

How Festivals Influenced the Musical Landscape of the 1960s

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May 16, 2023

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Introduction

When Jimi Hendrix played at the Monterey International Pop festival, he doused his guitar in lighter fluid and the crowd watched as his guitar went up in flames, stunned as this lanky, unknown musician from Seattle wiggled his fingers over the flaming guitar as if summoning the fire himself.¹ Two years later, he would play a somber performance of the Star Spangled Banner in front of about four hundred thousand Woodstock attendees at what would come to be known as one of the largest and most studied music festivals in history.

Performances like these highlight the musical and cultural rebirth that occurred over multiple stages in America in the 1960s. In the face of hardship, young people had to do what they could to shift the status quo, which is why the music of the 1960s tells a story of change. Vital moments of the decade are earmarked by festivals and their performances, their young audiences, and the context surrounding these multifaceted gatherings. Young people being villainized for their rebellious activities is nothing new, but in the 1960s, this generational divide resulted in an explosion of youth culture that veered as far away as possible from the generations that came before. This article explores how three festivals, the Newport Folk Festival, Monterey International Pop Festival, and the Woodstock Festival and the youth cultural movements surrounding them influenced rapidly changing popular music trends from 1965 to 1969.

It is difficult to find a comprehensive study of festival culture beyond the overwhelming amount of material on Woodstock and hippie culture. Some scholars have focused their efforts on Monterey or on Newport Folk specifically, but not the study of these particular festivals and their combined effects on popular music. Scholars have explored the significance of each event

¹ Vimeo – Jimi Hendrix, “Wild Thing – Monterey Pop,” 1967, online (vimeo.com), accessed: Feb 21, 2021, URL: <https://vimeo.com/220996511>.

presented in this thesis and have provided foundational research to further attempt to understand the connections between them.

In their books, John Moretta and Robert C. Cottrell provide full overviews of the phenomenon of the 1960s counterculture movements, specifically of hippies and their clash with people on the outside. Cottrell refers to them as revolutionaries and as missionaries, detailing the rise and fall of their cultural domination as well as providing broader context for this countercultural movement. Cottrell ultimately argues that the movement sought to revitalize society. Moretta's arguments are similar, building further that the hippies were a significant part of the protests that ended the Vietnam War. Donald R. Wesson, in "Psychedelic Drugs, Hippie Counterculture, Speed and Phenobarbital Treatment of Sedative-Hypnotic Dependence: A Journey to the Haight Ashbury in the Sixties," looks at the drug patterns in different epicenters of the hippie "movement", but primarily in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco. Wesson also highlights the differences between the activists and the hippies, who sought to keep themselves separate. Most of the arguments are ultimately positive, casting the hippies as a group that affected significant cultural and political changes. Similar work has been done on the Woodstock Festival, with scholars generally looking back on the event positively.

Much less work has been done with Newport Folk. Rick Massimo's book *I Got a Song: A History of the Newport Folk Festival*, published in 2017, is billed as "the first-ever book exclusively devoted to the history of the Newport Folk Festival."² However, Elijah Wald published *Dylan Goes Electric!: Newport, Seeger, Dylan, and the Night That Split the Sixties* two years earlier. Both mention the Dylan controversy, with Wald delving much deeper into the issue and Massimo providing an overview of the festival as a whole. Wald highlights the generational

² Rick Massimo, *I Got a Song: A History of the Newport Folk Festival* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2017).

divide that occurred alongside the rise of Dylan and argues that the night Dylan played electric was the “end of the folk revival, and the birth of rock as the voice of a generation.”³ Several of the authors cited in this paper experienced the events first-hand, recalling them and analyzing it in a historical context decades later.

Youth culture is more complicated than one single group, however, and this is especially true in this examination of festivals over the course of five years. Young people drove the sweeping cultural changes that took place over the course of the second half of the 1960s, and the multitude of subgroups which they considered themselves a part of are just one way to visualize them. Festivals showcased what strands of youth culture were most influential at certain points in time, such as with the case of Woodstock and the increasing frequency of anti-war protests. This examination also considers the various ways people both inside and outside these festivals interacted with them and judged them, even the negative judgments. By analyzing groups of people and attitudes toward them in different periods, festivals also show a fluidity in the way groups of people shift over time.

This article uses a combination of sources, including music and its lyrics, works from other scholars, an interview with a Woodstock attendee, personal accounts, artwork, and video performances to gather a comprehensive view of each festival. The video footage consists of performances, outtakes of performances, and interviews, with more footage available with each subsequent festival. Song lyrics are used liberally as primary source material to track changes between festival eras. The Beatles are referenced periodically because their career trajectory was closely tied with popular music trends. Music, performance, and personal accounts are vital to

³ Elijah Wald, *Dylan Goes Electric!: Newport, Seeger, Dylan, and the Night That Split the Sixties* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015).

understanding how the three festivals are connected and how festivals as a concept grow over time.

The first chapter discusses the Newport Folk Festival and how the electric Dylan controversy sheds light on the festival as an event that showcased a bending of genres. Chapter two discusses the Monterey International Pop Festival and how the Bay Area where the festival took place is tied to the explosion of psychedelic drug use. The last chapter discusses Woodstock and why the war was important in understanding why the festival was more controversial than many remember today. Drugs, music, and freedom of expression colored the last years of the 1960s. A willingness to experiment was a strong characteristic of many of the youth of the decade, whether they became high-profile performers or stayed among the crowds, and was closely tied with the transitional periods discussed in this article.

Folk Goes Electric: Newport Folk Festival

The year is 1965, and Bob Dylan exploded onto the folk scene just a few years earlier. There is a media frenzy surrounding his July 25th performance at the Newport Folk Festival in Rhode Island, where reporters and journalists lament that he strayed too far from what they knew as folk by playing an electric set. Over time, conflicting accounts arose regarding whether the crowd had actually booed at Dylan at all. Whether or not he was booed for playing “Like a Rolling Stone” on a stratocaster, the wheels had already been set in motion. Folk music carved out a space in rock and in the wider, burgeoning alternative youth culture that many of the older folks complained about. Newport Folk 1965 signaled that The Times Really Were a-Changin’. Rock and roll was evolving, and it took the people’s folk icon along for the ride.

The Newport Folk Festival, held annually since 1959, carried forth a legacy of tradition. Veterans like Pete Seeger and John Lee Hooker established that “folk” meant preserving the musical past with the present and steering clear of the beatnik scene, despite the rising number of young people playing folk music. Others said folk was intended to have a “dynamic present,” changing with the times and serving as a mode of expression for current issues, such as “energizing the folk to struggle against racism and oppression.”⁴ The American Folklore Society defines folklore as “our cultural DNA. It includes the art, stories, knowledge, and practices of a people. While folklore can be bound up in memory and histories, folklore is also tied to vibrant living traditions and creative expression today.”⁵ Folklore fits within the “dynamic present” but is rooted in the past. Folk festivals, then, have been a celebration of past and present.

⁴ Ronald D. Cohen, *Rainbow Quest: The Folk Music Revival & American Society, 1940-1970* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 19, quoted in Massimo, *I Got a Song*, 13.

⁵ “What is Folklore?” American Folklore Society, <https://whatisfolklore.org/>.

Folklore scholar Robert Cantwell refers to art as a “laboratory for cultural negotiation.”⁶ The same could be said about the Newport Folk Festival. When Dylan played an electric set at the festival in 1965, the performance not only exposed the tug of war within the folk music scene, but it exposed rock music as a generational disruptor that would carve out a unique identity for the 1960s. This section discusses the emerging youth culture of Newport Folk by examining elements such as changing fashion trends, widening generational divisions, and of course, the music. This is all contextualized by a noticeable creative shift in 1965, made clear with examples of shifts in composition and performance, that paved the way for subsequent rock festivals as well as an avenue for youth expression to be at the forefront of cultural change.

Music before 1965

The musical identity of the 1960s stems from popular music of the 1950s, which was dominated by early rock and roll. Music in 1965 grew from years of popular music primarily consumed as an accompaniment to dancing. It filled dance halls, corner stores, and living rooms as people marveled at the showmanship of flashy performers like Elvis Presley and Chuck Berry. “By 1959, Richard, Fats Domino and Chuck Berry, the conquistadors of Early Rock and Roll, were beginning to fade like the 50s. For one thing, their music sounded more and more like a rehashing of things that had been sung before,”⁷ John Gilliland recalls during the 1969 radio show *Pop Chronicles*. The same sounds and formulas were not further developing the state of music, until Motown came along.

⁶ Robert Cantwell, “Feasts of Unnaming: Folk Festivals and the Representation of Folklife,” in *Public Folklore*, ed. Robert Baron and Nick Spitzer (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 265.

⁷ John Gilliland, “Big Rock Candy Mountain: Rock 'n' roll in the late fifties,” *Pop Chronicles*, Pasadena, CA: KRLA, 1969, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc19763/m1/#track/4>.

The evolving R&B of the late 1950s gave way to a new kind of pop in the early 1960s. In 1959, Detroit songwriter Berry Gordy formed Motown Records, bringing together black artists and marketing their music to a wide audience by blending pop and R&B. In the 1969 radio show *Pop Chronicles*, John Gilliland remarked, “Motown in its finest hours is a vibrant and valid voice in the tumultuous chorus of the American Soul Reformation. More than that, it is a dominant chord in the international pop sound of the 60s.”⁸ The worldwide export of music from the United States and the United Kingdom especially would prove influential with the British Invasion. The Supremes’ “Please Mr. Postman” topped the Billboard Hot 100 chart in 1961, the first of Motown Records. It is a sweet pop piece about waiting for a letter from a long-distance love. Just a few years later, The Beatles arrived in America in 1963 with sharp suits and neat haircuts, and their new single “Please Please Me”. In terms of musicality, nearly all The Beatles’ early US releases followed a pattern of being written in common time. “Love Me Do” was a prime example, and among the first of their US releases. It also peaked at #1 on the US Billboard Hot 100 which spoke to the popularity of the formulaic, superficial tunes that were coming out of both sides of the Atlantic. Uniformity and themes of love were the keys to successful pop music

Despite the founding of Motown Records, the music charts of the first few years of the 1960s were not too different from the late 1950s. From about 1960 to 1964, polished, organized musicianship dominated the music world. Rock and roll icons like Roy Orbison, Chubby Checker, Ricky Nelson, Ray Charles, Elvis Presley, and Chuck Berry still ruled. Love and heartbreak were still the most prominent themes seen in popular music, and the primary function for music was dancing. Based on the fashion and stage presence of the most popular musicians of the early years, they were still perpetuating an idea of a “squeaky clean” America. Many

⁸ John Gilliland, “The Soul Reformation: Phase two, the Motown story,” *Pop Chronicles*, Pasadena, CA: KRLA, 1969, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc19763/m1/#track/5>.

musicians were known by some aspect of their appearance, such as Brenda Lee, a.k.a. “Little Miss Dynamite,” who had her first big hit at just twelve years old in 1957.⁹ As television performances grew in popularity, the need to be visually interesting was a must, though this would not be so black and white in the coming years.

While all this was happening, an undercurrent of change was on the horizon. Motown was just one of a series of musical innovations that would drastically change music in America in the 1960s., though it would not stay this way for long. John Coltrane, who did not follow musical trends, released a series of jazz albums in the early 1960s that emphasized the elements that were later to become trademarks of psychedelic music: unconventional modes, improvisation, and the influence of LSD. They directly influenced the aforementioned “Light My Fire” by The Doors, with “My Favorite Things” being referenced in the middle section of The Doors’ composition. Coltrane’s “India” was directly referenced in The Byrds’ “Eight Miles High” in one of the solo guitar sections. Though jazz musicians did not become known for being at the forefront of the psychedelic genre, they laid down the foundation that pop and rock musicians of the late 1960s later built upon.¹⁰

⁹ Jonathan Bernstein, “Inside the Life of Brenda Lee, the Pop Heroine Next Door,” last modified February 20, 2018, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/inside-the-life-of-brenda-lee-the-pop-heroine-next-door-205175/>.

¹⁰ Michael Hicks, *Sixties Rock: Garage, Psychedelic, and Other Satisfactions* (Champaign and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 62.

1965 as a Turning Point

Bob Dylan grew in popularity in part because of his lyricism. Just five days prior to the controversial performance at Newport Folk, “Like a Rolling Stone,” an energetic folk rock tune written like a diary entry or a stream of consciousness, was released as a single.

Once upon a time you dressed so fine
 Threw the bums a dime in your prime, didn't you?
 People call say 'beware doll, you're bound to fall'
 You thought they were all kidding you
 You used to laugh about
 Everybody that was hanging out
 Now you don't talk so loud
 Now you don't seem so proud
 About having to be scrounging your next meal¹¹

Dylan’s facility of introspective lyrics would influence the next generation of rock artists; not least of which was The Beatles. They released *Rubber Soul* in December 1965, which became a significant turning point in popular music. The music contained on the album ventured into innovative territory few had ventured into in the pop world. The group’s previously released material paled in comparison when it came to the maturity of the lyrics and composition. *Rubber Soul* was not only influential to the American public and their worldwide audience, but to other musicians as well. The Beach Boys’ Brian Wilson says of the album, “I listened to *Rubber Soul*, and I said, 'How could they possibly make an album where the songs all sound like they come from the same place?’” Wilson also says that the album directly inspired the creation of their critically acclaimed 1966 album *Pet Sounds*, where they experimented with a variety of sounds

¹¹ Bob Dylan, “Like a Rolling Stone,” recorded June 15–16, 1965, track 1 on *Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia Records, 1965, Vinyl LP.

just as the Beatles had begun to do. Yet, like *Rubber Soul*, the album maintains a pop sensibility that wouldn't alienate their audience. This conjunction of sounds led to the consumption of music turning in the direction of cohesive albums and away from just singles. Albums began to grow into experiences akin to reading a story from start to finish, with accompanying images to further the listener's vision of the music. These creations also spelled change for how drug use was expressed in music, which had until then been rare.¹²

Rubber Soul was the Beatles' "pot album" according to John Lennon. Bob Dylan had introduced them to the drug in 1964, and it is apparent from the change in sound that something had changed with the band. The new diversity of instrumentation and composition was territory The Beatles had not traversed before. "Girl" was a song in which they experimented with foreign styles of music and with voice equalization, inspired by Greek folk music for the part of the acoustic guitar. Harrison is also heard playing the sitar on "Norwegian Wood". *Pet Sounds* similarly used a wide variety of instrumentation, even using a theremin on "I Just Wasn't Made for These Times". The title track is an eruption of sounds of varying size and timbre. After *Rubber Soul* and *Pet Sounds*, mainstream music became flooded with a more personal kind of rock and roll that explored the capabilities of emerging music technology and globalization of music. It was only a matter of time before Newport Folk would evolve to reflect changing trends.

Bob Dylan's role in changing music trends lies not just in his interactions with other prominent musicians, but musically in between the realms of folk and rock, and outside the lines of what were understood as lyrical standards.

¹² *The Beach Boys and the Satan*, directed by Christoph Dreher (2008: Zeit Media Limited), DVD.

The Festival as a Turning Point

Not yet a rock festival but steadily moving in that direction, Newport Folk in the mid-1960s would make the initial connection between rock music and multipurpose gatherings focused on musical expression. It represented what music festivals would grow to become: young people congregating to engage in the culture of the moment. Yet, what made Newport Folk different from subsequent festivals in the 1960s was its roots in tradition. Photographs and video are not so easily found for Newport Folk as they are for Monterey Pop and Woodstock because it was less of a spectacle. It certainly received less media attention, as the media is drawn to spectacle. The spirit of the festival was less about pushing boundaries or exploring new mediums and more about, Newport Folk historian Rick Massimo argues, “keeping alive long-forgotten musical traditions--all years before the more celebrated rock festival.” Through the remainder of the decade after Dylan’s electric performance, the form of the folk festival became “a symbol of a worn-out genre looking for a reason to continue to exist.”¹³

Given the state of popular music in 1965, Bob Dylan’s performance at 1965’s Newport Folk Festival was no surprise. Like The Beatles, Dylan’s approach to music was changing with the times as young alternative audiences grew. To bring an electric guitar to a folk music festival made sense. Alan Lomax, ethnomusicologist and folklorist who acted as a board member for the festival, called American folk music “rock ‘n’ roll.”¹⁴

Younger musicians like Dylan and Baez reestablished “folk” as an art that looks forward, blends with other genres, innovates, and moves ideas. Folk predominantly became associated with the anti-war movement and visions of peace amidst chaos, though it also garnered respect from the rock community. Musicians like Jimi Hendrix made their own versions of folk songs,

¹³ Massimo, *I Got a Song*, 3-4.

¹⁴ Wald, *Dylan Goes Electric*, 207.

such as “Hey Joe” which was originally composed by Billy Roberts. Musicians Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel developed into folk rock musicians, having previously focused their efforts on mellow folk music, and before that, doo-wop style pop;¹⁵ Though their musical identities were created in folk, rock sensibilities catapulted their music into the spotlight. One example is with their 1964 song “The Sound of Silence,” originally an acoustic piece, which was popularized by a remix with electric guitars, released in September 1965.¹⁶

Dylan occupied a liminal space in which he was compared to Woody Guthrie, but appealed to the younger crowd. After one of his performances, *The Newport Daily News* reported, “however rebellious or ‘beat’ the present generation...their love for their country was still deeply embedded in them,”¹⁷ implying there was a subset of older people who held onto the notion that young people still held traditional values at heart while they changed the times. Young people continued to change the times long after Dylan entered the scene.

The Culture of Newport Folk

From its inception in 1959, Newport Folk has attracted a wide array of people of varying tastes and demographics. It was established as a family friendly event far and away from drug-fueled days in the mud that would come later at the more well known rock festivals. Pictured below, folk musician Jimmy Driftwood sits among the crowd in July 1959. Everyone pictured is dressed conservatively, with neat hairstyles and clean-shaven faces. The audience sits together in chairs, and children are pictured alongside older folks. Newport Folk in 1959

¹⁵ Tom & Jerry, “Hey Schoolgirl,” Big Records, 1957.

¹⁶ Simon & Garfunkel, “The Sound of Silence,” recorded March 10, 1964, track 1 on *Sounds of Silence*, Columbia Records, 1965, Vinyl LP.

¹⁷ ‘This Land is Your Land’ Ends Festival on High Note, *Newport Daily News*, 29 July 1963, 1, quoted in Wald, *Dylan Goes Electric*, 129.

exemplified a kind of gathering where radical change was nowhere in sight, and where parents could show their children good, clean music from respectable people.

The blues had a major presence at Newport Folk, and much like its child genre, it utilized electric and acoustic instrumentation. When Muddy Waters performed at the festival in 1960, his backing guitarist and bassist both played electric instruments in songs like “Got My Mojo Workin.’”¹⁸ The Butterfield Blues Band in 1965 did the same.¹⁹ Others such as Willie Dixon, Lightnin’ Hopkins, Reverend Gary Davis had already established by that time that Newport Folk was no stranger to musical innovation, so what made Dylan any different? The answer lies in the counterculture.

¹⁸ “Muddy Waters - Got My Mojo Workin' (Newport 1960) stereo sound remix“ YouTube video, 7:12, posted by “Péter Héty,” April 8, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gNs-29s-0Q>.

¹⁹ “Butterfield Blues Band - Newport Folk Festival 1965,” YouTube video, 1:30, posted by “Sigi Klar,” October 7, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_u_-G_1L9Gs.



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By 1964, young adults had become the overwhelming majority at Newport Folk and beyond. Their clothing becoming looser and their hair longer as the years went on, their presentation shifted alongside changing ideals. The beatnik aesthetic was still popular, as seen in the details of people's outfits, but it quickly had to make room for the next subgroup within the counterculture: hippies. In blurring the lines between folk and rock, Newport Folk also temporarily blurred the lines between who was a beatnik and who was a hippie as one faded away and one bloomed into being. Music that departed from tradition, celebrated by mostly younger audiences, continually placed pressure on the status quo set by older generations.

²⁰ David Gahr, *Jimmy Driftwood At Newport*, 1959, Getty Images, Newport, <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/folk-musician-and-songwriter-jimmy-driftwood-in-the-news-photo/154012026>.



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Musical genres were inextricably tied to youth cultures in ways that determined what was in and what was out. Folk music was in because it gave them a voice. When rock music gave them a more potent voice, everything shifted. Perhaps the stories of Pete Seeger attempting to take an axe to Dylan's guitar cable hold a grain of truth.²¹ Some would swear they saw Pete axing the cables, but Seeger himself explains it differently:

No. It's true that I don't play electrified instruments. I don't know how to. On the other hand, I've played with people who played them beautifully, and I admire some of them. Howling Wolf was using electrified instruments just the day before Bob did, but I was furious that the sound was so distorted you could not understand a word that he was singing. He was singing a great song, Maggie's Farm. A great song, but you couldn't understand, and I ran over to the sound man

²¹ Audience members stand together at Newport Folk, July 1964. Gilbert, Douglas R. *Newport Folk Festival Audience*. Grand Valley State University. University Libraries. Special Collections & University Archives, 1964-07-23/1964-07-26. <https://jstor.org/stable/community.31511321>.

²² Wald, *Dylan Goes Electric*, 258.

and said, “Fix the sound so you can understand him!” and they hollered back, “No, this is the way they want it!” I don't know who “they” was, but I was so mad I said, “Damn, if I had an axe I'd cut the cable right down.” I really was that mad. But I wasn't against Bob going electric. Matter of fact, some of Bob's songs are still my favorites. What an artist he is.²³

Some described Newport Folk as “Woodstock without drugs or electric guitars.”²⁴ As electric guitars entered the stage, all that was left were the drugs. The Monterey International Pop Festival in 1967 would do just that.

²³ “Pete Seeger & his (re-)actions during Bob Dylan's electrified performance at Newport 1965,” YouTube video, 1:48, posted by “folkarchivist,” May 4, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXbf7o8HGv0&t=9s>.

²⁴ Rick Massimo, *I Got a Song*, 3.

Summer of Drugs: The Monterey International Pop Festival

A turning point for popular music came during the summer of 1967, when a host of musicians mostly from around the United States and the United Kingdom came together for the Monterey International Pop Festival in Monterey, California, in June. The festival uncovered acts such as Big Brother & The Holding Company, Jimi Hendrix, Otis Redding, Jefferson Airplane, and The Mamas & The Papas. Other acts such as The Who were already popular across the Atlantic, but gained additional notoriety in the United States thanks to the festival. Many credit the event as a major influence that kick-started the flower power movement, an aesthetic which dominated popular music through the early 1970s. The flower power movement grew from the hippie movement, which was inseparable from the drugs that spawned it. The Summer of Love was no different, and the music from this time carries America's history of drugs on its back.

This section outlines how burgeoning use of recreational drugs, especially psychedelics like LSD, intersected with a new culture of experimentation and resulted in an explosion of radical creativity. A major turning point in America's cultural history, the elements that came together in 1967 to create the Summer of Love were represented at the Monterey Pop Festival. While the roots of this movement began in California's youth countercultural scene, the mythos of the hippie spread across the country and drastically changed popular music.

Recreational Drugs

Without drugs, the narrative would be much different. Figures like Timothy Leary, a psychologist and proponent of therapeutic LSD, and Ken Kesey, a well known figure involved in both the beat and hippie subcultures, held numerous events promoting drug use and the creation

of the hippie subculture, which rejected modern science and societal structures, embraced individuality, and encouraged the use of drugs for personal development. As the vehicle for these developments, drugs and hippies could not be separated. Yet despite the push for individuality, slogans such as “better living through chemistry” and the area’s propensity for festivals contributed to a sense of uniformity and created an establishment in its own right.²⁵

To understand why drugs grew in popularity in California in the 1960s, it is important to understand the general function of drugs before 1967. The state of drugs before the popularization of mind-altering drugs was mostly legally prescribed amphetamines and tranquilizers, which included substances such as Valium, Ativan, and Librium. Drugs largely stayed in the medicine cabinet. As the 1960s progressed, drugs as an idea shifted from the pharmaceutical to recreational, enabling new freedom of expression. Moretta describes America’s “middle class white suburbia [that] had become the nation’s first large-scale visible drug culture”, tracing the habits of the young counterculture not to their own failings, but the habits of their parents. Use of these drugs reached a plateau in about 1962 and remained in excessive use throughout the decade until government reevaluation of the drugs began in 1971.²⁶

One important distinction is one between “dope” and “drugs.” Members of the hippie subculture saw “dope,” substances including LSD, cannabis, and peyote, as beneficial and mind-altering. “Drugs” were addictive substances such as alcohol, cocaine, nicotine, and heroin. Hippies used “dope” and addictive drugs were “establishment drugs.” Drugs in the 1960s transitioned less to being pharmaceutical, and more symbolic of freedom. This distinction is

²⁵ Donald R. Wesson, "Psychedelic Drugs, Hippie Counterculture, Speed and Phenobarbital Treatment of Sedative-Hypnotic Dependence: A Journey to the Haight Ashbury in the Sixties," *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* Vol. 43, No. 2 (2011): 155, <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/02791072.2011.58770>.

²⁶ John Moretta, *The Hippies: A 1960s History* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 2017), 61; Nicolas Rasmussen, “America’s First Amphetamine Epidemic 1929–1971: A Quantitative and Qualitative Retrospective With Implications for the Present,” *Am J Public Health* 98, No. 6 (June 2008): 974–985.

important in understanding changing perceptions, because even with all the changes brought about in the 1960s, there were some perceptions that did not improve. Tom Coffin, one of the founders of the underground newspaper *Great Speckled Bird*, writes, “DRUGS turn you off, dull your senses, give you the strength to fight another day in Death America; DOPE turns you on, heightens sensory awareness, sometimes twists them out of shape and you experience that too, gives you vision and clarity, necessary to create Life from Death.”²⁷ In other words, “dope” was the vehicle with which young people could break out of the conventional life path set before them by their elders. They opened the mind to both life’s suffering and life’s many pleasures, leading to an intense period of awakening. Mind-expanding drugs played a significant role in the development of the new drug culture because they allowed that freedom of expression without the threat of an overdose, instead offering the user an altered mental state where they could still consciously engage with the world around them. Additionally, birth control played a role in women’s ability to be present in the countercultural movement because it allowed them to express themselves sexually without worry of being stuck as mothers and, in turn, housewives.²⁸

LSD became notorious for its unusual effects and even today, numerous musical subgenres attribute the aesthetic to the drug, most with the prefix “acid-”. Michael Hicks, in his analysis of DIY rock music in the 1960s, agrees with the scholars who assert that hallucinogenic drugs were a vehicle for inspiration, though he points out that there are some who argue that there was no direct correlation between the drugs and the music in question; it is not clear whether drugs inspired music or music inspired drug use. Popular musicians have spoken both

²⁷ Despite this distinction, this paper will primarily refer to any body-altering substances as “drugs”. Coffin, Tom, “Dope,” *Great Speckled Bird* (Atlanta, GA), October 6, 1969, pg. 5, <https://digitalcollections.library.gsu.edu/digital/collection/GSB/id/1161>

²⁸ John Markert, “Sing a Song of Drug Use-Abuse: Four Decades of Drug Lyrics in Popular Music – From the Sixties through the Nineties,” *Sociological Inquiry* 71, No. 2 (2001): 194-220; Timothy Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (Knoxville: University of Texas Press, 1991), 25, 29-30; David F. Musto, “A Brief History of American Drug Control,” *OAH Magazine of History* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1991) 15.

for and against the argument that LSD directly led to musical inspiration. At some point it becomes less about the drug itself and more about the aesthetics of the drug, because psychedelia was everywhere, while not everyone actually took LSD.²⁹

It is impossible to examine the history of American drug culture as it pertains to music in the 1960s without mentioning the influence of The Beatles on both. On The Beatles' "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," John Lennon famously dispels the rumor that the song has to do with LSD by proclaiming it was written about a drawing by his son, Julian. The lyrics paint a picture of whimsical nonsense of the sort associated with embarking on an LSD trip:

Picture yourself on a train in a station
With plasticine porters with looking glass ties
Suddenly someone is there at the turnstile
The girl with the kaleidoscope eyes³⁰

By the time of the festival, The Beatles had just released their most critically-acclaimed album, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, on which this song was included, was released less than one month before Monterey. After years of interview questions asking about their use of LSD, Paul McCartney later admitted to having taken LSD and that it "illuminated his music-making." George Harrison did not agree with the sentiment that LSD enhanced the music industry. Regardless, The Beatles remain examples of how far LSD reached culturally and musically, whether or not LSD directly correlated with certain musical choices.³¹

The press surrounding LSD in 1964 turned from a general feeling of positivity to that of a terrified parent. Subsequently, the US government stepped in and banned the drug in 1965. However, this did little to stop the tide of influence that had already taken hold. In October 1966,

²⁹ Wesson, "Psychedelic Drugs."

³⁰ The Beatles, "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," recorded December 6, 1966 to April 21 1967, track 3 on *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, Parlophone Records, 1967, Vinyl LP.

³¹ Michael Hicks, *Sixties Rock*, 63.

demonstrations were held in protest of the legislation.³² Ken Kesey sponsored “Acid Tests” in an effort to demonstrate how LSD could transform music and other forms of performance art, such as dance and film. There was a sense of “us and them,” or of those who partook and those who turned their noses up at the idea. This feeling was something the counterculture would become familiar with as the 1960s pressed on.³³

The Bay Area

The San Francisco Bay Area in central California, commonly dubbed “the Bay Area,” was where these ideas were born and came into fruition in everyday life. The Haight-Ashbury district in San Francisco, located near Golden Gate Park, became an enclave for like-minded people who thrived in an alternative lifestyle. Dr. Donald R. Wesson, in an article for the *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, describes a chronology of what would become the “psychedelic drug counter-culture” in the Haight-Ashbury district. Before the Monterey Pop festival, two other festivals occurred in the Bay Area; Ken Kesey held the TRIPS festival in January 1966, where the hippie movement began gaining traction, and Timothy Leary held the Be-in at Golden Gate Park in January 1967, where he popularized the phrase “turn on, tune in, drop out” that would become a sort of slogan for the hippie community.³⁴

Wesson refers to the Bay Area scene as an “epicenter” of LSD.³⁵ In San Francisco, LSD became especially popular after Leary and Huxley brought it to the forefront of the San Francisco alternative scene. Moretta counters the previous claim by novelist Alan Harrington that the hippies were only “Beats plus drugs” by expanding on what being a hippie meant. It was

³² Wesson, “Psychedelic Drugs,” 154.

³³ Michael Hicks, *Sixties Rock*, 60-1.

³⁴ Wesson, 154.

³⁵ Wesson, 154.

more about “acid-enlightenment” and passing on this message of enlightenment to others. The movement was heavily tied to drug use and the enhanced spirituality brought about by them, and not so much tied to the social issues of the time such as the war, civil rights, or feminism.³⁶

San Francisco

San Francisco became the place where all the kids who rejected the status quo congregated. It was where singer Janis Joplin found herself from 1966 until her death in 1970. She rejected the life of a wife, a mother, and a homemaker that had been laid out for her as a young woman growing up in the 1950s and 60s and instead, like many others, found a sense of identity in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco. Thanks to the pill, people like Janis could safely, along with millions of others, express herself sexually in a way women had not been able to before. She and her cohort in the Haight-Ashbury experienced a sexual, musical, and spiritual revolution. Her sister, Laura Joplin, recalls:

Janis arrived at the Haight scene in June 1966. By then the acid ritual had evolved into a multimedia experience, with rock music and other sensory visuals and movement. Gathering in large ballrooms for rock-and-roll dances, people were bedecked in velvet and brocade, madras from India, and anything paisley. They were typically aged eighteen to twenty, encountering the profound through ingesting tablets of LSD.³⁷

The acid flowed freely, and she was also beginning to turn away from some of the issues that she was facing by participating in the drug scene through alcohol. It was the most socially acceptable of the bunch; she could tout a “clean mind” while still participating in what was then the cool thing to do: to discover the magic of what drugs could do for the mind. She had already tried marijuana and had had a run-in with cocaine, but they were not for her. Alcohol had been

³⁶ Moretta, *The Hippies*, 57-83.

³⁷ Laura Joplin, *Love, Janis* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 152.

her drug of choice since college. Janis took a particular liking to Southern Comfort, a fruit-flavored liqueur. It was her accompaniment on stage, often going through a handful of bottles. “Janis’s experience with the music scene had always involved drugs,” says Laura Joplin. Janis brought the full experience of the new music scene to San Francisco. Her performance style was based primarily in the blues she sang, but it was more about engaging the audience in the full sensory experience that was the music. It attracted nonconformity and at the same time united musicians and their listeners together into one experience.³⁸

Janis’s time in San Francisco echoes a larger story of the Bay Area’s role in uniting music and drugs into a multifaceted experience. In 1965 and 1966, the music shifted to more of what people know as “the music of the 1960s”. Music was starting to become more sexualized, more emotionally expressive, and less restrained. The individual elements of music were becoming dynamized to mimic the varied experiences that were had with LSD. The elements of psychedelic music mimicked the depersonalized nature of experiencing an LSD trip and used elements of jazz to reach the desired effect. One can describe the music with a slowing down of time, lengthening of segments, repetition of sounds and phrases, and an overall “absence of musical goals”. LSD and the mental freedom it offered disrupted the existing rock structure that had been a staple for years. After Elvis Presley’s reign, blues structures that originated from black communities and had started the rock n’ roll revolution were being set aside in favor of fluidity.³⁹

Laura Joplin also recalls, “the new rock was more than music [...] combining music, art, drama, and life”. The Byrds’ 1966 hit “Eight Miles High” illustrates how this new attitude towards music as being a full experience was closely tied with drug use. It features some of the

³⁸ Joplin, *Love, Janis*, 142-53.

³⁹ Michael Hicks, *Sixties Rock*, 63-64.

hallmarks of psychedelic music, including unpredictable and dissonant guitar phrasing, abstract lyrics, frantic drumming, and a long, seemingly improvised guitar solo. All of this mirrored the mental and physical freedom that people experienced while taking mind-expanding drugs. By the time The Beatles' *Revolver* reached the United States, the era of acid rock was in full effect. From this point on, the music was no longer independent of the new drugs that were becoming widespread throughout youth culture but was completely intertwined with them.⁴⁰

Monterey Pop

If people like Timothy Leary, Aldous Huxley, and Ken Kesey brought LSD to the public consciousness, it was the festivals of the latter half of the 1960s in conjunction with the music that followed that led it to its cultural pedestal. Monterey Pop brought these ideas to an international stage, showcasing a variety of musicians that would later become famous worldwide. Most of the featured musicians came from regions outside the Bay Area, coming together from other musical epicenters to one of California's. In conjunction with a slew of impactful first performances that launched numerous musical careers and the developing culture surrounding psychedelic drugs, the festival became known for its impact on musical sound, visuals, and attitude.

The performances were eclectic both in visuals and sound. The music itself was not entirely psychedelic, but much of it borrowed enough elements from psychedelia and the aesthetics of LSD to be characterized as psychedelic pop. The idea behind the festival was to promote creativity in music and as a way of life, and in doing so it also showcased this way of

⁴⁰ Hicks, *Sixties Rock*, 63-64; The Byrds, "Eight Miles High," recorded January 24-25, 1966, track 7 on *Fifth Dimension*, Columbia Records, 1966, Vinyl LP.; Philip Poe, Melody Fisher, Darvelle Hutchins, and Mark Goodman, "Music of the 1960s: The Praxis of Ideological Change," *Journal of Social Change* 11, No. 1 (2019): 32, <https://www.doi.org/10.5590/JOSC.2019.11.1.03>.

life in the Bay Area. “Creativity, not commercial impact, was the dominant criterion.”⁴¹ Examples of performances: Jimi Hendrix had one of the most memorable performances, playing his guitar with his teeth and lighting it on fire. The screens behind performers portrayed “flowery and intestinal shapes in growing hues”⁴² Even promotional materials promised an unusual experience in line with the hippie aesthetic. In a promotional magazine published before the festival, there is a colorful drawing from the Beatles wishing well the people who made the festival happen.

⁴¹ Pete Johnson, “Something New--A Festival for Pop Musicians: A Festival for the Pop Musicians,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 1967, C1.

⁴² Pete Johnson, “1st Pop Music Festival Draws Large Crowds,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 19, 1967, D1.



Image: "Peace to Monterey" by The Beatles, 1967. This is only one of two pieces done by all four Beatles.⁴³ It was created to promote the festival. Image taken at the Rock Hall Archives in Cleveland, OH, August 2022.

The flower power aesthetic borrowed elements from psychedelia and nature, and it could be seen everywhere. Footage from the performances shows people wearing an eclectic variety of

⁴³ Monterey International Pop Festival Annual (program), 1967, ARC-0019-3, box 2, folder 1, Kathleen Mackay Research Papers Collection, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Library & Archives, Cleveland, OH, <https://catalog.rockhall.com/rrhof-ais/Details/archive/110004255>.

colorful clothes adorned with patterns, jewelry, and flowers. Some did not wear clothes at all. There was no notion that art and creativity was bound to a canvas or a musical instrument; clothing became an expression of one's physical and mental freedom through the use of wild color, unusual fabric, accessories, and patterns like flowers and paisley. Nudity was a fashion choice itself, with a lack of clothing symbolizing a similar sort of freedom.

The atmosphere around the festival was as eclectic as the fashion choices. In a documentary created after the fact, Michelle Phillips of the Mamas and the Papas describes the atmosphere at Monterey as resembling a renaissance fair,⁴⁴ and it was not limited just to The Byrds' opening song "Renaissance Fair." Dennis Hopper, a photographer at the festival, recalls, "flowers everywhere — everybody seemed to have flowers. It was true Flower Power. The vibe was beautiful. The music was fantastic. ... And if that could have continued, it really would have been Camelot."⁴⁵ It was, in festival form, the kind of "multimedia experience" that characterized Janis Joplin's time in San Francisco.⁴⁶

It was not all about the visuals. Drugs of all kinds were present among attendees and performers. John Phillips (also of the Mamas and the Papas) called the citizens of Monterey "acid freaks."⁴⁷ During the filming of Monterey Pop, multiple musicians commented on the use of drugs among themselves. John Entwistle of The Who said in an interview:

"Monterey... I don't really remember that much about it. By the time we'd actually got backstage, Keith and [?] had this big pile of pills in her hand... people were [saying] take one of these, man, take one of these. We had thousands of different colored pills ... Mama Cass was there, and we said 'what should we do with this?' and she said, 'Oh, you

⁴⁴ Monterey: The Lost Performances, 1967, ARC 0051-1-2-20, box 1, object 20, John Platt Collection, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Library & Archives, Cleveland, OH, <https://catalog.rockhall.com/rrhof-ais/Details/archive/110017891>.

⁴⁵ Stephen K. Peeples, "Monterey International Pop Festival: The Book – Summer of Love 1967," last modified June 12, 2017, <https://stephenkpeeples.com/news-and-reviews/monterey-international-pop-festival-book/>.

⁴⁶ Joplin, *Love Janis*.

⁴⁷ Monterey: The Lost Performances.

don't want that one; take that one. You don't want that one; take that one.' She sorted our pills, alcohol."⁴⁸

Pete Townsend, also of The Who, said "Jimi [Hendrix] was out of his brain"⁴⁹ and it showed in his performance. Jimi Hendrix walked onstage wearing a frilly sunshine yellow blouse, long red bell-bottom pants, a black and white embroidered vest, and a pile of chunky silver necklaces. The image that stood out was of Jimi kneeling in front of his flaming guitar, seeming to encourage the flames to grow higher as previous notions of what a guitar could do melted away.

Popular music changed drastically as a result of the festival. Not only did it kick off the Summer of Love, but as it introduced acts like Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, the bounds of what could be done musically were expanded, especially with showmanship and innovation. Album art from this time is notable for its strange artistic choices. Perhaps one of the most poignant examples of the reach of the summer of love was the creation of English rock band The Zombies' second studio album *Odessey and Oracle*.

⁴⁸ Monterey: The Lost Performances.

⁴⁹ Monterey: The Lost Performances.



Image: Album artwork for The Zombies Odyssey and Oracle.

The unusual cover artwork is reminiscent of the same visual aesthetic valued by the hippie movement, complete with flowers, pop culture references, abstract imagery, and highly stylized text. Their song “Time of the Season” was one of their biggest hits and became associated with the time of its release in 1968, but was recorded in August 1967. The lyrics strongly suggest an association instead with the Summer of Love:

It's the time of the season
 When love runs high
 In this time, give it to me easy
 And let me try with pleased hands

To take you in the sun
 To promised lands
 To show you every one
 It's the time of the season for loving⁵⁰

⁵⁰ The Zombies, “Time of the Season,” recorded September 14, 1967, track 12 on *Odyssey and Oracle*, Columbia Records, 1968, Vinyl LP.

Despite not attending the festival, the Beatles still had something to add to the musical repertoire of the summer of 1967, and it would prove to be the most memorable. “All You Need is Love,” released in July 1967, still acts as an anthem representative of the Summer of Love and hippie culture as a whole. The tempo is relaxed, the chord structure simple, and the lyrics encourage the listener to sing along while promoting peace.⁵¹ Later that summer, they would discuss plans for their multimedia project *Magical Mystery Tour*, to which they would add the single. Later in 1967, the Beatles released *Magical Mystery Tour*. The album builds upon the psychedelic and experimental sounds they succeeded with on *Revolver* and *Sgt. Pepper’s*, but with less structure and more offbeat ideas. In addition to a music album, they also released a comedic film that followed the same surreal lack of form. The cover artwork of both the album and the film show the band members posing in animal masks, surrounded by colorful stars, behind large rainbow text.⁵² The influence of Monterey Pop and the Summer of Love show in the strangeness and hopefulness in the style and presentation of music that came after.

Pop music of 1967 is often remembered for its bucolic “sunshine” quality, its innocence, and its hope for the future. Dr. Brian Ott, a professor of communication studies at Missouri State University, writes of this era in music, “popular music of this era had not yet discovered the issues of war and injustice.”⁵³ The hippie became mainstream—flower pop the new normal. In 1968 and 1969, some hope would remain, but rising tensions from the Vietnam War and eroding trust in the American government would break down the feeling of innocence that characterized the Summer of Love.

⁵¹ The Beatles, “All You Need Is Love,” Recorded June 1967, single, Parlophone and Capitol Records, 1967, Vinyl LP.

⁵² The Beatles, *Magical Mystery Tour*, Recorded April, May, August, and November 1967, Parlophone and Capitol Records, 1967, Vinyl LP. See also, *Magical Mystery Tour*, directed by The Beatles (Apple Corps and BBC, 1967).

⁵³ Ott and Joseph, “Mysticism, Technology, and the Music of the Summer of Love” 28.

The Late 1960s: War and Woodstock

“Monterey was about music, and Woodstock was about weather,”

– Lou Adler⁵⁴

On a sprawling upstate New York property in August 1969, a similar festival to Monterey Pop was held, but at a larger scale – one that had never been attempted before. Chris Knight of Eugene, Oregon, then seventeen years old, had never been to such an event; after all, Woodstock would come to be unlike anything attempted before. He hitchhiked from a commune in Rochester, Vermont and spent three days on the Hog Farm at what would become the gold standard for music festivals. Woodstock had the remnants of what made Monterey Pop special, but outside pressures created an entirely different scene.⁵⁵

Despite the haphazard organization, word of mouth spread quickly and over 300,000 people attended, well over what was expected based on ticket sales. Colloquially known as Woodstock or Woodstock ‘69, it was originally billed as the “Woodstock Music & Art Fair,” as well as “an Aquarian Exposition ... 3 days of peace & music”⁵⁶ The main idea of peace came at an opportune time for the youth of America as it felt like the country was in shambles. News outlets call it a nightmare, while attendees say the opposite decades later. Woodstock made history as a remarkably peaceful gathering where a story of wrestling with ongoing generational trauma was told through music. If music is a conduit through which people broadcast their fears and ideals, Woodstock was the physical manifestation. The music points to an angry generation of young people desperate for peace. As the turmoil of the 1960s reached a critical point, the festival signaled the end of a culture of carefree optimism and pushed the anti-war movement to

⁵⁴ Monterey: The Lost Performances.

⁵⁵ Chris Knight, “Interview with Chris Knight,” interview by Olivia Wilkinson, August 4, 2022, audio, 35:51.

⁵⁶ Poster - see below, pic taken at the archive

the forefront by showcasing a variety of musicians who expressed anti-war ideas through folk and rock music. Later, the mythology of Woodstock would be influenced by those who saw it from the outside.

This section details how the state of the war in Vietnam and complications at home led to a disintegration of the same optimism seen during the Summer of Love. When the war became mainstream, so too did anti-war sentiment, which was reflected in popular music. The festival defied expectations and proved polarizing between attendees, media outlets, musicians, and those who did not attend. Drug use in particular was heavily reported as a disaster despite being the same mind-expanding substances of previous years. Media outlets deemed the entire festival a disaster. Yet, many attendees remember it fondly, which has contributed to a continuous revival of Woodstock in the decades since.



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The War

While it rained on the Hog Farm, it also rained in Vietnam. In 1969, the Vietnam War had just overcome its worst point in terms of American involvement. The Tet Offensive in January, which was a series of coordinated communist attacks, instilled fear in many American

⁵⁷ The Seed (Chicago), circa 1969, ARC 0036-2-3-97, box OS3, object 19, Bomp! Records Collection, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Library & Archives, Cleveland, OH, <https://catalog.rockhall.com/rrhof-ais/Details/archive/110009234>.

households where communism was already an idea that inspired terror. In early 1968, over 500,000 American soldiers were stationed in Vietnam.⁵⁸ American youth focused their attention more than ever on the anti-war movement, and the movement grew increasingly forceful as groups like the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) gained prominence with the progression of the war.

Just short of his eighteenth birthday, Knight describes his experience with the draft in August 1969:

My 18th birthday is when I had to register for the draft and so what young men of that age and a few years older at that time, we all could see the war coming at us, you know, in time getting closer and closer. August was a pivotal month because that was the month I needed to do that and needed to figure out how I was not gonna be drafted.

I registered for the draft just before my 18th birthday and that became the era of the lottery system, which was supposed to be evidence of the war winding down. It really didn't make a lot of difference, but my lottery number that year was one number above the cutoff of the people who would be drafted. So I got astonishingly lucky and won that lottery and although the possibility was still there at least I wouldn't get drafted.⁵⁹

The lottery system contributed to a sense of unease for young men like Knight, who did not know whether they would have to stay or go. They had to relinquish control to a system that did not care whether someone went away to college. One number could mean the difference between death by gunfire, thousands of miles away from home, and a sigh of relief. The idealism that colored the Summer of Love just two summers earlier had died and given way to a harsh reality.

⁵⁸ "Vietnam War Campaigns." Vietnam War Campaigns | U.S. Army Center of Military History, n.d. https://history.army.mil/html/reference/army_flag/vn.html#tetcounteroffensive.

⁵⁹ Chris Knight, "Interview with Chris Knight."

Music in 1969

War and music come as a package, and it was no different for the Vietnam War. Much of the music released after the Monterey Pop Festival became grittier and angrier. Until the late 1960s, pro-war sentiment was “maintained, primarily in the idioms or social milieu of country music.”⁶⁰ The latter part of the decade saw a convergence in folk and rock music styles and much of the same anti-war sentiment that could be heard in folk was also heard in rock. What was once discussed mainly in folk and country music was now ubiquitous in mainstream rock and roll. One song that bridged the divide between folk and rock music was 1967’s “I-Feel-Like-I’m-Fixin-To-Die-Rag,” by Country Joe & the Fish, which was one of the most recognizable songs of the anti-war movement and the counterculture as a whole. The song combines folk inspired lyrics, “folk idioms,” and cadence with rock and roll sensibility in the instrumentation. It echoes the common sentimentality of being against the leaders of the war and not the soldiers forced to fight.⁶¹

And it's 1, 2,3, what are we fighting for?
 Don't ask me I don't give a damn,
 The next stop is Vietnam,
 And it's 5, 6,7 open up the pearly gates,
 Well there ain't no time to wonder why,
 WHOOPEE we're all gonna die⁶²

The song is as playful as one would expect coming out of the Summer of Love, but it directly confronts the conflict with its dark, satirical humor. Its cadence resembles a chant one might hear at an SDS anti-war protest. Before performing the Rag, Country Joe & The Fish

⁶⁰ David James, “The Vietnam War and American Music,” *Social Text* no. 23 (1989): 135.

⁶¹ James, “The Vietnam War,” 132.

⁶² Country Joe & The Fish, “I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die Rag,” recorded July 1967 to September 1967, Vanguard Records, track 1 on *I Feel Like I'm Fixin' to Die*, 1967, Vinyl LP.

would often play the “The Fish Cheer” which was a cheer that spelled out the word fish before introducing the Rag. At Woodstock, Country Joe played “The Fuck Cheer” which the audience enthusiastically chanted along with before playing the Rag.⁶³

Popular wartime songs of the earlier part of the decade leaned toward general messages of peace and the problems with war. Some of the most popular folk songs of the anti-war movement, such as 1965’s “Eve of Destruction” by Barry McGuire and 1964’s “Universal Soldier” by Buffy Saint-Marie are decidedly vague, not mentioning Vietnam at all. Instead, the music focused on a general feeling of things going awry as a result of war. “Universal Soldier” in particular conflicts within a global context, tying them all together and questioning them as one human urge to fight:

And he's fighting for Democracy
 He's fighting for the Reds
 He says it's for the peace of all
 He's the one who must decide
 Who's to live and who's to die
 And he never sees the writing on the wall⁶⁴

“Universal Soldier,” at this point vaguely refers to the war in Vietnam depending on who is listening, but like many other songs adopted by the anti-war movement before the late 1960s, it avoids direct confrontation. However, there are exceptions. One is “The War Drags On” written by Mick Softley and made famous by folk musician Donovan in 1965.

Let me tell you the story of a soldier named Dan
 Went out to fight the good fight in South Vietnam

⁶³ Woodstock outtakes: Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Janis Joplin (Crosby Stills Nash, the Band, SB, Country Joe & the Fish) Butterfield Blues Band, Havens, 1969, ARC 0051-1-2-104, box 5, object 14, John Platt Collection, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Library & Archives, Cleveland, OH, <https://catalog.rockhall.com/rrhof-ais/Details/archive/110018224>.

⁶⁴ Buffy Sainte-Marie, “Universal Soldier,” track 7 on *It's My Way!*, Vanguard Records, 1964, Vinyl LP.

Went out to fight for peace, liberty and all
 Went out to fight for equality, hope, let's go
 And the war drags on⁶⁵

It is a folk song that would coincidentally foretell the war dragging on for another ten years. Other songs adopted by the anti-war movement include “Saigon Bride” by Joan Baez and “Backlash Blues” by Nina Simone, both released in 1967. A common theme present in songs about the individual soldier was the subtext about those in power. Scholar David James, in the cultural studies journal *Social Text*, argues that a full and specific acknowledgement of the effects of the war on soldiers, or a “synthesis of sympathy for the soldier with recognition of his trauma,” would not even arrive until the early 1970s.⁶⁶ By the time of Woodstock, some had begun acknowledging the reality of the conflict and writing about it in songs that became mainstream.

Jimi Hendrix’s performances at Monterey and Woodstock offer a visual. At Monterey, Hendrix energetically performed a set that felt new and exciting in sound and visuals. At Woodstock, Hendrix performed a solo electric guitar cover of the Star Spangled Banner, which started as expected, but soon devolved into a cacophony of gunfire and dropping bombs. The destructive performance called back to Monterey Pop when he lit his guitar on fire, but the Woodstock performance carried the weight of a war on its shoulders. It echoed the cries of those who felt disillusioned as the war and anti-war demonstrations continued to be broadcasted into their homes and remained a part of their daily lives, despite living thousands of miles away.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Mick Softley, “The War Drags on,” track 6 on *Songs for Swingin’ Survivors*, Columbia Records, 1965, Vinyl LP.

⁶⁶ David James, “The Vietnam War,” 128.

⁶⁷ Woodstock - Jimi Hendrix, 1969, ARC 0051-1-2-108, John Platt Collection, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Library & Archives, Cleveland, OH, <https://catalog.rockhall.com/rrhof-ais/Details/archive/110018228>.

Three Days of Music

Investors John P. Roberts, Joel Rosenman and music promoters Artie Kornfeld and Michael Lang began organizing the festival in early 1969.⁶⁸ The Woodstock Festival included performances from thirty-two different acts, many of them seen at Monterey just two years prior. Several memorable performances include that of Santana, The Who, Big Brother & The Holding Company, Country Joe & The Fish, Jefferson Airplane, Otis Redding, and many others across the popular music spectrum of 1969. Folk, rock, and blues took most of the spotlight, with some acts blending genres.

One performance that stands out is that of Big Brother & The Holding Company. By the time Big Brother and Janis performed at the Woodstock festival, it was evening on Saturday, August 16th. She first asks the crowd if they all have enough water to drink, if they are staying stoned, and if they have a place to sleep. She tells the crowd, “Music’s for grooving man, and music’s not for puttin’ yourself through bad changes.” Before transitioning into the first beats of “Try (Just a Little Bit Harder),” her performance is slightly disheveled and breathy, likely from a combination of alcohol and fatigue.⁶⁹ She later expressed disappointment with her performance because the size of the audience caught her off guard, leading to none of the footage of Big Brother’s performance being included in the Woodstock film.⁷⁰ Two of Joplin’s posthumous biographies make note of her Woodstock performance. Joplin’s publicist, who wrote *Buried Alive*, notes “Janis had been mediocre at the festival,” but “the effects of dope on her

⁶⁸ Joel Makower, *Woodstock: The Oral History, 40th Anniversary Edition* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2009).

⁶⁹ Woodstock outtakes #1 with Creedence Clearwater Revival, Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young, Janis Joplin, Jefferson Airplane, Band, 1969, ARC 0029-6-2-227-78, Herb Staehr Collection, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Library & Archives, Cleveland, OH, <https://catalog.rockhall.com/rrhof-ais/Details/archive/110012307>.

⁷⁰ *Woodstock*, directed by Michael Wadleigh (1970; Bethel, NY: Warner Bros., March 26, 1970).

personality...made her ill-tempered and selfish. It rotted her vitality and sank her perky smile into the grimace of misery.”⁷¹

Alice Echols, a music and gender historian who authored *Scars of Sweet Paradise: The Life and Times of Janis Joplin*, describes the things that went wrong that weekend, and not least of all was Joplin’s performance. “Janis sang as if she were struggling to overcome the band’s sluggishness and her own weariness,” Echols remarks. “Many people report that she was four sheets to the wind, at least from all the drinking she’d been doing.”⁷² Drugs and booze would, like for many of the attendees, would be a vital part of the experience of Woodstock. For the nostalgic, “Janis Joplin and her girlfriend shooting up in a filthy portable toilet doesn’t exactly jibe with the legend of Woodstock.”⁷³ It is this legend of Woodstock that comes into question when looking beyond the many films and retrospectives praising the festival, instead inspecting the finer details and seeing how individuals, even the famous ones, waded through the mire.

Other performers remember difficult logistical issues. Jefferson Airplane played the morning of Sunday, August 17, after being delayed multiple times. As a result, the band was exhausted. “Woodstock was fun. If you’re 18 and you don’t care about sitting in the mud, it’s fun,” says Grace Slick, the lead singer of Jefferson Airplane. “I was 29, so my idea of fun is not having to watch out for a white dress and no bathrooms and playing at six o’clock in the morning.”⁷⁴ Organization issues, the rain, wardrobe issues, lack of sleep, and alcohol were factors that contributed to less than stellar performances in the eyes of some performers. “It was a drag. It was polluted. You couldn’t hear the music. Everybody was stoned out of their skulls,”

⁷¹ Myra Friedman, *Buried Alive* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 1973), 173.

⁷² Alice Echols, *Scars of Sweet Paradise* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), 265.

⁷³ Echols, *Scars of Sweet Paradise*, 262.

⁷⁴ Sheena Goodyear, “Mud, No Bathrooms and Bad Trips: Grace Slick Looks Back on Woodstock,” CBCnews (CBC/Radio Canada, December 31, 2019), <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-thursday-edition-1.5248043/mud-no-bathrooms-and-bad-trips-grace-slick-looks-back-on-woodstock-1.5248046>.

said a neighbor of Friedman who attended.⁷⁵ Pete Townshend of The Who complains, “We stood there for five hours waiting to go on.” Roger Daltrey says similarly, “People were screaming at the promoters, people were screaming to get paid. We had to get paid, or we couldn’t get back home.”⁷⁶

Planning assumed a reasonable attendance, about 186,000 based on ticket sales.⁷⁷ As a result, there was not enough food and water for every attendee, and the lines of cars attempting to reach the festival were astronomically long. Some people abandoned their cars to walk. Outside the performances, the festival operated like a commune, not too unlike those that would become commonplace in the 1970s. Attendees grew sleep-deprived as music played from the early afternoon until sunrise. People shared everything from drugs and alcohol to sleeping arrangements, to stories. “Especially where I was in the middle, essentially the geographic center of the crowd, there was this sense of everything being shared,” says Knight. “People would take like a canteen and pass it around, and people would put whatever they had, psychedelic drugs, amphetamines, put it all in this canteen, and then they would fill it up with wine and shake it up and pass that around.”⁷⁸ Like in San Francisco, the acid was plentiful. Woodstock became known for “acid alley” which was akin to a street market, but for drugs; people peddled in makeshift stands along back roads leading up to the festival. With the uncountable number of people taking acid during the festival, there were bound to be bad trips. At one point, it was announced at the podium that the drugs were, “not poison. It’s just badly manufactured acid. You are not going to

⁷⁵ Friedman, *Buried Alive*, 173.

⁷⁶ Joe Taysom, “Why The Who’s Pete Townshend hated Woodstock,” Music, *Far Out Magazine*, July 19, 2022, <https://faroutmagazine.co.uk/why-the-whos-pete-townshend-hated-woodstock/>.

⁷⁷ “1969: Woodstock music festival ends,” *BBC* (London, UK), August 18, 1969, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/18/newsid_2760000/2760911.stm

⁷⁸ Chris Knight, “Interview with Chris Knight.”

die.” For four days, Woodstock became the new epicenter for LSD, but it was more of a hindrance than a means to freedom of the mind.⁷⁹

Conflicting Stories

The festival, while promoting peace, proved polarizing. At the festival when supplies frequently ran out, some members of the surrounding community chipped in to help. Other locals were opposed to it entirely, even putting up signs such as “Don’t bother Max’s cows. Let them moo in peace.”⁸⁰ Those who did not attend either wished they did or deemed the festival a disaster.

Attendees recall Woodstock as a sliver of peace amidst the chaos, though not all would agree. The calls for revolution were largely ignored by the media. Reports came out of excessive nudity, drug use, and other “unsavory” behaviors. “A lot of it was being misreported,” says John Morris, the production coordinator for the festival. “There was some favorable stuff, but a lot of it was totally inaccurate and biased.”⁸¹ *The New York Times* famously released a piece titled “Nightmare in the Catskills,” dated August 18, 1969. “What kind of culture is it that can produce so colossal a mess? ... Surely the parents, the teachers and indeed all the adults who helped create the society against which these young people are so feverishly rebelling must bear a share of the responsibility for this outrageous episode.”⁸² One reporter for the *Times Herald* writes of the drug situation, “the resulting bad trips, upset stomachs, and general depression filled to

⁷⁹ Markert, “Sing a Song of Drug Use-Abuse,” 206; Robert C. Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs and Rock ‘n’ Roll* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015), 262.

⁸⁰ Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs and Rock ‘n’ Roll*, 263.

⁸¹ Makower, *Woodstock: The Oral History*, 227

⁸² “Nightmare in the Catskills,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), August 18, 1969.

overflowing the five medical centers hog farmers had set up. Asked about bad acid at the festival, Romney [the unofficial leader] commented, ‘All acid is bad. It’s Mafia stuff.’⁸³

Thousands of personal stories from other fans reinforce the newness and the sense of connection people felt at the festival. Charles W. Dithrich was seventeen years old when he attended the Woodstock festival in 1969, having identified strongly with the hippies across the country, even growing pot in his basement. He describes being hungry, wet, and tired, but describes the performances as beautiful and transcendent. On one occasion, he recalls helping an overwhelmed and shivering young woman who had taken some of the LSD that was being handed out. He describes the experience of Woodstock as harmonious; there were several points at which the festival could have ended in disaster, but people made it work. What Woodstock symbolized to attendees like Charles was social change. “The music I preferred at Woodstock was emblematic of personal and cultural freedom, of liberal social and political ideals, of love and coming together, and of expanding consciousness.”⁸⁴ Rick Gavras, another attendee, describes a “oneness of experience” between attendees.⁸⁵ Stories like Rick’s, Charles’s and Chris’s highlight how the memory of Woodstock deeply affected young attendees, often in a positive way.

Influence of the Festival

Woodstock is highly regarded as a place of significant change, for better or worse. The festival ended up becoming more famous than Monterey, as evidenced by the numerous tributes

⁸³ Times Herald Record - Saturday extra, August 16, 1969, ARC 0029-6-2-227-78, Herb Staehr Collection, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Library & Archives, Cleveland, OH, <https://catalog.rockhall.com/rrhof-ais/Details/archive/110029467>.

⁸⁴ Charles W. Dithrich (2020) “Woodstock: Reminiscences of a Psychoanalyst”, *Popular Music and Society* 43, no 2, 138-145, DOI: 10.1080/03007766.2019.1687675.

⁸⁵ Makower, *Woodstock: The Oral History*, 17.

and documentaries in the decades since the original festival. There have been two attempts to recreate Woodstock 1969 outright; Woodstock 1994 and 1999 were both disasters and few remember the events like they do the original Woodstock.

This was also the first time in which the idea of revolution had a looming presence at a music festival, reflecting in the messages of peace and love, as well as confrontational anti-war messages in the music. The promise of an era of nonviolence appealed to young people, especially those who considered themselves part of the counterculture. The festival further pushed alternative music into the mainstream, leading to folk and blues rock becoming massively popular genres in the 1970s. The Grateful Dead, for instance, are more fondly remembered for their cult-like following in the decade after Woodstock than their performance at the festival. Psychedelia was over; instead, audiences wanted music that felt grounded and honest. Especially after the deaths of some of the most notable young musicians of the 60s, such as Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, and Jim Morrison, something needed to change over the long term.

Woodstock exists more as a national phenomenon than the name of a town in the Catskills. It represents a generation both outraged and powerless to effect the kind of sweeping changes needed for peace, if peace were possible. Most importantly, the idea of Woodstock as a peaceful festival lived on, long past the mud, the acid freak outs, or the logistics. Calls to bring it back have only strengthened the mythology of Woodstock as not just a peaceful festival, but as a cultural moment that cannot be replicated because the factors that came together to create the perfect storm of the 1969 festival are no longer factors.

Conclusion

"It's unlike any scene I can think of in the history of all music. It's completely of, by and for the kids, and by kids ... The fads change, the groups change, but the songs keep coming, increasingly odd, defiant and free."

– Leonard Bernstein⁸⁶

The festivals of the 1960s track a rise and fall of optimism and of hope for a perfect Aquarian future, a hope that soon became a distant memory after Woodstock became one too. The creativity of the decade was a supernova, the festivals acting as halftime shows nestled in between world crises and generational differences. Like with Chris Knight's experience barely missing the draft and instead heading to the Woodstock festival, the 1960s was wrought with trauma among the sentiments of sunshine, love, and peace. Don McLean says it best in his eight and half minute retrospective anthem from 1971, "American Pie":

Helter skelter in the summer swelter
The birds flew off with a fallout shelter
Eight miles high and falling fast
It landed foul on the grass, the players tried for a forward pass
With the jester on the sidelines in a cast

Now the halftime air was sweet perfume
While the sergeants played a marching tune
We all got up to dance
Oh, but we never got the chance⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Leonard Bernstein, quoted in Monterey International Pop Festival Annual (program), 20.

⁸⁷ Don McLean, "American Pie," recorded May 26, 1971, track 1 on *American Pie*, United Artists Records, 1971, Vinyl LP.

While McLean's original meaning leans conservative and frowns upon the young rock musicians of the decade who are not Elvis Presley (the "king"), the song can be interpreted as a retrospective of a time wrought with trauma. It is hesitant to accept change, instead showcasing why art has declined. The reverence with which the public looks back on the music of the 1960s, including the music once considered controversial, and events like Woodstock 1969, demonstrates how strongly nostalgia and the passing of time can dull even the most staunch of hearts into looking back at the young musicians they once looked down on, with fondness. It was more than just a movement; it was many happening at once and in quick succession.

Festivals acted as a conduit for youth culture to develop and spread, and that sweeping development can easily be referenced in the music that came out during the time of these festivals. While nearly every year of the 1960s was significant in terms of musical innovation, 1965, 1967, and 1969 were most significant when examined through the lens of cultural change. Youth groups such as the beatniks in the first half of the decade, the hippies in the second half, and the anti-war movement from the second half into the 1970s featured prominently as agents of change in the social sphere and, by close extension, the creative sphere.

Newport Folk in 1965 exposed, through the electric Dylan controversy as well as increased attendance of young people at the yearly festivals, how music had grown to become a vehicle for personal expression. Without Bob Dylan and the transition of folk to a youth driven genre, the music world may not have seen albums such as *Rubber Soul* or *Pet Sounds*. In 1967, Monterey Pop first introduced a host of now widely known artists to a national stage, amidst a blossoming culture of psychedelic drug use and heightened experimentation in music and lifestyle. Without the Haight-Ashbury lifestyle, the Summer of Love may never have happened. Woodstock in 1969 brought together the fears surrounding war escalations, a desire for peace and

change, and an increasingly politicized young crowd into what became the most famous mud bath of a music festival America has ever seen. Without Woodstock, songs like “The Fish Cheer” may never have exposed the injustices occurring both at home and in Vietnam. Attending music festivals in the 1960s was akin to reading a newspaper containing every bit of relevant knowledge one must have to be part of the “in crowd,” the people parents and grandparents harped on everywhere else.

The limitations of this discussion lie mostly in the lack of representation present within these majority white festivals, as well as the mostly white musicians who benefited. With a decade as robust as the 1960s in terms of music history, it is difficult to encapsulate all of it in one discussion. It is also limited geographically to American and British artists, as the subject matter is concentrated on popular rock, pop, and folk music and the impressions left on American audiences. What this research does not take into account, aside from minor instances of mismanagement during Woodstock, is the long term effects of poor festival management. Future research of modern music festivals after the original Woodstock festival will have to take into account how mismanagement has led to tragedy, such as the various deaths at Altamont in December 1969 and, much later, the crowd crush tragedy at Astroworld in November 2021.

Up to the present day, young people have driven cultural change in powerful ways. However, the unique factors present during the 1960s contributed to a series of social and artistic tidal waves that cannot be replicated in the same way.