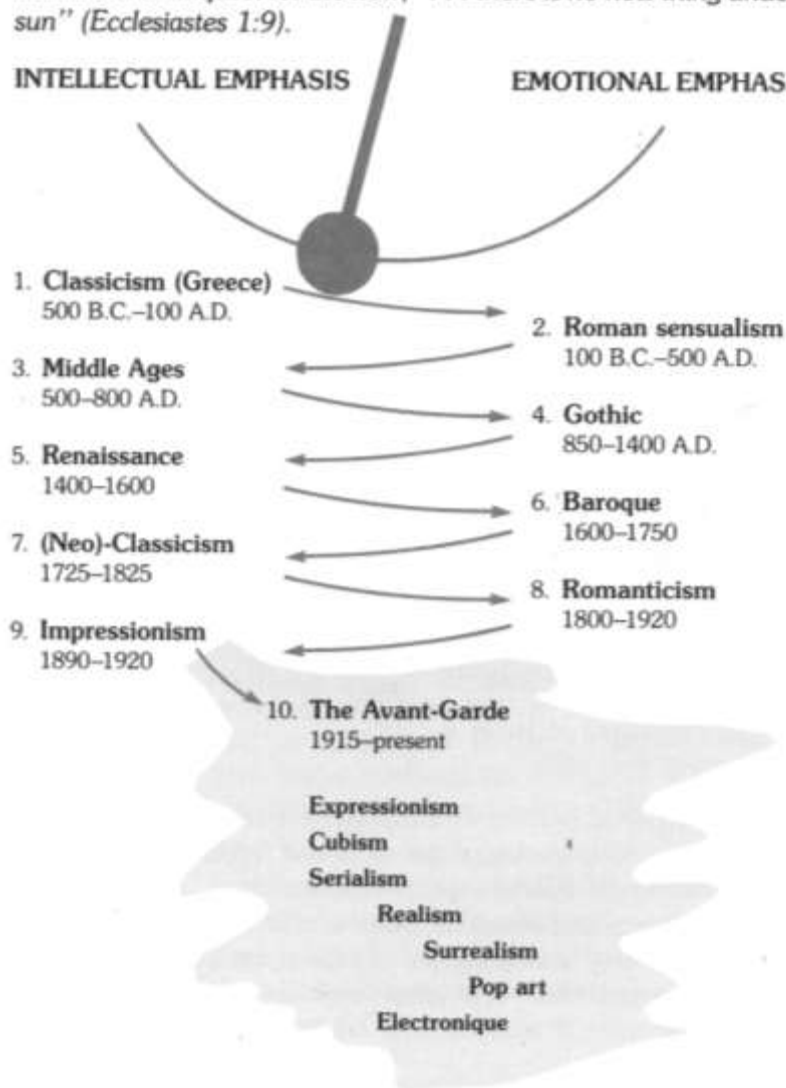
Often the arts themselves become the means of moving a society to a new way of thinking. It's as if the artists are experimenting with people's reactions. The ideas expressed in literary works, paintings, and musical compositions are supposedly not a serious

threat because they "represent only the opinions of fringe individuals." What the ideas often represent, however, is the unrest of the community, and by being offered first in artistic form, tolerance is built toward their acceptance. The change is at first opposed, then tolerated, eventually approved, and finally embraced.

An overview of these historical time periods could be illustrated with the picture of a pendulum swinging back and forth, for even in man's constant quest for the new, ". . . there is no new thing under the sun" (*Ecclesiastes 1:9*).

INTELLECTUAL EMPHASIS

EMOTIONAL EMPHASIS



• *The Medieval and Gothic Periods*

The art of the Medieval and Gothic periods shows painting which moved from flat perspective (all figures and objects seen in a single dimension) to intense studies in the science of perspective. Music was characterized by single line melodies such as Gregorian Chant. This age emphasized still figures, flat shapes, religious subject matter in a mystical communication, heavy symbolism, and a chant-like sound using modes different from the major and minor scales we know today.

The gradually developing sense of perspective became the catalyst for Renaissance art while the ethereal, mystical, flat, chant-like quality of the music reflected an age where the church allowed the light of Scripture to be obscured in intense ritual, liturgy, and the superstitions of the common people.



Twelfth-century troubadours popularized melodic folk music.



Pre-Renaissance chants lacked harmonic depth as did the art of that day.

• *The Renaissance*

The Renaissance is hailed as the “rebirth of culture.” Actually this period sought to recapture the culture of the Classical Age of Greece. Men strove to communicate their ideals of emotion and movement. Nothing was ever allowed to excess, but always controlled by the studious disciplines of an essentially good and “becoming better” man.

The sculpted quality of figures in art, the detailed study of anatomy, much greater depth in color and harmony, and elimination of purely religious themes gave a message of control and independence that was fitting to the eclectic man of these times.

This was the age of the scientific method, dissection, and discovery. Christopher Columbus found the "new world" by sailing west to go east. Galileo experimented with gravity; Leonardo da Vinci drew detailed anatomical diagrams. Machiavelli's thesis in his treatise on government was that "the end justifies the means."



New York Public Library

The invention of movable type in the mid-1400s made printed books possible, and therefore, encouraged learning. Access to the Scriptures prompted Reformers such as Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and Knox to question the tenets of Catholicism and react to Renaissance humanism.



Rembrandt of a High, Rembrandt

The perspective of depth in Renaissance art was also manifested in its music.

The statement of the Renaissance is that man has something of value to offer which is innately good in a glorified sense. He does not need to answer to the Creator since he is sufficient within himself. This age became the catalyst for the Baroque era's emphasis on the increasing richness of detail, ornamentation, and heavily-shaded color.

• *The Baroque Era*

The word *baroque* was derived from the Portuguese word *barroco*, which was a pearl of irregular shape much used in the jewelry of the time. This term denoted a style of pomp and grandeur, massiveness and dramatic qualities, energy, and emotion. This was the age of absolute monarchy in which musicians and artists served the court or the formal church.

In reaction to the humanism of the Renaissance and influenced by the Reformation, the Baroque era was a period which emphasized devout religion—man's search for God. John Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*, and John Bunyan gave us *The Pilgrim's Progress* during this age. George Frideric Handel wrote the *Messiah*, and Johann Sebastian Bach dedicated all his music "to the glory of God alone."



The Pilgrim's Progress

The spiritual convictions for which John Bunyan was imprisoned brought music back to religious themes.



New York Public Library

John Milton's blindness and spirituality allowed him to write with great insight.

The art of this time is excessively ornate and detailed. Colors are rich, and a variety of texture is emphasized. In music, the sound is a "busy" one with many melodies being heard simultaneously in the oratorio and the fugue.

The sounds of the Baroque period became organized around the system of equal tempering—a tuning of pitches such that the major/minor tonal system of the next 300 years became possible. Musical compositions could now be played in various keys, and modulation from one tonal level to another within a composition could be accomplished.

The polyphonic texture of Baroque music is mirrored in the "busyness," energy, and attention to detail in Baroque painting and sculpture.



• *Classicism*

The term *classicism* here refers to the artistic expression of the 1700s. It is not to be confused with the general term "classical music," which refers to all serious, concert-type music. Note also, if we were to be completely accurate, we would have to call this age "neo-classical," because its goal was to recapture the culture of classical Greece.

The artists (painters, musicians, authors, etc.) of Classicism reacted against the excessive ornamentation and "busy" texture of the Baroque Age. They replaced that expression with an emphasis on balance, symmetry, clean lines, controlled colors, simple melodies supported by chordal harmony, and happy themes. They stressed objectivity and the "universal values of all mankind."

Artistic expression was to be, above all, orderly and serene. Emotional expression, no matter how deeply felt, had to be controlled within a definite form. This was the era of palaces, balls, and powdered wigs. Man put so much polish on himself that the external view became highly stylized.

Humanistic faith in the essential goodness of man was extolled. Problems such as war, poverty, crime, and the ugliness of sinful, self-centered man were ignored by the aristocratic court.

The Classical Age gave the coming era the basic forms of expression, which were then exploited to communicate the heights and depths of man's emotional struggles.



Jean-François de Troy



Jacques-Louis David

Rococo art (left) was a reaction to the ornate canvases of Baroque art. Though it kept some richness of Baroque color, its themes were simpler and eventually led to the disciplined style of Classicism (right).



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, a child prodigy, epitomized the style of classical musicianship.



The parallel columns of this church building in Paris come from the influence of Classicism.

• *Romanticism*

The Romantics reacted against the highly polished exterior of the Classicists by expressing what they believed man to be: emotional, struggling against fate and nature, nationalistic, exotic, exploring the heights of virtuosity, and intensely personal.

Historically this age is marked by the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. Classicism influenced this period by providing the designs for the form of expression, but these forms were no longer the controlling factors. They were simply the vehicles by which expression was made.

The *sturm und drang* (storm and struggle) of Romanticism is revealed both in the choice of subject matter and the intense energy of its art and music.



The Art Institute of Chicago

The Romantic era was one of extremes—solo performances and the largest orchestras in history; the most delicate levels of soft and the powerful surges of the very loud; storm and passion. Each composer sought to outdo his compatriots with louder, richer, more bombastic, longer, and heavier compositions.

• *Impressionism*

Romanticism was a catalyst to Impressionism by its statement that the only valid thing is man's personal feeling. All the storm and struggle and internal evaluation of man that Romanticism emphasized was reacted to by the Impressionists, who were tired of the dark colors and the overpowering sound. They blurred the lines in their paintings and communicated not subject matter, but the effect that light had on the subject matter.



Ruins Cathedral, Rouen



National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

The blurred images and experiments with light and color seen in these paintings are typical of Impressionism. Just as the eye must do the blending of colors to interpret the subjects of the pictures, so the ear must blend the sounds of an Impressionistic musical piece.

The Impressionists' attitude was that the sensory "impression" of the moment is fleeting so quickly that the goal is to capture it upon the canvas before it is gone forever. In music they blurred the sounds, creating shimmering aural pictures of their "impressions." In this effort they opened the door to atonality and the departure from the major/minor tonal system which had dominated music since Baroque times.

The Impressionists also created an artistic atmosphere in which it became appropriate to present images in geometric form or no form at all. The bottom line became "that is how I perceive it." While they were laughed to scorn by the traditionalists of their day, their impact cannot be minimized. Their willingness to present anything they felt or perceived as art opened the way for the "anything goes" philosophy of the fragmented, unregenerate twentieth-century mind.

• *The Twentieth Century*

No single musical or visually artistic style characterizes the twentieth century. Hence, the term *avant-garde*, meaning, literally, "before the guard" (or, so new that it is not yet officially recognized), is used as the general earmark of all the trends. Modern music for a time struck out in the direction of anti-Romanticism. Artists felt that European expressions had become too refined, so they turned to the influences of the jungle in rhythm and intonation to try to counteract those expressions.

The effect of highly developed technology has made the media of the twentieth century capable of transmitting every new development into the field before it has the opportunity to stand the test of time.



On the overview chart, expressionism, cubism, and serialism are placed in a more intellectual direction while realism, surrealism, and pop art are given a more emotional leaning. What is actually happening in the downward movement of the list is a demonstration of the fragmentation of man's thinking as he seeks new thrills and means of expressing himself in what he perceives to be an increasingly meaningless world.

Styles and forms other than those listed exist as well. The foundation of each, however, is the glorification of man as he succumbs to the nothingness which marks existentialism.

Since nothing lasts in the existential world view, nothing matters but this moment's experience or man's perception of it. "Eat, drink,

and be merry," for tomorrow we die—and there is nothing left after that! If throwing a bucket of paint at a canvas satisfies, do that. If playing a song in four keys simultaneously satisfies, do that.



Woman in a Blue Dress, Phnom

Fragmentation and distortion are common in twentieth-century paintings and music.



© Marcel Duchamp

This satirical expression of commercial imagery suggests the social themes which often comprise modern art and music.



© Piet Mondrian

Splashes of color and jagged lines communicate emotions of minds which are ruled by chaos.

These art forms reflect life which has lost external and internal character controls. Increasing evidences of pornography and distortion in art express man's disdain for limitations of any kind and demonstrate that the arts *do* express morality or immorality. It is impossible for art to be morally neutral.

Twentieth-century art forms—all of them, visual, aural, and written—worship man's thought for the moment and his right to entertain that thought or change the focus of that thought without any responsibility to answer for it.

The individual Christian has a two-fold responsibility with reference to the arts. First, he must make

certain that anything he allows to pass before his senses will be Christ-honoring and uplifting to his spirit. Thus, he will automatically create a market for that which is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of a good report. (See Philippians 4:8.)

The music he chooses for his listening must reflect the testimony of a changed life, even as the Psalmist wrote, "*He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord*" (Psalm 40:2-3). His second responsibility is to reject that which is damaging to the cause of Christ, thereby decreasing the market for it and thwarting its ability to act as a catalyst for increased worldliness.

Peter Masters, the present pastor of Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle in London stated that "England is twenty years ahead of America in spiritual decline . . . and the first thing to go in the churches was the music." God has called His people to be holy, even as He is holy. (See I Peter 1:15.) God's love never cancels His holiness. In like manner He calls those who love Him to "*exhort one another daily*" to "*walk after his commandments.*" (See Hebrews 3:13 and II John 6.)

Raising a standard for holiness in Christian music is not a demonstration of legalism; it is an act of true love for both God and our fellow believers in the Body of Christ. Perhaps Jesus' example in driving the moneychangers from the Temple pictures it best. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, and He is not to be grieved by our walking in a carnal manner. Those who are changing the music among us are actually creating the demand and then setting out to "satisfy" that demand at great expense to all of us.

God is calling us, "*O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing [lies]? Selah. But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself . . .*" (Psalm 4:2-3).

"*I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another. . . . Sing unto the Lord a **new song**, and his praise from the end of the earth . . .*" (Isaiah 42:8-10).

"*O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth*" (Psalm 96:9).

THE THREE-FOLD TEST OF GODLY MUSIC

"... A threefold cord is not quickly broken."

(Ecclesiastes 4:12)



1 GODLY MUSIC MUST BE PURE. *TEST THE SPIRIT.*

- To whom does this music give glory? (God, the performer, this world's philosophies, the composer, etc.)
- How does this music reflect Biblical doctrine and Godly living?
- Is this music reactionary in any way just to be different from that which has been used in previous times?
- Does this music violate your spirit in any way?



2 GODLY MUSIC MUST BE ORDERLY. *TEST THE MESSAGE.*

- Are all the elements of this music combined in a proper balance?
- Does the melody line have a balanced rising and falling contour which matches the inflection of the words?
- What message is conveyed by the harmony? (Mood, atmosphere, emotion, etc.)
- Does the rhythm of the music dominate the message or is it subtle in its function?
- Does the organization of the music reflect a carefully-thought-out design and communicate a definite sense of beginning and ending?
- Does the music have a balanced message of tension and relaxation?
- Does the musical background overpower the text? Does the background distract the listener from the message?
- Is the text accurate in statement and implication as evaluated by the standard of God's Word?