

# MUSIC AND MOODS

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No study of Christian standards would be complete without considering the influence of music. Multiplied millions of young people all over the world have been brought under the hypnotising spell of rock-and-roll. Like a common denominator, it has crossed the boundaries of language, culture, and religion to affect more lives than almost any other social force. Even the Christian church has been invaded by so-called "gospel rock" which has become the evangelistic vehicle of church young people in communicating with other youth. But what message is being communicated by the tempo and rhythm of this "now" music? How can we explain the obsessive devotion of so many millions to the same kinds of sounds?

Very few people understand the tremendous power that music exercises over the conscious and the subconscious nature of those who listen to it. It has long been known that martial music, band music, and religious music could produce predictable emotional responses. Moods of listeners have been programmed by certain kinds of music. Vast segments of people have reacted in almost uniform togetherness to the same controlled music. They have been tranquillised into nostalgia or lethargy by soothing melodies, or they have been agitated to actual violence by appropriate "wild" syncopated rhythms.

How does music produce moods? It has now been established scientifically that moods have a biological basis. They are produced by a combination of brain activity, blood circulation, and body chemistry. All these functions are affected in an extraordinary degree by music. Medical research has revealed that nerves of the ear have more extensive connections than any other nerves of the body. In fact, there is hardly a function of the human system which cannot be affected by musical tones. Actual tests have proved that music has a direct influence on pulse rate, blood pressure, the nervous system, digestion, muscles, and glands of the body.

Dr. Schoen makes this remarkable statement in his book, *The Psychology of Music*: "Music is made of the stuff which is in and of itself the most powerful stimulant known among the perceptual processes .... Music operates on our emotional faculty with greater intensiveness and rapidity than the product of any other act." Page 39.

The most amazing fact of all is how the physical organs react to music. Since the body only functions when the brain commands it to, we know that music, in some way, has to reach the brain first of all. But what part of the brain perceives the music? One of the most important discoveries ever made in this area has established that music is "heard" in that portion of the brain which receives the stimuli of emotions, sensations, and feelings. In fact, music completely bypasses the brain centres involving reason and intelligence. It does not depend upon the master brain to gain entrance into the body. It enters by way of the thalamus, which is a relay station of all emotions, sensations, and feelings. Schullian and Schoen describe it thus: "Once a stimulus has been able to reach the thalamus, the master brain is *automatically invaded*, and if the stimulus is continued for some time, a closer contact between the master brain and the world of reality can be thus established." *Music and Medicine*, pp. 270, 271. (Emphasis supplied.)

Notice that the music has to be "continued for some time" to produce physical reactions through the conscious, master brain. The repetitive, percussive amplification of sound through the electric instruments of rock-and-roll produces a phenomenon which is better described than understood. *Time* magazine describes it in these words: "The hypnotic beat works a strange kind of magic. Many dancers become oblivious to those around them. They drift away

from their partners. Inhibitions flake away, eyes glaze over, until suddenly they are seemingly swimming along in a sea of sound."

The most frightening thing about this whole subject is the irresistible assault of the music upon the emotions and then upon the actions. Since the attack is made through the thalamus, the individual who listens will be affected by the music without even making any conscious decision in the matter. This is why doctors have grasped music as a new way to reach the minds of the retarded and the mentally ill. It has opened the door for music to be used therapeutically to communicate with emotionally disturbed patients. Even autistic children are being remarkably stimulated to respond because they do not have to make any kind of voluntary decision-the music reaches the brain centre just by being perceived as sound, through the thalamus. Words may mean nothing to the children, but the sensory level is pried open by the music, providing access to the conscious brain.

Now this fascinating fact about music, though beneficial in reaching the mentally disturbed, has also provided a way for Satan to make a sneak attack upon almost anyone who will listen to the wrong kind of music. Without his even realising it, the listener's mind will be bent to whatever emotional attitude the devil wants to incorporate into the musical beat. Van deWall sums it up in this manner, "Much of what we call irresistible in music is so because we react on this sensory-motor level of functioning." *Music in Hospitals*, p. 15.

Later in his book Van deWall describes how the nerves transmit the music message to the various parts of the body: "Sound vibrations acting upon and through the nervous system give shocks in rhythmical sequence to the muscles, which cause them to contract and set our arms and hands, legs and feet in motion. On account of their automatic muscular reaction, many people make some movement when hearing music; for them to remain motionless would require conscious muscular restraint." Page 106.

With this summary of the subtle psychological effect of music on the brain and the body, we are better able to understand how the rhythm and beat of modern rock music has created so much moral havoc among the young. The incessant themes of illicit sex, drugs, and rebellion have been dinned into the brain, creating an emotional attitude of acceptance toward these aberrations of conduct.

By operating through the thalamus, Satan bypasses the mental and spiritual barricades of intelligent reason, and enters the citadel of the mind--the great control centre of all human decisions and action. There, in the mind, Satan has the equipment to translate sensual musical impressions into physical action. Through the telegraphic network of nerves reaching every part of the body, he can communicate the appropriate commands to act in accordance with the emotional stimuli of the music.

It has been no secret that some of the most popular rock-and-roll musicians are not only tied in with drugs but also with spiritualism. Bob Larson has documented the confession of some such performers that their success has been guaranteed by a covenant with Satan. This means that Satan is controlling the production of the music as well as the manner of its communicating with the listener. No great wonder then, that many rock-and-roll concerts have turned into orgies of obscenity, where both performers and listeners are virtually emotional pawns of satanic control.

Many have defended rhythmic music on the basis that it correlates with the natural body rhythms in producing more co-ordinated activity and accomplishment. It is certainly true that specially selected music increases the working capacity of the muscles. In his article,

*U.S.S.R.: Music and Medicine*, Leonid Melnikov enlarges on this remarkable fact. "At the same time the tempo of the movements of the worker changes with the change of musical tempo. It is as if the music determines a good rapid rhythm of movement. Another series of experiments on students proved that not only the working capacity changes under the influence of music, but also the pulse and blood pressure." *Music Journal XXVII*: 18 (Nov., 1970).

Does this bodily response to specifically programmed musical selections mean that all rhythmic musical tones are beneficial to the body? On the contrary, although man has an inherent affinity for certain rhythms, there are some broken-meter, harmonic dissonances in the melodic line which are completely out of harmony with natural body rhythms. Such is the typical, insistent tempo of rock-and-roll music. Alice English Monsarrat in an article entitled *Music--Soothing, Sedative or Savage*, wrote, "A broken meter in the treble, played over an insistently regular beat in the left hand with gradually increasing rapidity almost to the point of frenzy ... is capable of producing the identical disintegrating and almost hysterical effect on an organism; as if a person would try to rush madly in two directions at the same time. Any psychiatrist knows that it is precisely this two-directional pull of conflicting drives of emotions that is helping to fill our mental hospitals with broken wrecks of humanity."

What Ms. Monsarrat is really saying is that to maintain a sense of well-being and integration, people must not be subjected too much to rhythms not in accord with one's natural body rhythms. If the truth were fully known, a vast proportion of the present teen-age restless rebellion might be traced to this constant exposure to incompatible rhythms.

The strategy of exploiting the sensual appetites is not a new approach for Satan. He has experimented with teenage emotions for almost 6,000 years and is well acquainted with their vulnerability. He has been delighted to manipulate the lives of unconverted young people through rock music, but he is even more delighted when he can intrude his mind-bending, hypnotic music into the church. By his age-old program of gradualism, he has managed to break down the fine sense of discrimination and to reproduce the same erotic musical beat in some Seventh-day Adventist churches. What a triumph for the devil when he manages to compromise the high standards of the last-day church! Any mingling of spiritual and carnal brings a reproach upon the people who are chosen to proclaim God's last warning message.

The only correct attitude for those who are called out of Babylon and the world is to close every door to the deceptive musical snares of our great spiritual enemy. There can be no compromise with the degrading music forms which have been Satan's tools of corrupting and destroying. We are reminded of Christ's words, "For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16:15. In the light of this statement we should be even more guarded against music which has become so intensely popular with the world. Only a deep heart experience of love for Christ will empower our young people to take an unreserved stand against this "highly esteemed" deceptive instrument of Satan.