



Peace, Protest, Change:

# Music in the 1960s

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1) Tiny House  
lives on  
street

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## Preface

Music pulses throughout history as prominently as the people who made them have. From the very first hunter-gatherer societies, we have observed music as a part of daily life. Music was used by the first people to imitate daily struggles, adventures, and pleasures. Different lyrics, beats, and rhythms existed to explain difference circumstances: a chase after a majestic deer, or that night's dinner, were characterized by swift blows to a drum with building dynamics to emphasize the high-tension scene; the events of a famine were recorded for generations as drawling, low notes as a remembrance of the desperation felt by people with no water; and of course love, along with all the elation/dejection associated with it, was expressed with any and every melody, tempo, and tone.

Although the function of music has changed throughout history, its significance has not – the 1960's are hard evidence of that. During the '60's, people all around the world connected and felt the power of music, whether it was by listening to music or by making their own. The varied genres in my paper aim to illustrate how the global atmosphere of the 1960's contributed to the production of music, as well as how music affected world affairs.

The timeline was the first genre I thought to make because I felt that it most clearly demonstrated how political tension and music were completely intertwined with each other in the 60's, a time characterized by the high-strung effects of the Cold War throughout the world. During this time, people used music as both an emotional outlet and a means to voice their opinion about the tense world they were living in. By doing so, they were able to share their views with other civilians, as well as with lawmakers, showing how music was utilized as a mechanism for change in a revolutionary decade. The Beatles article was used in a similar way as the timeline – to show how the views of one group could influence humongous masses of people through music. The article explained how the effects of music travel far and wide, changing many parts of our lives, such as how we dress, talk, and think.

Both the diary entry and the poem included were designed to give the readers a sense of the motivations behind the people who recognized music as a part of themselves during the 1960's. The diary entry is written by a girl who just started university and is being exposed to world issues for the first time, outside her suburban household. She is representative of the cultural awakening that occurred among many college students during the era. This is highly significant because university-aged students were a major driving force of the rebellious atmosphere and protest initiative that distinguishes the 1960's from other decades. The poem, "Why We Sing", is basically an extension of what is expressed in the diary entry. The poem highlights the injustices that people wanted to change during the 1960's (i.e. gender stereotyping, racial discrimination, and unnecessary war) and emphasizes the importance of music as an avenue to take a stand for what ordinary people believe in.

The underlying message of each genre is that the power of music lies in how easily it is shared; a catchy tune can spread through a population like wildfire, until it finally brings together any and every person who desires to share their opinion on the matter. Music is poetry, utilized by its producer to make the receiver listen. It is one of the most potent ways to get a message across, to bring distinct individuals together who may share only one common thought. Music is the cause and the effect of the '60's revolution.



*“You don't need a weatherman to know  
which way the wind blows”*



The Weathermen – a notorious, left-leaning faction of the activist-group Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) -- derived its name from these Bob Dylan lyrics in 1969.



Dear Diary,

Gee wiz, it's been one crazy week! But now that I think about it, when was the last time things have been normal since I started school up here? Everywhere I look, there's something going on on campus. The guys in our group have taken to playing their guitars out on the lawn; what started as Freddie and Eric strumming a few chords after class turned into a quarter of the campus's guys and gals singing and stomping around the green for hours at a time. There's events happening outside of campus all the time, too... I would know because I actually went to one last night! After the sun goes down is when the booze comes out, Mary Jane starts passing herself around, and the music becomes intoxicating.

Of course, my old folks at home would have my head if they knew what I've been up to – but that just seems so unjustified! I don't think I'm doing anything wrong, I'm just living my life without having to listen to them all the time. I hadn't realized how I'd been living in a suburban bubble my whole life, subjected to the whims of people who have never gone out and had any fun. Ma and Dad, sure they have good intentions and all, but they don't know what peace is. Over here, I see all these people who actually *know* things, to the point that I had no idea how much I didn't know before! There's talk about rallies and protests and music festivals to spread peace. Before I was here, I didn't even know peace was something that had to be fought for so much. I was completely blinded to the injustice that's happening in the world. Living with people who were just like me, I never saw others who weren't faring so well, like blacks. Now, I'm part of the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and I'm learning so much about what's *really* happening... you know, what our parents never felt the need to tell us about.

I know, though, that if the rest of the country could just embrace these values of free love and music that people here seem to understand so well, we'd be miles closer to achieving peace



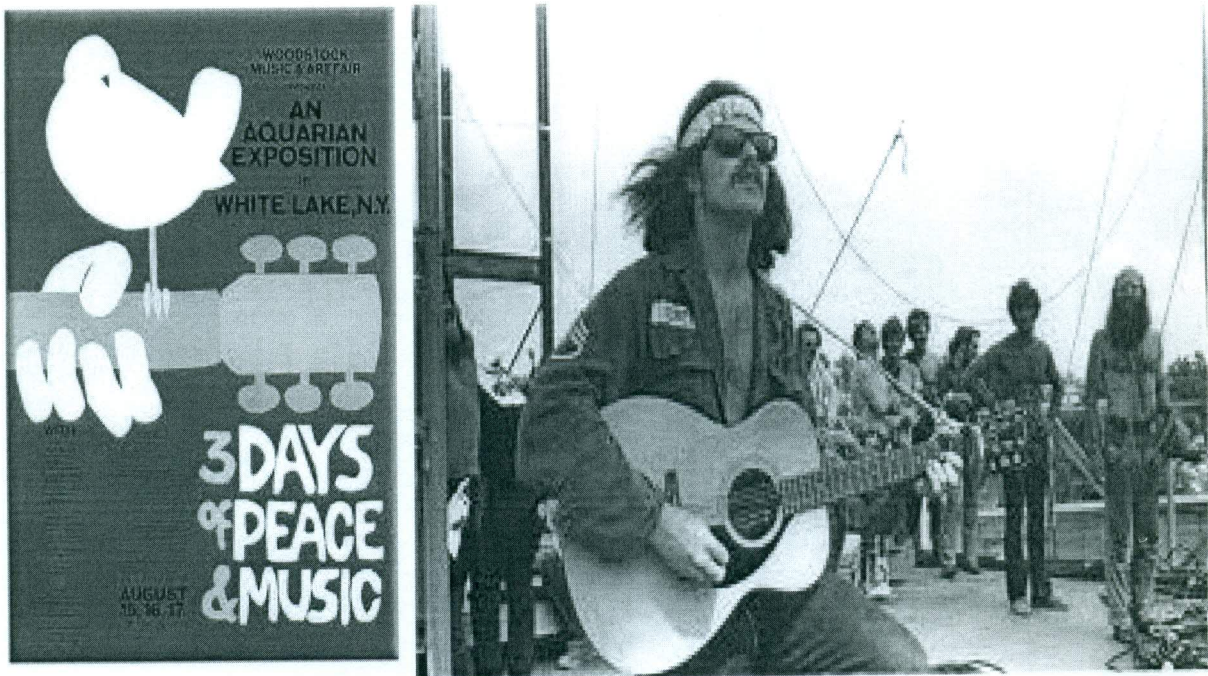
of mind, body, and soul. The key is music, because it brings us together. I'm learning now that listening to it and making it and sharing it have more power than I ever imagined. When I am singing protest songs with my friends in SDS, I feel like I am making a difference for the first time in my life. By singing together, we have a common note, a common tone, a common purpose. By singing together, we come alive.

## Notes

The PBS article “The Weather Underground” described in detail how the Weather Underground Organization (WUO), along with other sub-groups of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), affected the nationwide atmosphere through means of protest. The Weathermen, in particular, were particularly notorious for launching a wave of domestic terrorism to fight for racial justice (they were allied with the “Black Liberation Movement”) and to express their anti-war sentiments. Although the group advocated political peace, they were notorious for their violent attacks: “for the bombing of the United States Capitol on March 1, 1971, they issued a communiqué saying it was ‘in protest of the U.S. invasion of Laos.’ For the bombing of the Pentagon on May 19, 1972, they stated it was ‘in retaliation for the U.S. bombing raid in Hanoi.’ For the January 29, 1975 bombing of the United States Department of State Building, they stated it was ‘in response to escalation in Vietnam’” (Kaufman). Despite the group’s radical actions, they notified each place that they bombed of their intentions – thus allowing everyone to evacuate the buildings – before they actually attacked. For this reason, their message of peace before violence was heard, but feared at the same time. As mentioned before, the members of WUO identified themselves as “Weathermen”, deriving their name from Bob Dylan’s popular song “Blowin’ in the Wind”. Even before the beginnings of the group, many interpreted that “the lyrics suggest a coming revolt” (Kaufman). The fact that music suggests any action at all is evidence of its influence in the formation, progression, and motivations of active groups during the 1960’s.



*It's one, two, three what are we fighting for?  
Don't ask me I don't give a damn, next stop is  
Vietnam*



-Joe MacDonald at Woodstock

## Notes

Considered one of the least-supported wars by the American public, the war in Vietnam sparked a rapid influx of anti-war and protest songs. Randy Yagi's article states, "from Bob Dylan to the Beatles, a number of notable music artists penned tunes that criticized involvement in the war" (Yagi). Among these artists was less-renowned country singer Joe MacDonald, who performed his song "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die Rag" at Woodstock. His audience was consisted of enthusiastic Americans who agreed with his anti-war-message and made his song famous. MacDonald's lyrics emphasize how much of America felt that the United States' involvement in the war was useless and that their government was making a mistake by keeping troops in Vietnam. These lyrics underscore how peace and love became "mainstream" values during this era, as well as how music was used to express the dissension between the ideologies of United States government and the American public.



## Timeline: Politics and Music Intertwined

### Vietnam War

November 1, 1955 – April 30, 1975:

The war was a military conflict during the Cold War. What was originally a civil war between communist North Vietnam and anticommunist South Vietnam soon became a “proxy war” between Russia, who supported the North, and the United States, who provided aid to the South. The United States used its involvement in the war to enforce its political philosophy of containment (the prevention of the spread of communism abroad).

Event in History	Event in Music
<p>November, 1963:</p> <p><b>Assassination of President John F. Kennedy.</b></p> <p>Over the decade, U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War had escalated immensely. President Kennedy’s assassination marked the point in time where there were 16,000 American “advisors” stationed in Vietnam.</p>	<p>1963-1964:</p> <p>Countless musicians expressed their sorrow regarding JFK’s assassination by releasing music in the aftermath of the tragedy. Among the music released were Simon &amp; Garfunkel’s “Sound of Silence” and the Beach Boys’ “The Warmth of the Sun”.</p>
<p>February, 1965:</p> <p><b>President Johnson begins the air war.</b></p> <p>This means he ordered the sustained bombing of North Vietnam, which was soon followed by the U.S. sending the first ground troops to South Vietnam. Whatever involvement the U.S. had in the war while JFK was in power became dwarfed by the after-effects of the late president’s death. Between his assassination and 1965, 1.4 million American men were drafted into the Vietnam War.</p>	<p>March 24, 1965:</p> <p><b>First anti-war teach-in.</b></p> <p>Faculty members at the University of Michigan and SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) members worked together to organize a teach-in about the Vietnam War. Over 3,000 people attended. Through use of anti-war slogans and song lyrics, the attendees publicized, educated others about, and protested US involvement in Vietnam.</p>
<p>April, 1969:</p> <p><b>U.S. troops in Vietnam peak at roughly 550,000.</b></p>	<p>August 15 – August 18, 1969:</p> <p><b>Woodstock Music and Art Fair.</b></p>

## Notes

“What Happened in the 1960’s” provided a concise list of the events and phrases - such as "The Space Race", "Cuban Missile Crisis", "Kennedy Assassination", "Martin Luther King", "Vietnam", "Civil Rights and Riots", "Hippies and Flower Power", and "The Beatles and Rock and Roll" -- that epitomized the decade and how it was a time for change. Racial inequality towards the African American minority, for example, began to receive spot light attention; masses of African Americans and whites vouched for change, which was finally achieved via The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and The Voting Rights Act of 1965. The general population was also affected largely by foreign affairs, owing to the fact that "the 60's were a decade once again dominated by a war (VIETNAM)...the effects were felt throughout the world" (Coldwell). However, because of the new awareness people had that they could incite change, ordinary people utilized "the power of 'peaceful' demonstrations; students were the driving force because with education comes empowerment and with empowerment comes a voice"...and this voice did not go unheard. Music became an incredible avenue for the many individual voices of America. Many groups utilized this public power to express both widespread and personal sentiments about war, racial injustice, and the importance of love during tough times, all of which contribute to the famous "flower power" attitude that characterized the 1960s.



*You say you want a revolution...  
Well, you know,  
We all want to change the world.*



-- The Beatles, 1968



## The Beatles Take America

By Trisha Ahmed

As the decade comes to a close, it might be hard for some of us to remember that icons such as these four lovely men haven't always been around. In fact, it wasn't even until the '50's that American Rock and Roll rippled across the Atlantic and influenced music across the globe. Although Elvis may have started the defy-convention, revel-in-music attitude all those years, it was up to those good ol' British bands to interpret it as they did. But who deserves praise more than The Beatles? Let's take a look back at how these four hunks have taken our hearts, American, and the world by storm in only a decade.



**December 26, 1963** was when we heard "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" for the very first time, and boy was it everywhere! Although the band had been performing in the UK for years beforehand, this important date marked the beginning of *Beatlesmania* in our very own America.

**February 7, 1964** was when the quartet landed at New York's JFK Airport for the first time, met by three thousand adoring fans. "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" had already been a number one hit for a solid three weeks, and the band's followers were not to be disappointed when The Beatles arrived. Their



performance on the *Ed Sullivan Show* racked in more than 73 million viewers – that's over a third of America!

**By 1967**, the band held 20 hits on *Billboard's* Hot 100 Songs Chart, making them the most successful Hot 100 artists to date!

We cannot forget, however, that the group's stardom did not deal only with their music, but also with their style. Dubbed the "British Invasion" by many, the Beatles definitely succeeded in setting a plethora of trends for us Americans to obsess over. We look to them for inspiration, whether it be their simple, but insightful lyrics or their sleek suits, paisley shirts, and more colorful outfits. What we have emulated the most, however, is probably the famous mop-top! Aside from looking hip, the long, shaggy look has become an emblem of our culture. It represents youth, rebellion, and an indifference to tradition...things that have sparked quite the opposition from a number of parents and grandparents!

What began as a catchy tune to hold a lover's hand has evolved into calls for peace and love in the more mature, but true albums they've been producing of late. Inspiring hundreds upon thousands of fans worldwide, one can say that they have marked a huge transition from a conservative America to a rebellious culture. Their songs, their hair, everything about them!, is welcomed by a mass following. Whether you love or you hate the four fine-haired foreigners, t's impossible to ignore their presence here at home.



## Notes

Fontenot's article, "Revolution", highlighted the achievements and meanings associated with the Beatles' song of the same name. By 1968, student demonstrations were at their peak not only in the United States, but also in the rest of the world. John Lennon, a member of the Beatles and chief songwriter of "Revolution", was particularly conscientious of the French upheaval in May of 1968, where a massive student strike and resultant riots caused the collapse of the government. Lennon was inspired by the event and "wrote this song directly to the world's young revolutionaries" (Fontenot). However, the inspiration Lennon felt towards the political protests did not involve only positive feelings. It was noted that "the release of the [song's] album version in November indicated Lennon's uncertainty about destructive change, with the phrase 'count me out' recorded differently as 'count me out, in'" (Fontenot). In effect, the members of the leftist movements viewed the song as a betrayal to their cause. I chose this song as a representation of the Beatles because it is an example of how everybody who supported "change" during the '60's did not necessarily agree with the tactics of the revolutionary extremists. The lyrics and the popularity of the song are evidence that the Beatles utilized their public power to spread their conflicted feelings, allowing us to analyze, decades later, how global political tension was received by civilians in the 1960's.

# Why We Sing

By Trisha Ahmed

Girls in dresses flood out of school doors  
At precisely 3:35.  
Eyes down, they pass by boys  
Who see them only as future trophy wives.

The girls continue on home,  
Brown hair framing their faintly-freckled faces.  
The boys are gone,  
All seems atoned

...until one ivory hand drops a piece of paper.

A passing stranger stoops to pick it up,  
Offering it back to its owner – a puzzled, white face.  
Hurriedly she backs away, rejecting the favor,  
Unable to see past his dark hair, skin, eyes – the evidence of his colored race.

Meanwhile, soldiers fight in a faraway lands  
As pawns of international power plays.  
When enemy pawns storm in, shots go off,  
And both sides fall in the field where they shall eternally lay.

A sting reverberates within me,  
Encompassing my toes, my head, my heart.  
Somewhere along the way, the pain escapes through my throat...  
And I know I don't have to fall apart.

What was electricity in my body  
Transforms itself to words.  
They rush through me, out of me, and into others  
Where I know they will be heard.

We sing for those who can't,  
We sing because of the sting.  
We sing so others can hear us  
As we make our words ring.

They ring throughout the air  
And get our messages across.  
They change how people think  
And do what guns cannot.

For when a shot is fired,  
The victim dies as he was when alive.  
And though his body will decay,  
His mind is forever preserved, although never revived.

The power of song is stronger than death,  
Because it speaks to who we are in life, the things we feel inside.  
It changes emotions, feelings, love,  
And everything violence suppresses, the things it fails to hide.



## Notes

Dominik Favre's poem described the mood of the 1960's, and it helped me craft my own poem. It was a time of major societal change, defined by rebelling against the traditional standards set in the 1950s. The individuals who rebelled in the 60s generation were set on promoting peace and love to counter war principles that they perceived their government to be advocating (seen in the United States' continuation of the Cold War in Vietnam). These individuals, "sought to expand individual and collective consciousness. They learned about and embraced Eastern thought, philosophy, spiritualism, and social and political activism". Entire music festivals, such as Woodstock and the Monterey Pop Festival, arose out of the attractive idea of having days of free music and encouraging "free love". This awareness that love and peace were something to be fought for is supported by how "rebellion was a huge trend in the sixties society, whether it was rebelling against politics, the system, or being involved in any way." Of course, the nature of rebellion also changed. Instead of fighting with arms, music was used as a means of offensive and defensive action: "Folk singers used their lyrics to persuade society to care about political issues and take a stand against injustice. Hippies used the composition of their songs to heighten drug use and words to promote an escape from reality. Rock stars used their talent and lyrics to persuade society to rebel and go against the grain". In this way, we see that the relationship between music and society was not a one-way street; the problems and issues in society, such as racial discrimination and war involvement, gave way to the production of music about these topics, which served to voice individual opinions and rally others to support a unified cause.

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