

Measuring the Music (Part 5)

The Rhythm of Rock

Text: Ephesians 5:18-19

Introduction:

1. Having studied a snapshot of the history of rock and roll and the evil fruit it has produced, we now turn to a consideration of the rock beat itself. It is important that we learn what it is and how to identify it.
2. We will briefly review some notes on Ephesians 5:19 and then view the majority of Pastor Ian Western's lecture on the "Rhythm of Rock". This will be followed by a brief testimony from N. Chaney on her experience with rock before salvation and how her tastes have changed after salvation.

I. The Source of Melody in godly Music – "in your heart"

- A. The work of the Spirit of God in the heart is what produces godly melody. Beautiful, tuneful, melodious music is the fruit of revival and the genuine work of the Spirit. This is why the greatest hymns of the faith have come out of times of spiritual reformation, revival and refreshing. Harry Ironside writes, "Every believer's heart is like a harp, and as the Spirit of God breathes over the heart-strings, real melody goes up to the ear of God."
- B. Conversely, dark, rhythmic, beat dominated music is a fruit of man's depraved appetites under the influence and control of Satan.

II. The Standard of Melody in godly Music – "singing and making melody"

- A. The word 'melody' literally means 'psalming' which in its literal sense has to do with playing of a tune on a stringed instrument. It means "to cause to vibrate by touching, to twang" (Strong) The word 'melody' comes from two Greek words, 'meloidia' meaning "choral song" derived from 'melos', tune, plus 'aoidein', "to sing" (Garlock & Woetzel).
- B. An excellent book entitled *Music in the Balance* by Frank Garlock and Kurt Woetzel notes, "The part of music to which the spirit responds is the melody. Ephesians 5:18-19 gives us a clear indication the part of music which God wants to be **preeminent** in the music of a Christian. Verse 18 commands us to be "filled with the spirit". The word 'filled' literally means "to be controlled." The very next verse then states that we should be "making melody" ... Thus, when the King James Version of Scripture follows the command to be filled with the Spirit with the musical form melody, it is accurately teaching that this element of music and God's control in our lives are closely related."
- C. This verse very clearly teaches that the kind of music the Holy Spirit's filling produces is melodious, tuneful music. This is the opposite to rock and roll music which is rhythm dominated with its back beat and sensual dance rhythms.

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- D. The Trinity of Music. Music reflects the character of the Triune God who created it. There are three elements in music: melody, harmony and rhythm.
1. Melody is the primary tune and ministers to the spirit. The melody is to dominate and control the music.
 2. Harmony is “the combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions having a pleasing effect.” (Oxford Dictionary) The harmony is what ministers to the soul.
 3. Rhythm is the pulse of the music and ministers to the body. It is the physical part of music. The analogy between the pulse and the rhythm will help the Christian to be discerning in his choice of music (from *Music in the Balance*):
 - a. Too much pulse (or erratic pulse) – the body is sick.
 - b. Too much rhythm (or erratic rhythm) – the music is sick.
 - c. No pulse – the body is dead.
 - d. No rhythm – the music is dead.
 - e. Pulse under control – the body is well.
 - f. Rhythm under control – the music is well.
 - g. “The pulse is there to sustain life. It does not call attention to itself in that role. Rhythm should play the same part in music. It is there to keep the music moving, not to dominate the sound.” (Garlock & Woetzel)
 - h. Note: In good music, you are generally unaware of the rhythm as it does not draw attention to itself.
 - i. The musical trinity corresponds to the order in the three parts of man.
 1. The spirit is to be the control center.
 2. The soul (mind, will and emotions) subservient to the rule of the spirit.
 3. The body under the control of the spirit.
 - j. Question: Which part of music dominates in rock and roll? Melody or rhythm? Answer: The rhythm! This is the complete opposite to godly, Spirit-filled music which is melody dominated and controlled. This is why the contemporary Christian music movement is so unscriptural with its use of the world’s fleshly, ungodly style of music.
 - k. Dan Lucarini: “Rock and roll is a musical style that was created for immoral purposes by immoral men, and has always been used by the world to express its immoral attitudes in song.” (*Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement*, p. 68)
 - l. Gary Gilley: “The new-paradigm church has caught the wave of our times and has created **a church for the entertainment age**. Rather than expose and correct the superficiality and wrong mindedness of a generation addicted to fun, amusement and self, the modern church has all too often chosen to go with the flow and give ‘them’ what they want...**it is very difficult to distinguish what the modern church is offering from what the secular world is offering.**” (*This little church went to market*, p. 33.)

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- m. Simon Frith in his book, *Sound Effects, Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll* states, "The sexuality of music is usually referred to in terms of its rhythm – it is the **beat** that commands a directly physical response."¹
- n. Charles T. Brown in his book *The Art of Rock and Roll* makes the following statement about all kinds of rock and roll: "Perhaps the most important defining quality of rock and roll is the beat...Rock and roll is different from other music primarily because of the **beat**."²

III. The Rhythm of Rock Analyzed (Pastor I. Western)

(Refer lecture notes for this segment – starts next page)

¹ Cited by F Garlock & Kurt Woetzel, *Music in the Balance*, p. 33

² Ibid.

LESSON VII THE RHYTHM OF ROCK

INTRODUCTION



In the early 1960's The Beatles took the Western World by storm. Large populations of young people literally worshipped their mop-headed idols from Liverpool. In about 1964 the Beatles came to Adelaide, and half the population crushed into the city centre to welcome them. Young women in particular were powerfully affected. Most of them screamed, some became hysterical and tore at their hair, while others fainted and had to be literally carried out by medics, over the heads of the writhing

human sea. Why was there such a reaction from the conservative, generally modestly dressed, middle-class young people of Adelaide? The Beatles symbolized a new sort of freedom which many of these post-war baby boomers were looking for. A new post-war generation was ready for new freedoms, and The Beatles articulated and visualized that thought. But what role did the music play in this revolution? Some CCM advocates would try to tell us that it was not the music. If it was the music, they say, Beatle music would have the same effect on listeners today as it did in 1964. This argument does not properly take into consideration the element of *desensitization*.³⁷ For most of these post-war generation young people, there was something about that music that they had not heard before. Without all the hard propulsion of Haley and Presley, in simple ballad-type songs, the Beatles expounded something new to the Western ear, and the masses caught it. The Beatles clearly and simply expounded the *Rhythm of Rock*.

Musicologists generally agree that the one single feature that distinguishes Rock from other music genres is its rhythm. It is also widely established that the rhythm of modern Rock and its African ancestors, produce lewd dance forms. ¹ For further study see *Bob Larson*, Appendix D, pp 79,80. This characteristic of Rock has also been observed in CCM concerts. John Makujina, in his book *Measuring the Music*, states: "We should not assume at this point that dance styles at Christian Concerts offer much improvement; they are almost identical as anyone who has attended them or viewed videos can testify." Because of the pervasiveness of Rock in our modern society, and because of its wide use in CCM, it was felt necessary to devote a whole lesson to *The Rhythm of Rock*. The subject is discussed under the following outline:

I. Rhythm in Relation to Melody (Review)

II. Rock Rhythm Patterns

- A. Common Rock Rhythms
- B. Rhythm and body movement

III. Rock Rhythm on Old Hymns

IV. Rock Rhythm in relation to Melody

V. The Moral Nature of Rock

I. RHYTHM IN RELATION TO MELODY

In Lesson II, we demonstrated that music is a *trinity of melody, harmony and rhythm*. We also demonstrated that melody has intrinsic harmony and rhythm in it. Melody is not just the top line in a quartet, but is any, or all melody strands within the fabric of a piece of music. We also discovered that melody takes the lead in ordering the other members of the musical trinity, namely, harmony and rhythm. This is clearly seen in melody's relationship to rhythm. The melody tells us if a song is in *duple time* or *triple time*. Melody tells us where to start counting in a piece of music. It will tell us if the music starts on count one, or on another count, as in an *anacrusis*.² In order to demonstrate that melody determines the time frame of a piece of music, analyze the following hymn tunes. Determine if the hymn is in duple time (4/4) or triple time (3/4). [For the purpose of this exercise, we will treat compound time as 3/4.] Write 3/4 or 4/4 on the right hand side of the treble clef. Insert the bar lines so that number one count falls immediately to the right of them. Remember that *long* notes are *strong* notes. The strongest beat in any measure usually follows immediately after the bar line.

A. Example MH 358

Example MH 358 consists of four staves of music. The first three staves show a melody in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is written in a treble clef and consists of quarter notes and half notes. The fourth staff shows a bass line with half notes and quarter notes.

B. Example MH 464

Example MH 464 consists of three staves of music. The first two staves show a melody in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, and A-flat). The melody is written in a treble clef and consists of quarter notes and half notes. The third staff shows a bass line with quarter notes and half notes.

In this example, see how particular the melody is in respect to the time frame of the hymn. The melody *insists* that count one begins on the _____ note. No other time arrangement fits comfortably. In the above two examples we can see that:

MELODY IS THE CLOCK THAT SYNCES THE WHOLE TIME FRAME OF MUSIC

II. THE PATTERN OF VARIOUS ROCK RYTHMS

A. Common Rock Rhythms

There are a number of rock beat patterns, but they all have one thing in common. Rock music artificially stresses weak beats. This is different to the counter rhythms normally encountered in music such as military marches. Rock music stresses the weak beats to the point where the whole framework of the rhythm is tipped over. In order to do this, Rock bands have to employ a disproportional amount of percussion instruments and electronic sound amplification. Familiarize yourself with the following Rock patterns. Audibly rehearse these patterns, while stressing the upper case syllables.

Back Beat: Probably the most common Rock Rhythm.

4/4 Time | da - DA - da - DA | da - DA - da - DA |

Break Beat: Similar to the above, yet usually faster in tempo

4/4 Time | one - AND - two - AND - three - AND - four - AND |

Stopped Anapestic Beat: Probably the most impacting on the human body

4/4 Time | da - da - DA - (stop) | da - da - DA - (stop) |

Other Synthetic beats: Any weak beat can become the target of an artificial stress.

3/4 Time | da - da - DA | da - da - DA |

B. Rhythm and Body Movement

Of all the above rhythms, there is medical evidence to suggest that the stopped anapestic beat is the most impacting on the human body. Last lesson we tried to march to a strong $\frac{3}{4}$ waltz pattern, and found that it was awkward to say the least. My father served during the Second World War with the 27th Scottish Battalion. In one endurance march, they accomplished 50 miles (90 km) in one day, on one pint of water. They marched to the bagpipes and the 4/4 rhythm of the side drums. He said that they would not have lasted the distance without the drums. I wonder how far they would have got if they had been marching to a stopped anapestic

beat or to a Strauss Waltz? The human body is a rhythmic organism. Many of its body rhythms have a direct correlation to the rhythm of music. For example, *Andante* is a walking pace. *Presto* corresponds to a running pace. *Waltz* rhythmic pattern corresponds to the heart beat.

III. ROCK RHYTHMS ON OLD HYMNS

We have previously noted that rock rhythms can be superimposed on an almost endless variety of music; anything from *Switched on Bach* to *Sacred Music*. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that some of the older hymns of the faith have also been rendered in a rock style. We shall first analyze the music score of an old hymn, and then compare how it has been rendered in the following sound tract. Firstly, determine whether the song is *duple or triple time*. Secondly, add *bar lines* and *time signature*. Thirdly, mark the naturally *strong beats* by drawing an upside down ^ over them. Fourthly, listen to how this old hymn has been interpreted in a Rock style. Fifthly, place these accents > over the notes in the score that have been artificially stressed.

A. Example: MH 564 Sound Tract: CD Best Loved Hymns - Old Rugged Cross³



B. Conclusions:

The Rock Rhythm did not arise naturally from the melody. The Rock Rhythm is foreign to the trinity of music, has been forced onto the music from without, and is therefore *autonomous* and *destructive*.

IV. ROCK RHYTHM IN RELATION TO MELODY

A. Melody is the clock that syncs the rhythmic framework of a song.

We would not know that a song had a back-beat, or a break-beat, unless there was a melody to tell us where count one started. Even in advertizing jingles, which are often predominately rhythm, there is at least a thin thread of melody. At least a suggestion of melody is required to start the clock ticking. Without a melody from God's created musical trinity, there could be nothing for Rock to rebelliously kick against. At this point, a comment on syncopation is in order. Some well meaning conservative Christians tend to reject all syncopation as evil.

B. Syncopation is not wrong if it arises naturally out of Melody.

Syncopation is a problem when it defies melody. This is particularly a problem in rock music. Syncopation, having broken *free* of melodic control, distorts the whole basic time frame. John Makujina includes the following insightful comments from Kimberly and Lee Smith's book, *Oh be Careful Little Ears*.

"The problem in rock is not syncopation per se, but a syncopated beat in dominance to the harmony and melody, which it usually overwhelms.

Kimberly and Lee Smith, whose treatment of syncopation is one of the most nuanced and balanced of any CCM opponent, add that syncopation is mis-used (i.e. becomes unnatural) when it conflicts with the melody rather than complementing it. They list ragtime, flamenco, polka, and mazurka as types of music that sometimes use syncopation to complement the melody."⁴ (Underlining mine)

V. THE MORAL NATURE OF ROCK

We are now in the position to make some general statements concerning the nature of Rock.

A. The Rhythm of Rock is like a parasite.

As I look across our property towards Mount Panorama, I can see some lovely old gum trees that are infested with a type of *mistletoe*. At first sight one could think that it was simply some fresh green foliage produced by the tree as spring approaches. On closer observation, the outgrowth is a parasite, transported by birds, which having taken root into the flesh of the tree, saps the life out of it, and in some cases kills it. **Rock music is much like that deadly mistletoe. It saps the life out of the good and gentle elements of God's musical trinity. It looks promising, but in the end delivers death.** This is so much like the lie of the Devil. Promising autonomous freedom, sin when it is finished always brings forth death; death to form and beauty, death to hope, death to morals, and death to music.

B. The Rhythm of Rock functions like a narcotic.

Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Ephesians 5:17-19

It is interesting to note that the Holy Spirit contrasts drunkenness with Spirit filled melody. The wine that makes people drunk gives them a false happiness, and often causes them to sing. But alcohol is a substance that is foreign to the human body. The Bible accurately describes Nabal's physical state on the morning after his drunken party.

But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. 1Sa 25:37

In a similar way Rock music is like alcoholic wine. Its characteristic Rhythm is a foreign substance in the body of good music. **It may give a temporary high, but when the Rhythm has gone out of the music, there is not much left.** There is another aspect in which rock music is like alcoholic wine. The alcoholic needs more and more alcohol to get the same level of feeling. The alcoholic becomes tolerant and desensitized to the drug in his system. **Rock music is like narcotic wine. The user needs more and heavier Rock to get the same high.** This explains why those who view Beatle concerts today, do not faint and scream like they used to. When the Beatles came to Australia, their music was like the first few glasses of alcoholic wine that a prodigal takes on his first night away from home.

C. A Plea for soberness in God's People.

The people in our Independent Baptist churches today have become more and more desensitized to narcotic rock music. The CCM that many professing Christians listen to eclipses the music of the Beatles, with today's megawatt amplification and driving syncopated beat. The sad part of all this is, that the now generation has lost its innocence, and modern Christians have been *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*. How can we ever arrest the moral and spiritual decline in our churches, when the average Christian is wide open 24/7 to today's media. How grieved the Holy Spirit must be! It does make a difference what we watch and listen to in private. The autonomous fruit of Rock Music is seed, which when planted in the life of a Christian, will bring forth a crop of corruption. The Christian needs to have a sober attitude to his flesh life. Without the daily application of the Cross and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, our flesh would constantly overwhelm us. When God's people get as close to the edge of sin as they can, they are grieving the Holy Spirit, and despising the Cross as God's provision to conquer indwelling sin. They are mocking God!

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Galatians 6:7 8

END NOTES

¹ John Makujina, *Measuring the Music* (PA USA: Old Paths Publications, 2002) pp. 42-47

“... sociologists trace most forms of social dance in the United States during this century to the African-American community, which over time blended Anglo-Saxon motions with those from their native cultures. According to Hanna, ‘Afro-Americans meshed the African style of loose, flexible torso, extending and flexing knees with an easy breathing quality, shuffling steps and pelvic swings and thrusts. The erotic nature of these symbols, especially the pelvic thrust, is well documented in the fertility dances of African tribal cultures like the Ubakala of Nigeria.’”

² Stanley Sadie, *The Grove Concise Dictionary of Music* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1994) p. 22

Anacrusis. Upbeat; term (borrowed from literary usage) for unstressed notes at the beginning of a phrase of music.

³ Best Loved Hymns Old Rugged Cross (Distributed by Kennedy International Pty Ltd, no date, no copy write notation).

⁴ John Makujina, pp. 149 Quotes from Kimberly and Lee Smith’s book *Oh, Be Careful Little Ears* pp 44-45, 66.