

ROCK-n-ROLL REVISITED

(This was written back in the mid 1980's, but we believe it is still relevant today)

Getting Informed about ROCK MUSIC

By JAMES E. GIBBONS

MOST OLDER adults know little about rock 'n' roll music except that it is loud and unpleasant to their ears. To them the volume of the instruments is so loud and intense that the lyrics cannot be understood. It is dismissed as undesirable nonsense without even trying to consider the message of the music.

But is this just so much innocent noise listened to by so many young people?

I had always thought rock music was not exactly right, had discouraged young people from listening to it, but had not really looked into the matter with depth. So, when I read a book recently, *Why Knock Rock*, I was provoked to do what they said.

They suggested that parents "get smart." If you don't know what you are talking about, young people will call your bluff. Check out the record department of the local variety store, then a rock record shop. You will be shocked (as a Christian) at what you see. Looking at the album covers will make you feel as if you are flipping through the pages of *Playboy* magazine. You will see sex, violence, drugs, hedonism, along with Satanism, being peddled. Drug paraphernalia (at the rock record shops) may be for sale along with the records.

Obtain and browse through magazines that give the latest on rock music and rock groups; magazines that are prepared for, aimed at and read by young people. Such magazines are *Rolling Stone*, *Hit Parader*, *Circus*, *Musician*, and *Creem*. Here you will see what is going on with the rock groups and be able to read the lyrics of songs you could not understand.

I did this, and I became educated really fast! You get it straight from the "horse's mouth" here. No second hand "stuff." I was very uncomfortable with a lot of the "gutter" talk about sex by the rock stars, but I was determined to become informed.

There were two words which kept surfacing in these magazines in talking about the rock 'n' roll world. They were *hedonistic* and *androgynous*.

"Hedonistic"

In the November, 1984, issue of *Hit Parader* (page 12), a mother wrote this publication: "I'm getting sick and tired of reading about the lewd and lascivious

lifestyles that every heavy metal performer seems to lead. I'm the mother of a 14-year old son, and I'm thinking about preventing him from reading about rock and roll until he learns that not every rock star is only concerned with drugs, alcohol and premarital sex. Would you please write something that would explain this to my son?" The straight-forward answer to the letter (by the magazine) is very revealing: "Unfortunately, rock and roll is perhaps the most hedonistic of all entertainment forms. Bands like Motely Crue, Quiet Riot and Van Halen truly do lead lives that would make Julius Caesar green with envy. Thankfully, from what I've been able to observe, the use of illegal drugs among rock performers has dropped sharply in recent years—but their love for booze and sex remains as strong as ever."

In case "hedonistic" is not one of your words, it comes from a Greek word that means pleasure. It is used in English to describe a lifestyle; the self-indulgent pursuit of pleasure, any kind, as a way of life. It is fleshly and animalistic and has no hang-ups in reference to morals. Anything goes. If it brings sensual gratification, do it.

Unrestrained illicit sex, liquor and drugs are marks of the trade in the rock world. Gene Simmons of KISS is quoted in *Entertainment Week (Winston-Salem Journal)*, January 5, 1985) as saying, "Rock 'n' roll is all about promiscuity, you know." He continues, "Rock 'n' roll literally means sex. The term comes from a Leadbelly song saying, 'let me rock you all night long.' He wasn't talking about reading Nietzsche to her."

Nikki Sixx of Motley Crue in the October 31, 1984, issue of *Circus* (page 66) ties in their hedonistic lifestyle with their success, "The kids who come to see us want to identify with that. They see us living a reality that's just fantasy for them." Then Dee Snider of Twisted Sisters says his music is like psychotherapy. Appealing to rebellious youth, he said, "If you can't afford to go to a doctor to find out why you're _____ up, then listen to metal. Dance around and you wanna go home and kill your parents!" (page 111 of same issue of *Circus*).

"Androgynous"

Also in the November, 1984, issue of *Hit Parader* magazine (page 29) upcoming rock groups are singled out for consideration. One group is said already to be "an international press favorite due to their hard rock sound and androgynous image," and they were expected to make a go of it. The word "androgynous" keeps reoccurring as the common denominator of successful rock groups, and is considered as one of the necessary ingredients to bring this about. What does it mean?

Actually it is weird! The term "androgynous" is a compound word formed from two Greek words, *andros* plus *guné*. The meaning of *andros* is man, and *guné* means woman. So, the word "androgynous" means male and female in one person. Hermaphrodite would describe it, or the practice of functioning either heterosexual or homosexually (being bisexual).

This explains a lot of things. It explains the image the rock groups are trying to project, as well as many things living it out in their lives. Look at the very appearance of the rock singers. In one sense they look crudely masculine, but at the

same time they may have long effeminate hair, be wearing makeup, ear rings, and other jewelry commonly associated with women. Some of their clothing would be more appropriate on the opposite sex (if appropriate is the word we should use).

The names they choose by which to identify their groups projects the androgynous image. What about the AC/DC group? This is said to mean either heterosexual or homosexual (bisexual). There is a group called the "Iron Maiden" (and it is composed of men). Another one is called "Twisted Sisters" (men!). This is seen in the KISS group, Alice Cooper and Boy George.

Even if they don't pick such names, they try to project a mystic to keep you guessing about their sexual identity. Such an aura surrounds Michael Jackson. The Prince in his "Purple Rain" says, "I'm not a woman, I'm not a man, I am something that you've never had..." (*Entertainment Week, Winston-Salem Journal*, November 3, 1984).

Recently as I was leafing through a magazine while waiting in a doctor's office, I saw this write-up about this rock group. It had a picture of them in concert. When they came out to perform, two of the macho-looking guys passionately kiss one another in the mouth. In another magazine, two fellows are seen pawing one another.

It is not a lovely picture, is it? In fact, it is sick. And to think that somewhere along the way music has done a flip-flop. When a lot of us were younger, pop music referred to the easy listening kind. Not any longer. Now pop means rock. It is the music commonly listened to by the younger generation, and is it any wonder that there are so many mixed up people today? Looking to these rock stars, and identifying with them (even with their androgynous image), it is no wonder that so many are confused about their personal, sexual identity.

I am convinced that the field of rock 'n' roll music has largely become the devil's playground. Diabolical influences seem to be behind these performers as they preach their hedonistic philosophies of life to our young people as entertainment. Rock music broke down the middle class' abhorrence to drugs, which theretofore had been kept in the ghettos of the larger cities. So much of the music is anti-Christian, anti-marriage, and anti-family. One recent song asked, "WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?" Neither do we need any more Pink Floyds with their nihilistic fatalism.

The book that I mentioned earlier in this article gives four questions to ask about rock music (or any other kind of music) in determining whether it is right or wrong.

1. What are the lyrics saying?
2. What kind of lifestyles have the musicians chosen?
3. What do the graphics on the album covers indicate?
4. What are the goals of the songs and the performers?

YOUNG PERSON, OLDER PERSON, think on these things. (End of reprinted article)

The Story Continued Many Years Later

That is the end of the article this writer-put together back in the 80's, but it is not the end of the story. The story goes on. We can't help but think of the words attributed to men of wisdom from ancient times until now. It is

said that Plato said, “Watch music. It’s a very important art form. Rulers should be careful about what songs are allowed to be sung.” To Plato, music was “the movement of sound to reach the soul for the education of its virtue” (Plato’s *Republic*). Andrew Fletcher, a Scottish politician of years leading up to more recent history, is said to have asserted, “I knew a very wise man that believed that if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation.” Thus, he was supposed to have said, “I don’t care who writes a country’s laws; I just want to know who writes a country’s songs.”

With these words in mind, consider rock ‘n’ roll “music.” It is our firm conviction that our society is experiencing fall-out from a whole generation that has been “brought up” on this kind of “music.”

Times were more modest and restrained when rock ‘n’ roll was first introduced into our society. Therefore years ago when the “godfather” of rock music, Elvis Presley, first appeared on the Ed Sullivan variety show, they seemed to not know what to do with him. The television cameras would not show the lower part of his body as it “gyrated” indecently with his music. This was tame as to what would follow later in the name of this kind of “music.” In fact, go back and review the first section of this column as to the meaning of the expression, “rock ‘n’ roll” (the reprint article). The expression has reference to the sex act itself, as the DJ’s dubbed this music.

Then as rock ‘n’ roll gained momentum and massively impacted our society, *Columbia Encyclopedia* says, “All aspects of the music—its heavy beat, loudness, self-absorbed lyrics, and raving delivery—indicated a teenage defiance of adult values and authority.” Rebellion, the hedonistic and the sex element always seemed to be there. Reread the first part of this article that we have reprinted. Besides the unsavory element of promiscuous sex, generally speaking, the androgynous image projected by the rock performers always hits us in the face. There was a crude and eerie mystic about them that left one questioning. What about these fellows? Are they male or female? They appeared crudely masculine, but at the same time, with their long hair and makeup, feminine. Who would have ever thought that their mixed-up and dual sexual identity would spill over into a whole society of human beings? It is our conviction that their music, their songs, their mixed-up sexual identity (and behavior) overwhelmingly impacted a whole generation of young and formative lives. Remember our quotation from Plato and the other one, “I don’t care who writes a country’s laws; I just want to know who writes a country’s songs.” People are so mixed up today, that some would even try to impose same-sex marriage on us. (And politicians could care less, except to get votes). We point our finger at rock ‘n’ roll music as a strong and contributing factor to the mixed-up modern world in which we find ourselves living today. This is our indictment. □

The SWORD and STAFF
Post Office Box 147
Mt. Airy, NC 27030 USA