8 Easy Steps to Becoming a DJ

Music, Activism, and You

HEARD AT WESLEYAN:

Jake Schofield, DJs in the dorms
Dear 108,

We laughed, we cried, and we made mewling noises which sound like a strange combination of both. Enjoy the fruits of our (and your) labor.

Love,
your editors

P.S. Next time, we’re writing articles.

Photo credit: Julia Baez
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Range</th>
<th>Article Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>“Joy Division: An Existential Sound”</td>
<td>Sheng Jia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>“Introducing Jake Schofield”</td>
<td>Julia Fram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>“The Sounds of Wes”</td>
<td>Stuart Pasch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>“Singing for a Change”</td>
<td>Eden Engel-Rebitzer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-17</td>
<td>“From Guitars to Genomes: The Rise of Pandora”</td>
<td>Swetha Mummini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>“8 Easy Steps to Becoming a DJ”</td>
<td>Monica Leslie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-23</td>
<td>“Solidarity through Song: Politically Influenced Music”</td>
<td>Liza Parisky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-27</td>
<td>“Welcome to Heartbreak, Man From The Moon: How Kanye West and Kid Cudi Changed The Game”</td>
<td>Jason Griffiths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-31</td>
<td>“Bob Marley = Reggae? A look at the reggae superstar's rise to prominence and the way we view him now”</td>
<td>Marlen Delgado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32-33</td>
<td>“Rakim Allah: Unsung Prophet”</td>
<td>Stephen Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34-35</td>
<td>“The Science and Psychology Behind Music: Why we Hum Along and Groove to the Beat”</td>
<td>William Iselin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-39</td>
<td>“Introducing the Tallest Man on Earth By Rehan Mehta”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-41</td>
<td>“Three Days Grace: The Rise to Fame Chipper Bounds”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Joy Division: An Existential Sound

SHENG JIA

“It almost seems to be that it all came when they had the name...it was like Roxy Music or Velvet Underground. You know instantly from that moment...it was one of those names.” -- Paul Morley.

If you’ve ever asked yourself who shifted the rock scene and led a whole new genre of music focused on emotions and feelings in the seventies and eighties, the answer is Joy Division.

The band borrows its name from the prostitute wing of a Nazi concentration camp. There is something absurd about this name-- it’s in really bad taste, but also quite funny. But unintentionally, this absurdness became the description of Joy Division’s music.

As Marshall Berman concluded in his book All That Is Solid Melts Into Air, “To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world-- and at the same time that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are.” This dramatic tension in modern life creates an existential living condition, especially in Manchester where industrialization began.

The band itself is a natural portrait of what modernity brings to people in Manchester, where it was formed--people become both unrelated and related in waves of transformation and destruction. Lead singer Ian Curtis was never closely related intellectually to the other band members. Yet when they were brought together by music, they created astonishments.

In fact, the band never listened to Ian’s lyrics when they performed together. But the totality they created sounded as if it came from their souls.

“Punk enables you to say ‘fuck you,’ but somehow you couldn’t get any further. It’s just a single venomous...phrase of anger, which is necessary to reignite rock ‘n’ roll. But sooner or later, someone was gonna want to say more than ‘fuck you,’ some one was gonna want to say ‘I’m f**ked.’ And it was Joy Division who were the first band to do that, to use the energy and simplicity of punk to express more complex emotions.” -- Tony Wilson.

Joy Division ends the era of punk with a transformation. Rock music becomes the medium for expression of existential anxiety. Content wise, Joy Division is a gateway to an “Atrocity Exhibition” where all the existential living conditions brought by modernization is revealed. Estrangement, loneliness, isolation, loss of control, destruction, death, are all images related to Joy Division's music. But apart from the crying-out of an existential anxiety, their music reveals a desire to break free from this cage of existential crisis deep down in the consciousness.

Joy Division's music sounds genuine and dark, but it can also be a punch into the normal life that lacks consciousness with a punk spirit. For most of the time, drummer Stephen Morris plays just like a machine; he does not simply lay out beats but fills in the entire piece and provides the momentum to the piece and to a powerful but gradual blow into reality. This mentality of breaking-free keeps coming in Joy Division's music.

Joy Division’s music sounds genuinely violent. It’s the trenchant and heavy sound of the inner world of a modern man. Distracted, dispositional, delusional--people in Dostoevsky’s novels rebel in the form of transformation and destruction. Lead singer Ian Curtis was never closely related intellectually to the other band members. Yet when they were brought together by music, they created astonishments.

Works by Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, and Sartre heavily influenced Curtis. He was like a word box, fanatic about writing lyrics, while initially the rest of the band didn’t planned to go for any depth in their music. But the totality they created sounded as if it came from their souls.

Most of Joy Division’s songs are as Paul Morley describes: “It’s simple music, but not simple-minded; cryptic but not impenetrable. While probably no one will exactly know the intention of Curtis’ lyrics since he committed suicide in 1980, most of them still makes incredible sense when one listens to it.

Take “Atrocity Exhibition”, from album Closer as an example.

From the onset, the song is about people around him being used to the atrocity of being entertained by others’ miseries. But Curtis was revealing one of life’s absurdities. It was as if we are the one who is being watched for entertainment. It’s a ludicrous life, but we still do exist.

Asylums with doors open wide
Where people could pay to see inside
For entertainment they watch his body twist
Behind his eyes he says: I still exist

This is the way, step inside
This is the way, step inside
This is the way, step inside
This is the way, step inside
This is the way, step inside
This is the way, step inside please. Joy Division welcomes you to the reality of life.

Joy Division was a transient glittering star in the rock ‘n’ roll scene. It ends an era and started another. But all of it happened so naturally, just like the transformation of life around you. Sometimes it’s true that we all live a boring one-way life, but a moment with Joy Division’s music, we “live our lives through the eyes of Joy Division and Ian Curtis.” —Tony Wilson

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Jake Schofield, a junior who loves to play the trumpet, has just returned to Wesleyan from studying abroad in Ecuador. Jake is a member of multiple bands on campus, including The Fly Machine, Mad Wow, and Buru Style. Buru Style, an atypical campus band, was started in 2007 by Bill Carbone, a graduate student in ethnomusicology at Wesleyan. While much of Buru Style’s music features traditional reggae Nyabinghi rhythms, they have succeeded in making their own unique sound by incorporating jazz, funk, and many other musical styles. After a semester of sun, culture, and admitted pining for the Wesleyan music scene, Jake has taken the time to chat with me about his involvement in Buru Style.

Q: Is Buru Style different from other Wesleyan bands you have been involved in?
A: It’s definitely the most intense and professional musical experience I’ve ever been a part of and will ever be a part of.

Q: What do you bring to Buru Style?
A: I bring me – Jake Schofield. I wouldn’t say I contribute to the songwriting, but I play the parts they tell me to and I play them right, hopefully. I bring my own style and energy. Everyone brings their own thing.

Q: How did you get involved in Buru Style?
A: This is a beautiful story. I knew a lot of the musicians. I went to every show and I loved them. Towards the end of freshman year the piano player asked me if I wanted to play a gig with them at the Blue Note in New York. I said yes, obviously. We were going to play the night after the very last day of school, a night of celebration so I played with them after having no sleep. A week later, we went on a short tour and cut an album. I felt a little star struck.

Q: What are some artists that have influenced Buru Style?
A: I don’t really write the music, but there are definitely some incredible artists that have influenced the sound of Buru, like Jackie Mittoo. He’s called the keyboard king. Bill is definitely influenced by James Brown in terms of how we want to model our shows. He’s the King.

Q: Do you listen to the same types of music you play?
A: It’s hard to say because I don’t think the music we make sounds like any music I’ve heard. I do listen to a lot of reggae, more than just Bob Marley reggae.

Q: In our class, the issue of covering a song or adopting a “style that is not yours,” is really relevant. We talked about many specific examples in which a white artist covered the song of a black artist, such as Pat Boone and his horrendously lame cover of Little Richard’s song Tutti Frutti. Although the case is not identical with Buru Style, a band that writes their own music and has its own sound, what do you think about the fact that Buru Style is heavily influenced by music typically played by Jamaican artists?

We are all pretty much white Jewish kids so it really all depends on how you approach the music. If you are playing music that’s one thing but if you’re trying to emulate a style that is not yours, well, that’s another thing. Bill studies Jamaican music and ethnomusicology. He just loves it. But, I really like our sound because it’s really genuine. You play how you feel. That’s the beauty of music. Pat Boone probably played lame music because he was pretty lame whereas Little Richard was awesome and crazy. On Buru, everyone is talented enough to play their own sound really well and they don’t force it. We would never be as good as a real Jamaican band but we play as hard as we can and have our own crazy style.

Q: You mentioned something about Little Richard being a great musician because he is crazy. Do you think you have to be crazy to make great music?
Certainly to be a good performer. James Brown is crazy and he is the man. You don’t have to be crazy to make good music but you do have to be crazy to make crazy music.

Check out Buru Style at www.myspace.com/burustyle
The Sounds of Wes

Stuart Pasch

“For a campus that has such a diverse student body it makes sense that almost every genre is represented,” said Charlie Kaplan ‘14. While Wesleyan’s campus may be small it surely is a diverse one. For every sports game there is some sort of concert happening at Wes, and anyone who is looking to play music can usually find a place to perform and people to listen.

Apart from the diverse musical tastes of the students there are also different styles and trends in music around campus. Where you go on the weekend depends upon if you want to dance, and, if so, what you want to dance to. It seems that each building represents a different musical taste. Students agree that the music scene varies from place to place around campus.

WestCo has more techno/rave music; there is almost always a DJ and while it isn’t music I tend to know it’s always mixed well. John Ludlow ‘14 agreed, “WestCo is mostly techno, not so much pop. It seems like someone has put work into DJ-ing it.”

For anyone who only travels to WestCo on the weekends, the music scene is defined by the loud, wild raves held in the WestCo Café. But WestCo is more than just raves. Concert Committee Chair Donovan Arthen ’11 said that “aside from dance music, WestCo has Open Mic Night every Wednesday and that is a variety of music.”

Beta is at the other end of the spectrum from WestCo. “Beta does a lot of 90′s stuff along with current music; it can be more old school,” said Lindsay Boyd ’14. From personal experience I can agree that the music is very current and I would probably hear it on the radio. At Beta I’ve seen them playing music off of a dance playlist on someone’s iPod. The music is great and they play songs everyone knows, but it doesn’t have the same feel as a party with a DJ. At a DJ’d party you can feel the time and effort put into the music.

Psi U is somewhere in between WestCo and Beta; while they generally have a DJ I still feel it’s a crapshoot as to what I’m going to hear there. Meredith Hritz ’14 says, “Generally Psi U and Beta have mostly rap, but Psi U has more variety because of their themed parties.” Psi U has parties that are themed around eras and play the music of period.

The senior houses provide yet another angle of the music scene. “Fountain is like six months behind some of the music that’s being played in the dorms and what’s on the radio. It’s older but still recent rap that everyone knows all the words to,” says Hritz. This is true unless the house puts a little extra time into getting a DJ for the party. But the music played there is not necessarily meant to be a crowd pleaser; most of it is picked by people at the party. They find their favorite party song on the iPod and put it on. Natalia Manetti-Lax ’14 said, “Fountain is good but it’s all personal.”

One question I’m left with is: “where is the music coming from?” Nicole Updegrove ’14 believes “If you really want party music you should go to the dorm rooms.” I agree; I think the cutting edge of popular music at Wesleyan music can be found in the dorms. “Barbra Streisand” by Duck Sauce was a song I first heard in my dorm, two months ago, and only recently heard it played in Beta. The music in the dorm rooms slowly but surely finds its way into the frats and onto Fountain.
Immanuel Lokwei ’12 was raised in a small village in Northern Kenya. In the spring of 2010, that village was being ravaged by drought. In a region where people routinely suffer from lack of food, the drought had major implications for the survival of the villagers. Immanuel partnered with his classmates Howe Pearson, Jesse Humm, Matt Hurwit, and Abaye Steinmetz-Silber to use their mutual love of music as a tool to support Immanuel’s hometown in its time of crisis. They saw their mission as twofold; to relieve the suffering of famine in Northern Kenya and to showcase the talent they saw in their peers at Wesleyan. As Pearson said, “We heard this beautiful music all around campus and we felt like this tragedy in Kenya had created an opportunity to make real change by sharing this music with the world.” They used their connections throughout the Wesleyan and Yale music scenes to put together an album entitled Artists Helping Hands, comprised of songs donated by fellow college musicians. The group posted the album online and it could be downloaded for a donation of any amount.

In the month before they left for Kenya they had raised $1300 dollars from album sales. This money went to building and funding a relief clinic run out of Immanuel’s family’s home and to starting a soccer tournament, both of which are now self-sustaining. The group sees itself as part of a larger movement of artists using their talents to enact social change.

Sam Rosenfeld, a student at Brown University, also uses his passion for art to impact his community. Every summer he travels to Los Angeles to film for and work with a group of hip-hop dancers who use their art form to reduce violence and encourage education in their communities. “You can take a child and give them a gun and make them a soldier or you can give them an instrument and teach them to dance, and make them an artist. That’s why this is so meaningful to me,” says Rosenfeld.

While Rosenfeld feels strongly about using art to make social change, he does see it as a limited tool. For example, there is no unified movement amongst the artists. He explained that there could be relationships between groups doing similar work, but instead most organizations are completely independent of one another.

Because universities have historically been an important source of work for social justice, they could prove to be the ideally supportive environments for artists trying to improve their communities. With both financial and social backing from peers and the institutions, universities around the country are beginning to serve as breeding grounds for this marriage of music and social justice. For students such as Rosenfeld and Lokwei, this new trend amongst college musicians brings a new level of meaning to their art.
With over a staggering fifty million users in the United States, Internet radio service Pandora continues its ascend in popularity. Founded by musician Tim Westergren in Oakland, California, Pandora remains a dominant force in Internet radio because unlike other stations, its sole focus is to help listeners find music that will appeal to them.

The idea first originated when Stanford graduate Tim Westergren was writing musical scores in the film industry. He quickly became intrigued by why film producers preferred some songs to others. With a background in music theory, he started looking for patterns in songs that producers chose for previous movies and deconstructed them from a musicological perspective. After listening to various songs, he came up with a list of over eight hundred different song traits. He predicted that producers would choose songs for their new film soundtracks based on traits chosen from previous songs in films. By predicting songs based solely on characteristics, Westergren became skilled at choosing songs film producers would place on their soundtracks. His idea quickly expanded beyond film soundtracks and eventually, he teamed up with graduate student Nolan Gasser to start the Music Genome Project, which lead to the launch of Pandora in 2005.

Westergren’s vision was simple: he wanted to connect people to music they would love. However, early in his career, Westergren realized the limitations of the music industry. Prior to the surge in digital music, in the early 2000s, record companies only promoted a limited amount of records and the majority of listeners were confined to albums found at their local music stores. Westergren wanted to resolve this issue by making lesser-known music more accessible and introduce listeners to new music.

The Music Genome Project, founded in 2000, has a primary goal of classifying all music on a fundamental level. The Music Genome is split into five different categories: Pop/Rock, Hip-Hop/Electronica, Jazz, World Music, and Classical. Each song that enters the genome is based on 400 different attributes or “genes” and every gene corresponds to a different aspect of music. Some of the genes are strictly technical, involving the structure and composition of a song, while others are more loosely subjective such as how emotionally intense a song sounds or how aggressive the vocals are. To make these evaluations, Pandora hires musicologists, a group of skilled music theorists, to analyze these songs for 20 hours each week. An average three-minute song can take a musicologist over 20 to 30 minutes to evaluate, and songs are constantly being evaluated for reliability and consistency in ratings. When analyzing a song, a musicologist first breaks it down into broader categories such as its form, rhythm, sound, melody, harmony, sound, and lyrics. He then proceeds to more subjective factors such as how “upbeat” the song sounds. To date, the Music Genome Project has analyzed over 800,000 songs and 80,000 different artists in its exhaustive collection.

When a first-time user enters the website, he or she is asked to enter a song or artist of interest. Pandora then scans its extensive database and selects a song that it believes the listener will enjoy. Pandora’s selection process is based on a complex mathematical algorithm that attempts to find songs that have similar qualities to the original song chosen. The user can also find out why a particular song was picked and gets a brief thumbnail description of the various music traits that lead to its selection. For example, initially putting “Here Comes the Sun” by the Beatles leads to “In My Life” by the same artist, chosen because of its “mellow rock influences, folk influences, and mixed acoustic and instrumental tonality.” The listener can then provide either positive or negative feedback for the song selected either by clicking thumbs up (“I like it”) or thumbs down (“I don’t like it”). A thumbs up serves as positive feedback, adjusting the algorithm to play songs with similar qualities whereas negative reception of the song adjusts the algorithm to avoid songs similar to it in the future. In addition, Pandora’s feedback mechanism also provides quality control; it ensures the ability of musicologists to accurately judge songs.

Despite the popularity of Pandora, Westergren’s vision did not come without costs. Royalties serve as a major obstacle to Pandora’s success as a business. In 2007, the Copyright Royalty Board demanded that per-song performance royalties be doubled when songs are played on the Internet. As a result, song royalties spiked from .008 of a cent to .019 of a cent. Although...
the numbers may seem infinitesimal, considering that Pandora has over a million listeners that plug the website in daily, the costs quickly add up. In fact, Pandora nearly found itself on the verge of collapse in 2008 until it reached a new agreement with SoundExchange, the company that collects royalties and distributes them to record labels and artists. With lower royalty rates and a resurgence following its launch on popular mobile phones such as the Apple iPhone and Blackberry, the company was able to stay afloat, but not without repercussions for users. Currently, listeners are limited to forty hours of music a month unless they upgrade to Pandora One or pay 99 cents a month for unlimited usage.

In spite of these setbacks, however, Pandora remains a dominant force in Internet radio. Although currently only available in the United States, with 60,000 new subscriptions a day, it is clear that users are here to stay.

References


1. Listen

An inspiring DJ is like a hungry lioness always on the prowl for new music. With ears alert they stalk the campus eavesdropping on your conversations. “Hey, I just heard of this great new band…” Phone ready, they text a note to themselves. It’s this unquenchable thirst for the next big thing that makes a DJ great. A young hopeful must open up their ears and listen to what people around campus are blasting from their iPods. Wesleyan is an artsy school and the perfect environment to learn about and spread fantastic music.

2. Partner Up

As in battle, one is always stronger with an alliance. It is a common occurrence for DJs at Wes to work in pairs. This allows for more exposure and more shows. With a partner you also present a more diverse set list. You have one who specializes in popular frat style music and another who brings the eclectic rave tunes, resulting in everyone in the crowd partying hard all night.

3. Make a Fresh Name

Don’t be afraid to be punny. DJ Dubstep made a very obvious play on his last name, Dubbs. “Bastille” gives a degree of mystery. Is he French? I don’t know. Or Flammenwerfer; that must be cool because I have no idea what it means. In fact, a DJ’s name is nearly as important as the music they play. Important tip: make sure you make a name that people can pronounce. It’s hard to get your name out there when there’s no consensus on its pronunciation.

4. Get an “in”

Booking your first show is always the hardest. Joining a fraternity or a program house can open doors. Many DJs booked their first show through an “in” with a campus organization. Most of the frats have an in residence DJ that works all their parties. Looking for your “in”? Join a program house. This time of the year they are taking new applicants.

5. Learn the Programs

Playing music off iTunes is for noobs. A real DJ has special programs that allow them to speed up the song, have it fade out, add my phone and utilize stock beats. A more experienced DJ can make even the most mundane songs their own. A good starting program is virtual DJ, which is available online for free.

6. Be Aggresive

Have a friend throwing a party? Be obnoxious. Ask them if they have a DJ. If you want to book more events exposure is key. Even at a small party you can get your name out there. Every event can be enhanced with music, thus every event can be enhanced by you. Even if they don’t ask for a DJ just show up with your laptop and speakers. Trust me, they’ll thank you later.

7. Cater to Your Crowd

When you’re playing music it’s not about what you want and what you like. You should be able to play a diverse amount of venues. A great DJ will be able to hop from Eclectic to Psi U, to Beta, and to Fountain.

8. Respect the Hierarchy

There is a clear hierarchy in the DJ community. Do NOT mess with the highly respected DJs. That guy at Bar Mitzvahs playing one hit wonders and wearing a sequence vest— he messed with the hierarchy. Don’t be that guy. The best DJs play from 11:30pm to 1:00am. Until you become the best enjoy playing at 9:00pm.
Bloodshed, taxes, and abolition. Labor, elections and the Great Depression. Major political events occur in the United States on a regular basis, and while politicians, pundits, and pollsters may dominate the discourse, it is musicians who actually say the most. Protest songs and politically motivated music movements are nothing new in this country. The Hutchinson Family Singers emerged out of New Hampshire in 1839, singing anti-slavery songs that landed them in at the White House on occasion. During the early 20th century, in the midst of World War I and the movement for women’s suffrage, other artists voiced their views through music. But the most famous period that inspired many to pick up a guitar and sing socially aware lyrics was during the Vietnam War, in the late 1960s into the early 1970s. Just as rock and roll was becoming a staple in society, this controversial war prompted protest songs that swept through the country, many of which are still listened to today.

The Vietnam War provided a unique opportunity for rock and roll because so many agreed that it was an unnecessary and horrific decade in our history. With a built-in platform from which to express their views, rock musicians who were just hitting their peaks capitalized on the chance to enter the social sphere. Country Joe and the Fish (a band whose name had political implications from the start, as “Country Joe” referred to Joseph Stalin, and “the fish” to a reference made by Mao) may have had the most direct, satirical protest song of the time, “I Feel Like I’m Fixin’ to Die Rag,” released in 1967. With lyrics dripping with sarcasm, calling mothers and fathers to send their boys to war and “be the first one on [their] block to have [their] boy come home in a box,” Country Joe brought to light the absurdity of the war. He would end up singing it in front of hundreds of thousands at Woodstock.

Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young focused on a domestic event with their 1970 hit, “Ohio”. Still a piece about the war, “Ohio” focused on the shootings of four unarmed Kent State students by the Ohio National Guard during a protest. With the repeated line “four dead in Ohio”, CSNY’s song reflected many Americans’ sentiments at the time, as the violence reached home. Other artists took this decade as an opportunity to promote peace in general. John Lennon’s 1969’s “Give Peace a Chance” and 1971’s “Imagine” are songs that transcend the ages with a message asking for a better world. Cat Steven’s “Peace Train” follows the same logic, as peace became a theme for all.

Vietnam protests songs did not stop when the war did in 1975, proving how profound an effect this event had in the music world. Billy Joel’s 1982 hit, “Goodnight Saigon” starts and ends with the sound of helicopter blades with a narrative about the war in between, complete with lines like ”we left in plastic, as numbered corpses.” Bruce Springsteen’s famous 1984 song, “Born in the U.S.A.,” while widely accepted as patriotic, is actually somewhat mocking the coun-
try, as Springsteen combines lines like “sent me off to Vietnam to go and kill the yellow man” with a chorus repeating “Born in the U.S.A.” These standouts are just a snapshot of the numerous protest songs that hit in the airways in the 1960s and ’70s. So many are still played today, and not just by the generation that grew up with them.

The Iraq War of the 21st century did not inspire the same widespread musical contempt. Instead, artists banded together not to protest the war itself, but to bring out the younger generation to vote. Rock the Vote, an organization started in 1990, became headline news during the first decade of the new millennium. It exploded in 2008, registering 2.25 million voters. While the main goal was to register young voters and motivate them to get to the polls on Election Day, it seemed to be a campaign for the Democratic candidate, and one that rejected Republican platforms, including the war. Artists such as P. Diddy, Madonna, and Justin Timberlake all appeared in public service announcements for the organization. Other movements, such as MoveOn.org’s Vote for Change, did have a strict Democratic message. A 2004 tour through swing states featured artists such as Jack Johnson, Crosby, Stills and Nash, Bruce Springsteen, Jurassic 5, and Pearl Jam. Politically charged musical endeavors such as these show that since the Vietnam War, this political genre has opened up past rock and roll to encompass any musician who has a thought to voice.

Music will continue to infiltrate the political sphere, and every time a musician picks up the microphone, the people gain a better perspective on issues. When commercial and entertainment enterprises take on political and social movements, the world becomes a little more connected. Without any boundaries, without the need to campaign, musicians have the freedom to deliver ideas to the people. Over the years, as new controversies arise, there will hopefully always be a guitar around to ensure that important messages never die.

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Growing up, I prided myself on staying up to date on new music. It became a hobby of sorts. I listened to the radio constantly. Now, in this new technological age, I scour different blogs for new music. So when I first heard 808's and Heartbreak, Kanye West's experimental departure towards a more contemplative side, I was interested. I didn't like it right away, but it eventually grew to be one of my favorite albums. I found the beats he made for the songs strange, but in a good way. I had never heard hip-hop sound like that before. It was a move away from the destructive materialism that a lot of rappers seem to promote. It wasn't about cars, or money, or being on boats, or just how generally lavish and ostentatious one's life was. It was emotional, following a breakup with his fiancée and his mother's death in 2007. The album seemed to spark a shift from the most universal themes of rap songs, namely money, women, and violence. The second song I heard from the album, after the MTV Awards Show when West performed “Love Lockdown,” was “Welcome to Heartbreak,” and this was the song in which I was first introduced to The Man From The Moon, Kid Cudi.

Scott “Kid Cudi” Mescudi, from the Cleveland, Ohio suburb of Shaker Heights, first entered the downtown Manhattan scene when he moved to Brooklyn, NY, and somehow got a coveted job at the Bathing Ape store, an ultra expensive Japanese fashion boutique in SoHo often frequented by celebrities (and those who can afford it). Kid Cudi soon became involved with DJ A-Trak's record label, Fool's Gold, and quickly began releasing and producing music, beginning with his single “Day 'N' Night.” Eight months after “Day 'N' Night” was released, I heard “Welcome to Heartbreak,” and I began to explore the music of Kid Cudi. I haven't looked back since.

Kid Cudi is an anomaly. It doesn't make sense that he is popular. He is not, nor claims to be, a "gangsta" or a "pimp" as many rappers do in their music. He does not flaunt his success. To be quite honest, Kid Cudi is kind of emo. Emo, as in emotional, and there is significant evidence of this in the lyrics of his songs. He constantly refers to his inner turmoil, wailing out, "Oh-whoa-whoa, why does it/ Feel so wrong, when I'm tryna [sic] do right!" on the morose ballad, "Solo Dolo (Nightmare)." At the end, he inverts it, questioning, "Why must it feel so right/ When I know that it's wrong?"

This kind of candor shows Kid Cudi making himself vulnerable. Vulnerability is not something that most rappers flaunt. The image of the gangster rapper stems back to some of the earliest, most relatively mainstream rappers such as Public Enemy, or NWA in the early 90’s. These artists were the archetypes that rappers built their personas around. If you took a random sampling of rappers in the 90’s and early 2000’s, almost all would claim to have come from "the hood" or to have committed some form of violence, and, of course, to have been a very tough badass. Kid Cudi has departed from this in part thanks to Kanye West, who seemed to pave the way as a controversial star with soaring fame by releasing 808’s and Heartbreak.

This album was nothing like the previous three albums of West. Instead of witty, sharp commentary or constant jokes over fake workout videos as he had done in the past, West really strips his sound down to the bare minimum, using synthesizers and the 808 Beat machine to create melancholy melodies fitting for his distressed mindset. Kid Cudi seems to have been directly inspired by Kanye, for his debut album, Man on the Moon – The End of Day, has numerous songs with minimal instruments or noises at all, as if he doesn't want you to be distracted by the unimportant.
He is concerned with telling you about himself. He wants to use the album to introduce the complicated being that is Kid Cudi, or “The Martian” as he calls himself on “Embrace the Martian,” one of his songs from his first mixtape, a Kid named CuDi. He not only wants to show us his humor, hard partying habits, and generally good vibes, but also his dark side. He constantly refers to having problems, or demons as he calls them, which he constantly wrestles with. He explores this in one of the albums biggest singles, “Soundtrack 2 My Life,” with a chorus that he sings,

“I’ve got some issues that nobody can see/
And all of these emotions are pouring out of me/
I bring them to the light for you, it’s only right, this is/
The soundtrack to my life, the soundtrack to my life.”

This kind of stark statement is unusual to hear in rap. It’s an unusual topic to address, let alone promote, in an open forum. These points are both valid, but it simply doesn’t seem to matter. Kid Cudi has thrown wide open the door that Kanye unlocked with 808’s. He is not a rapper touting himself and his newfound fame. He has taken the idea that rap doesn’t have to be a serious affair and run with it, producing songs such as “Make Her Say,” a racy number about fellatio sampling Lady Gaga’s hit “Pokerface” with guests Common and Kanye West, and “Up, Up, and Away,” in which he regales us with stories about his various marijuana related activities. He contrasts this exceptionally with his self-proclaimed darker side and more serious songs. The song “Soundtrack 2 My Life” discusses his childhood. He praises his mother for being able to afford good things on Christmas, yet contrasts this image immediately with the image of sitting in his room, playing alone with his toys, and his siblings never truly understanding that there was something wrong, that he had “the little bit of sadness in me.” It is an interesting way to enter stardom, coming out and saying, “I’m not perfect, here are my flaws, here’s what I struggle with.”

Kid Cudi’s second album, The Man on the Moon – The Legend of Mr. Rager, was anxiously awaited by many fans this Fall, and again he did not disappoint. While this album didn’t have quite as many hit singles, Cudi’s collaborations, with artists Kanye West, Cee-Lo, and Mary J. Blige among others, brought the album alive. Cudi is still pushing the limits by using sounds previously not emphasized in rap, such as violins on “Revolution,” and an almost exclusive use of the piano on the song “Marijuana.” As we’ve learned in class, music changes over time with experimentation, and Kanye West and Kid Cudi both took huge risks with these albums and became more successful; more importantly, however, we should be most appreciative of these two for their ability to push limits and open up entirely unexplored sounds and content for future musicians.

Reference

Bob Marley = Reggae?

A look at the reggae superstar’s rise to prominence and the way we view him now.

Marlen Delgado
In the 1950’s and 1960’s, a new phenomenon was taking over Jamaican radios. Artists from New Orleans like Fats Domino—who had been extremely popular in Jamaica—were beginning to slowly disappear, and this new music began to appear in record stores and played daily on radio stations. This slow, yet rhythmic music led to the rise of “ska,” which many music critics claimed to be an unsophisticated Jamaican version of pop music.

Just like the Blues music in the United States, it took a very charismatic woman to bring ska out of Jamaica and into the ever-growing music business. With “My Boy Lollipop,” Millie Small made ska a new phenomenon in music. Soon, reggae, the name that was given to ska music to make it more appealing to white costumers, became extremely popular and thousands of new reggae records and artists began being produced in Britain. Reggae became an acclaimed genre of music and it was no longer seen as primitive. In fact, Kevin Allen stated that, “what the critics failed to understand was the incredibly complex and creative nature of reggae’s rhythms. How the bass drum and bass guitar beat syncopated with the straight beat of the snare, and the bouncy uplift from the high hat and rhythm guitar.” Artists poured into rundown studios in order to try to become the face of reggae, and one man and his band made it to stardom.

Nesta Robert “Bob” Marley, the most well-known reggae star, started out with his band The Wailers (1964–1974), which later turned into Bob Marley and the Wailers (1974–1981), as just another group attempting to spread their music to the world. Marley was the leading guitarist, the lead singer, and the songwriter for the group. The Rastafari inspired lyrics and his Jamaican beats soon caught the attention of millions, and the singles from the band soon hit the top of the musical charts. Soon enough, people began to consider Marley “the undisputed world ambassador of reggae.”

Bob Marley and the Wailers also gave a voice to the social issues that tormented their homeland, Jamaica. They brought the public issues of their country into their lyrics, which turned them into peace activists in the eyes of many. “As his fame spread, he became a legendary figure, revered as a prophet of hope by the downtrodden and oppressed for his championing of populist political movements,” said Chris Salewicz in his article in the magazine The History of Rock. Marley and the Wailers continued to promote peace by playing at rallies and concerts that intended to bring tranquility to the people. In 1981, his journey ended when Marley died in Miami from cancer.

In today’s mainstream pop culture, Bob Marley is no longer represented as a music rebel. His memorabilia has little to do with his music or his Rastafari religion, but rather the fact that he smoked cannabis. Millions of posters, shirts, mugs, etc. represent Bob Marley as a stoner. On college campuses, for example, hundreds of students hang posters on their walls, which depict him smoking. Although he did smoke marijuana, Marley did not do it for recreational purposes. A part of the Rastafari religion promotes the smoking of cannabis for religious purposes, as well as eating only natural foods and excluding meat from the diet. Marley did not create a movement to promote the legalization of marijuana in the United States, yet he is portrayed an activist for the inclusion or marijuana into society. His music is no longer a part of his image, as hundreds of so-called Marley fans are not even aware of the existence of the rest of his band, the Wailers. While many purchase Marley memorabilia to support a cause, few do it to continue the message of peace and change for the people that need the most help.
He’s the John Lennon of hip-hop, yet his name is hardly ever mentioned. His work and style directly influenced the most popular household names in hip hop, including 2Pac, Eminem, the Wu-Tang Clan, and Jay-Z. His fluid, velvet-smooth flow and complex, intricately crafted lyrics would set the bar for rappers for generations, but perhaps too high to be reached. Even if he may not garner much recognition today, one name was certainly on New Yorkers’ minds in 1987: Rakim.

Rakim was born William Griffin Jr. in the Long Island suburb of Wyandanch. As the nephew of R&B great Ruth Brown, he was immersed in music all his life. Rakim took up the saxophone at a young age and was interested in hip hop from its beginnings in nearby New York City. At the age of 18, he converted to Islam and took on the name Rakim Allah, “Ra” and “Kim” being the names of the sun god and the ancient Egyptian kingdom, respectively. His newfound faith would later become a common topic in his lyrics and philosophies.

Straight out of high school, Rakim chose to skip college and he teamed up with Eric Barrier, a radio DJ who was looking for an MC. The duo traveled to the house of renowned hip hop producer Marley Marl and put out their first single over the bassline of Fonda Rae’s “Over Like a Fat Rat,” and titled it “Eric B. for President.”

The team, now officially known as Eric B. and Rakim, then signed a contract with the label 4th and Broadway. They issued two more singles and their 1987 debut album Paid in Full ended up in the top ten of the R&B charts. The album introduced listeners to Rakim’s clean yet provocative style and his refined, sharp flow, influenced by his appreciation for jazz music. His opening line for “Eric B. for President” (“I came in the door, I said it before”) has become one of the most often quoted lines in hip hop. Eric B. and Rakim’s debut album was certified gold by the end of the year. Less than a year later, a second album, titled Follow the Leader was also certified gold. Their third album Let the Rhythm Hit ‘Em undertook very little success compared to the duo’s last two albums.

However, in 1990 the pair split up to go on their separate paths. At this time gangsta rap, spearheaded by N.W.A., overtook the stage and pushed more classic hip hop out of the way. In 1992, their final collaboration Don’t Sweat the Technique was issued.

Rakim stayed off the scene until 1997, when he signed a contract with Universal and released his first solo album The 18th Letter. The album was highly anticipated by listeners and managed to reach number four on the charts and receive positive reviews. He followed up his first solo record with The Master, which failed to repeat the success of his preceding album. It wouldn’t be until 2009 that Rakim released a new album, partially of tracks he had made with Dr. Dre during a short stint at his Aftermath label.

While Rakim’s solo career may have only scratched the commercial success he had with Eric Barrier, his musical influence is prevalent today in many of the most well-known hip hop artists of the 90s and beyond. In a time and place where lyrical skill was often demonstrated by rap battles, he showed the power of taking pen to paper and artistically and painstakingly crafting lyrics. He developed a blunt force in his lyrics, embodied by powerful metaphors and a lengthy vocabulary. His smooth, laid back flow and intricate, developed lyrical style brought hip hop to a completely new level. In addition, he popularized and mastered the use of internal rhyming. His style would become a template for East Coast hip hop, which was characterized by innovative, dexterous lyrics. Rakim broke ground in making hip hop a showcase for lyrical talent.

Rakim is also chronicled for the messages in his songs. As a part of his Islamic faith, he rapped against violence and praised God. However, one of the most common themes in his works is his own lyrical style and rhythm. Ever since Paid in Full, he discussed how he writes his music, how he views his position as an MC, and his own skills at rapping. He also describes how he seeks musical perfection in his music in many of his songs. In addition, Rakim also performed several songs about love, war, and awareness of poverty and drug issues.

Rakim Allah was one of the hottest MCs during the late 80s and early 90s. While he seemed to have fallen off the track slightly in years after, it is safe to say his prominence and significance may come from the influence of his lyrical style and technique more so than his own actual music. He single-handedly paved the way for the emergence of the East Coast hip hop, characterized by its developed lyrical prowess. Because of his staggering influence on hip hop that revolutionized a genre, Rakim is largely considered to be one of the most successful MCs in history.

References


The Science and Psychology Behind Music: Why we Hum Along and Groove to the Beat

William Iselin

Have you ever wondered why music is so important to us? When you think about what it is, at the lowest level of understanding, it’s just a bunch of vibrations moving through the air. Yet what should be such a small and insignificant thing is enough to bring out some of the strongest emotions. Many of our biggest heroes are musicians and music has changed the course of history. It is in fact so important to us that there is a multi-billion dollar industry that is built on the buying and selling of music.

Before getting into why we have evolved to have such a dependency on music, we must first look at how we sense sounds. First, sound waves enter the ear and vibrate the eardrum. This causes a chain of bones to transmit the vibration to the cochlea, a snail shaped organ deep inside the ear that is made up of three tubes rolled up together. It is the middle tube that contains the receptors that vibrate when a sound wave reaches them. These receptors then send a signal to the brain via the cochlear nerve. It is the apex of the cochlea that allows us to hear low frequency sounds while the base allows us to hear high frequency sounds. As we get older, the cells at the base of the cochlea start to die, which is why we lose the ability to hear very high frequency sounds.

Now that we have explored the how, we can now move on to the why, which is what most interests us here. The perception of music is an area where there is still much uncertainty, but both cognitive psychologists and neuroscientists have started to elucidate the mystery. We are born with the ability to perceive music and there are areas of the brain that specialise in this. It has not always been this way though. Music and our ability to perceive it evolved from language. We can see this through the fact that the low level processing of both music and language share the same pathways. The brain specialises more and more as you get to higher levels with the left hemisphere containing more regions entirely devoted to language and the right hemisphere containing more regions entirely devoted to music.

The regions that specialise in music also share some circuits with regions that govern emotion. This is why certain types of music can stir up such strong emotions and even cause us to feel strong physiological arousal. I’m sure you’ve experienced these chills when listening to a particularly moving piece of music. This strong emotional response is one of the most important reasons why we listen to music: music has such a positive effect on us and we have made it a major part of our lives. There is also an evolutionary perspective on why we have adopted music on such a grand scale. We know that music evolved from language and as language got more and more complex so did music. Language became the vehicle for knowledge while music became a very useful tool for social bonding. Because it induces such a strong emotional reaction, music was used to make a group of people feel the same way at the appropriate time, such as with war songs. It became a way for a group of individuals to express themselves as one. Music is still used in such a way today—national anthems are a perfect example of this.

There are many other benefits to listening to music. Music therapy, which emerged after World War I, is a field that uses music to help treat people who have sustained brain damage. There are many stories of patients, who are normally completely unresponsive, coming alive briefly after listening to a piece of music from their past. Unfortunately the field still isn’t universally accepted and many insurance companies won’t cover its costs.

Another example of one of the benefits of music is a relatively new discovery that children who are exposed to music at a very young age may have better problem solving abilities. There is some evidence to suggest that children who start to learn an instrument before eight years old perform better in spatial and temporal reasoning tests than children who don’t. This would be explained by the fact that musical training increases the number of connections between the different parts of the brain. This theory has yet to be proven but the initial evidence is promising.

Now that we have examined the effect that music has on us as individuals and in society, it is no surprise that it has become such an important part of our lives and will continue to be studied both scientifically and artistically.

References


Introducing
The Tallest Man
On Earth

Rehan Mehta
If you ever search 'The Tallest Man on Earth' online, you will find an interesting mix of results. There will be Sultan Kosen from Turkey, who stands at 8 ft 1 in tall. There will also be Bao Xishun from China, who stands at 7 ft 9 in tall. And then you will come across 27-year old, folk singer-songwriter Kristian Matsson from Sweden, who stands at approximately 5 ft 5 in tall, goes by the stage name 'The Tallest Man On Earth,' and is about to take the world by storm.

While considered a folk artist, Matsson more appropriately describes his music genre as "acoustic/blues/folk"—a very exciting combination. For the vast majority of his songs, he plays acoustic guitar in a 1960s folk style. Simple chord progressions perfectly complement his complex, yet emotional lyrics. Just like lead singer of Queen Freddy Mercury once said that he wanted people to have their own interpretations of his songs, Matsson said, "sometimes my stories might not be that easy to follow...people should build their own opinion about what's happening in a song." While his lyrics are extremely difficult to follow, the emotions they express are easy to gauge and reminiscent of a 1930s blues style. In addition, his metaphors and descriptions act as a catalyst for the most amazing imagery. To quote lyrics from Matsson’s Into The Stream, "I've set the rain, to be cold and hard, I've set the sun, to be bright and sharp, To wake you up, from your hollow dream, I'll shake your bed, with a thunder strike, from my hand."

Besides Matsson’s playing style and lyrics, a huge element of his music is his unique voice and singing style. His accent is loud, deep and slightly nasal. It’s this voice and style that leads many critics to compare him with a young Bob Dylan. Not surprisingly, Matsson lists Dylan first under his influences, along with Bob Hund, Skip James, Feist, Velvet Underground and Charley Patton, to name a few. One of Matsson’s most popular songs King Of Spain shows his vocal range and the complex rhythm he employs with his vocals.

Matsson released his first album of five songs The Tallest Man On Earth in 2006 to moderate success, and he has been developing his sound, as well as a strong fan following ever since. After the release of one great full-length album, Shallow Grave (2008), and a tour through Europe and the U.S., Matsson is finally getting widespread recognition for his latest release The Wild Hunt (2010), a beautifully crafted masterpiece. Sputnik Music rated the album number 1 in their ‘Top 50 Albums of 2010.’ Rolling Stone magazine reacted to the album by awarding Matsson ‘Band Of The Week’ in June 2010. To quote the magazine, "Raw, scruffy troubadour folk. On The Wild Hunt Matsson moves furtively through a wide spectrum of pre-war and 1960s blues influences from Robert Johnson to Skip James."

Matsson has also released a follow-up EP to the album named Sometimes The Blues Is Just A Passing Bird. It has five songs, including two of my favorites: The Dreamer, where Matsson uses an electric guitar for the first time, softly just as his acoustic style, and Like A Wheel.

Unfortunately Matsson will not be touring on the East coast anytime soon, though he is scheduled to perform at the Coachella Festival in California this April, followed by a European tour through late June. However, if you like acoustic, blues, intense poetic lyrics, Dylan, music or just Swedish men, I urge you to give The Tallest Man On Earth a listen.

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www.thetallestmanonearth.se
In pop culture today, bands like Three Days Grace take a backseat to artists like Drake, Lady Gaga, and Justin Bieber, but their success is by no means dwindling. When they formed in 1992 Adam Gontier (vocals, guitar), Brad Walst (bass), Neil Sanderson (drums), Phil Crowe (guitar) and Joe Grant (guitar) were freshmen in high school. The five met in the small town of Norwood, Ontario, Canada through mutual friends. Upon realizing they all liked the same music, they decided to form a band, which was originally called Groundswell. The five friends soon discovered that the only people who were listening to their music were their friends and family. They accepted any gig they were offered, playing at school talent shows and even opening for movies at the local theater.

By fall 1995 Grant and Crowe had left the band and the trio of Gontier, Walst, and Sanderson changed the name of the band to Three Days Grace. According to Gontier, the name comes from a feeling of a sense of urgency, as in if you had three days to change something in your life, could you do it? The same year the band made the huge decision to move to Toronto to try to get a record deal. Getting airplay in Toronto was extremely difficult for the unsigned band. Eventually the band was able to meet with local producer Gavin Brown, who took what he saw as their best songs and created a demo tape that they sent to EMI Music Publishing Canada. EMI was very interested in the band, but requested more material. It was at this point that the Three Days Grace and Gavin Brown created the song "I Hate Everything about You," which got the attention of several recording companies. The song was the first single of their debut self-titled album. EMI was very interested in the band, but requested more material. It was at this point that the Three Days Grace and Gavin Brown created the song "I Hate Everything about You," which got the attention of several recording companies. The song was the first single of their debut self-titled album. The song reached #2 on the Canadian Singles Chart, and was voted #8 on the list of Top Alternative Songs of the Decade. The song to this day is still widely recognized and when asked about the inspiration for the song during an interview, front man Adam Gontier stated, "the song is pretty blunt you know? It's to the point. It's about realizing there's something in your life you're wasting time on. I think everybody, even in this band and a lot of other people have felt that way before at one point or another in their life. Whether it's a person, a relationship whatever it is you're just wasting time on it. The song is a realization of that."

With the success of their first single, Three Days Grace signed with Jive Records and relocated to a studio in North Brookfield, Massachusetts to complete their first album. Late in 2003 Barry Stock (guitar) joined the band and toured for nearly two years with them while the album Three Days Grace went platinum in the United States and Double Platinum in Canada. After the release of their debut album, Gontier developed an addiction to the painkiller OxyContin, and in 2005 he checked himself into the Center for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). While there Gontier began writing lyrics describing what he was going through during his stay at CAMH. These lyrics eventually became the singles: "Animal I Have Become," "Pain," and "Never Too Late," off the bands second album One-X. "Animal I Have Become" became the most played rock song in Canada in 2006 and in 2007 Billboard listed Three Days Grace as the rock band of the year. In 2009 Three Days Grace recorded their third album Life Starts Now in Vancouver, British Columbia. Contrasted with One-X, the tone of the album was meant to be more optimistic suggesting that it's never too late to make a change in your life, or to start anew. The album debuted at the #3 spot on the Billboard 200 and sold 79,000 copies in its first week. Since May, 2009 Three Days Grace has been touring around the US and Canada, and are still widely recognized by anyone who considers themselves a fan of rock.

References

40
Mysterious.

Compassionate.

Timeless.

Original.

Political.

Dylan.

Henry Coxe

“I just have thoughts in my head and I write them. I’m not trying to lead any causes for anyone.”
–Bob Dylan

“Bobby Dylan says what a lot of people my age feel, but cannot say.”
–Joan Baez

About the government’s portrayal of the threat of the North Koreans, Vietnamese, and the like:

“Dylan feels a very critical trust was betrayed in these exaggerations. He feels further, in what amounts to a militant attitude, that it is up to him to speak out for the millions around him who lack the fortitude to do so for themselves.”
Though his political beliefs were rarely overtly stated, many of Bob Dylan’s songs serve as evidence of his political stances. He frequently and purposely questioned the political and social norms of his time. Personal interviews and lyrical analysis show the degree to which Dylan politicized some of his music. He used his fame and talent to not only make great, timeless music but to broadcast and popularize his political stances. Thus, the logical question, then, is: if some of his aims were political, why did he make such a conscious effort to create an enigmatic, mysterious character? Certainly, a clearer statement of his beliefs and aims would better serve his political agenda. If forced to describe Dylan with only a handful of adjectives, enigmatic or mysterious would certainly be among them. So, where does his enigmatic character fit in with his politicized music? Now, this talk of his political aims and agenda allow him to sound more like a politician than a musician. He was a musician first and foremost. However, the politics and beliefs of Bob Dylan were highly influential, often radical, and worth deeper analysis and consideration.

As Winston Churchill once described Russia, Dylan was “a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key.” The second half of this quote being the operative part, perhaps Dylan, his beliefs, and his intentions can be unwrapped with close analysis. While he has been exhaustively examined from a myriad of perspectives (musical, political, philosophical, religious, and more), he could never be fully understood and comprehended. However, considering his enormous influence on American society, it is worthwhile to explore the beliefs that were behind and inspirational to his music.

Dylan has said he doesn’t write “protest” songs, that he simply writes the thoughts in his head. He wrote songs about his genuine beliefs, which happened to often be political, subversive, or radical. His beliefs and lyrics resonated strongly with disenfranchised or repressed groups, college students, counterculture, and many others. It seems he wanted to be a spokesperson for those people who could not speak. In this way, he saw himself as a guardian or father figure to people with whom he shared concern. He wanted to bring voice to those in need, the underdogs of America. He believed in self-empowerment and personal freedom. In a 2004 60 Minutes interview he said about his name change: “You’re born, you know the wrong names, the wrong parents. I mean that happens. You call yourself what you want to call yourself. This is the land of the free.” This sentiment was clearly a driving force behind his music and lyrics. The freedom to be who you want to be and create your identity as you see fit also penetrated his religious life as he publicly converted from Judaism to Christianity in the late 1970s.

Thus, the derivation of Dylan’s tendency and need to challenge the status quo may have begun in his childhood. Dylan thought he was born to the wrong family in the wrong place. He has said he truly started to feel alive when he moved to Greenwich Village at 19 years old. Just as his move to New York empowered him, he felt the importance of helping empower people and change problems with our society. Music was simply his medium for this purpose. Similar to his view of his childhood, just because norms and circumstances affect and control people and society, it does not mean they should be resolutely and wholly accepted. If the status quo has problems in how it affects society, it must be challenged and corrected.

One historian argues that Dylan’s music revealed a hidden reality or truth: his “songs of the 1960s expose the futile grand illusion of the American Dream, painting disturbing and distorting images of a subterranean reality beneath the surface appearances.” An interesting coincidence from his career is that he played “Masters of War” at concert both weeks after September 11, 2001 and the 1991 Grammys when the U.S. was embroiled in the Gulf War. It has been consistently opined that the song was written in protest of the Cold War arms build-up. The problems he saw and wrote about decades earlier had relevance once again and surely will be applicable many times more. His liberal, compassionate world-view has been argued to originate with “the listless Civil Rights and Ban the Bomb radicalism of the late Fifties.”

The status quo and political environment will never be entirely acceptable, which is why Dylan’s music is so timeless and will always be important. “Blowin’ in the wind” is similarly thought to be a protest song against war.” The standard example ‘Blowin’ in the wind,’ which interspersed straightforward political questions with metaphorical ones, always concluding: ‘the answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind.” The titular lyric to this song seems somewhat indefinite. ‘The answer to freedom and peace is blowin’ in the wind. ’ It seems this could mean both that is obvious and all around us, or that it is as difficult to grasp as the wind. Nevertheless, songs like “Blowin’ in the wind” (anti-war) and “The Times They Are a-Changin” (social change) are among Dylan’s most popular, classic songs and are the most politically motivated. They serve as prime examples of his ability to create revered, timeless music that is politically and socially relevant and influential. Though his purposes seemed so noble, Dylan rarely spoke about the meaning of his music and lyrics. He let his music speak for itself, as do most artists. No matter the intricacies of his liberal, radical beliefs we know his political view ultimately involved the improvement of the repressed and disenfranchised, promoted peace and freedom, and sought cultural change for the better. The political feeling of he and musical peer Joan Baez are accurately captured by the following: “They felt the intolerability of bigoted opposition to Civil Rights, the absurdity of life under a polluted atmosphere, and they were confident that a majority of their listeners felt the same way.” And so, Dylan spoke for them.
Footnotes

2 Elizabeth Thomson and David Gutman, eds., The Dylan Companion (USA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 86.
4 Thomson and Gutman, 140.
5 Thomson and Gutman, 140.
6 Thomson and Gutman, 82.