

# GENERATIONAL JAMS

By: Elizabeth Long

Although the likes of Bob Dylan, Miles Davis, Hank Williams, and Aretha Franklin are familiar to some, the younger generations are more likely to recognize the faces of Taylor Swift, Billie Joe Armstrong, Mac Miller, and Luke Combs. While both groups are composed of influential musicians, there is one major difference between them: the generation in which their music thrived. The unfamiliarity of today's youth with the first group of names exhibits the fact that music tastes and genres change drastically over time.

"Today, pop culture has a huge impact on music, but in other generations, it was societal issues or the beliefs/ideas of the musicians," said Norwin High School teacher Mrs. Brentzel, a member of Generation X. "Music reflects the culture that creates it--genres will shift with the culture."

Some people seem to think that the evolution of music is caused by the culture that produced it. As Brentzel suggests: societal issues, pop culture, and the beliefs of musicians are defining factors in all music. However, the aspect that music is affected by the most is still a subject to debate.

According to a local survey of 217 adults and students, 40 percent of people believe that pop culture is the aspect that affects music the most. 35 percent thought it was musicians' beliefs, and 23 percent said societal issues. Nonmusicians are split on what they think music is influenced by the most. The real question revolves around the opinions of the professionals. The thoughts of musicians and other workers in the music industry are the most important in this topic.

Music production and engineering major Belinda Huang stated in an Sonicbids article that: "What our parents used to dig, kids of today would deem as lame. And in a few years, the music we think is cool now will probably be outdated. It's nothing against the music. It's just a representation, a manifestation of what's constantly changing around us." This point of view that the progression of music is caused by the natural evolution of the society and culture around us is shared by many individuals within the music industry. Although it is impossible for all music professionals to share the same beliefs, it seems to be a popular idea.

"Pop culture and societal issues often seem to go hand in hand," said Don Carr, an orchestrator of cameras, graphics, and animations for concerts and other live video events. "Each era of artists develop a look, say like 'grunge' in the 90's. People liked the songs, adopted the look of those artists, and, in turn, many people started to tune into some of the social issues some bands would stand for."



Two generations, one band

Don Carr is someone who has worked in the music industry for almost thirty years, and has worked on projects such as touring with Iron Maiden and Woodstock '99. He is experienced in his craft and also knows a bit about why certain music becomes and stays popular, which is crucial in regards to the reason why music becomes and remains relevant.

"I'd say that if you can create a lyric or melody that you can sing easily or get stuck in your head, there is a solid chance it becomes a hit," said Carr, "That doesn't make it good, as there is a ton of disposable music made throughout the years."

It is a well known concept that catchy songs that get stuck in your head, also known as earworms, can garner immense success. That explains some things when it comes to the music industry and the popularity of certain songs. However, the creation and continuing popularity of certain genres is still in question.

"Music genres fluctuate in popularity because of age and innovation," stated Norwin student Nathan Link, a member of Generation Z. "After a genre becomes popular for a long time, people get bored of it and start looking for a change. Then, someone creates something new or different . . . genres need to evolve over time, if they want to stay popular."

This sentiment seems to be a popular one among all generations. The idea that genres and subgenres emerge and evolve over time, and gain a following as they grow in popularity is a logical progression. In recent years, music listeners have branched out when it comes to the genres they listen to. As of now, there are more types of music than in any other decade. From Baby Boomers to Generation Z, a majority agree with the generalization that older folks stick to what they are used to, and younger individuals explore different genres to see what best suits them.

"I think each generation looks for a way to create a unique identity and divert from their parents' culture as they search for an independent identity," said Holly, a member of Generation X.

A genre's popularity is determined by the sheer number of listeners it has. Different genres become popular over time because older generations tend to limit themselves to the music of their youth, and younger age groups attempt to differentiate themselves from their parents by establishing different tastes, especially when it comes to music. This boosts the popularity of new genres. The reasons people gravitate towards these genres, however, vary.

When, in the aforementioned poll, 217 individuals were asked why they like their favorite genre, 39 percent said it was because of the beats. 35 percent responded that it was due to lyrics. 14 percent value vocals while 4 percent prefer the community and fan base of their favorite music genre. There really is no answer as to why music genres and tastes change over time. Not a factual one at least. Music, like many art forms, is subjective. It all depends on how you look at it.

One thing that all people can agree on, however, is that the influences, content, and community of different music genres all affect its popularity and longevity. Everything, even in music, has its ups and downs. Music is generational. Like those who listen to it, it is forever changing. This is perfectly described in this quote from famous musician and poet Jim Morrison: "Each generation wants new symbols, new people, new names. They want to divorce themselves from their predecessors."



## Top 3 Music Genres

1. Pop
2. Rock
3. Country

**40%** of people think that pop culture affects music the most

**78%** of people listen to music through online streaming platforms

Do you think that music reflects the feelings and beliefs of the generation who created it? If so, why?

"I think it definitely does. For example, today's music is focused mostly on lyrics, and a lot of musicians are speaking out about society with their songs, which definitely reflects the feelings of this new generation." Oliver Hinson

Why do you think that different music genres fluctuate in popularity over time?

"I feel like as certain artists grow and their fan bases expand the more 'mainstream' and popular they become." Alanna Neidigh

## Important Years in Music History

'58 Billboard debuts its' Hot 100 Chart

Woodstock Music Festival '69

'77 Elvis Presley dies

Live Aid Concert '85

'92 CD's surpass cassette tapes

Apple Computer introduces Apple iTunes Music Store '03

'13 Vinyl makes a come-back