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Music: Uniting Nations, Dividing Generations

By Kirby Jones MBA, BSc

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by: **Kirby Jones MBA, BSc**

Cultures around the world since the beginning of time have appreciated, enjoyed, and incorporated some form of music in their everyday lives. However, just as one man's trash is another man's treasure, one man's music can often be another man's noise, and vice versa. Still, certain universal aspects of music can serve as a means of communication between two people who have little else in common.

Some say that the only thing that makes music different from noise is the culture of those listening to it. There is some truth in this; you wouldn't expect a typical American teenager to be found head banging to a CD of tribal African chanting. Similarly, you'd be surprised to find that African tribe knowing what to make of a boy band ballad. Of course, such vastly different cultures may not share musical preferences, many slightly more similar cultures can enjoy a real connection as a direct result of shared musical abilities and experiences.

In an attempt to appeal to newer markets, music artists are evaluated for their international appeal as international sales can equal or even surpass the domestic sales figures. This worldly appeal can be successful in creating a shared interest and bond between citizens of greatly different lands: Americans and Chinese, Russians and South Africans. It is thus not surprising that a typical music promotion tour includes various international destinations.

Music artists of today and yesterday have been known to help cross cultural divides in times of conflict and even war. Their music can bring crowds of people in warring countries to their feet, tapping their feet to the rhythm. News broadcasts are frequently carrying stories of disheartened soldiers abroad smiling again after a visit from familiar pop music artists.

On the other hand, music is also a frequent bone of contention between the generations. Why is the music of different generations more often referred to by its respective decade (i.e. 'the sixties', 'the eighties') rather than by its most popular artists or a particular genre? Grandparents are rarely found

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enjoying the same music as their grandchildren. Much more common, they are often heard complaining that the other's music is too loud, too soft, too fast, or too slow. Even music artists with a wide-ranging appeal, like The Beatles, are not always appreciated by both extremes of the generation gap. Though their music stands a much greater chance of acceptance from fresh ears than rap has from a Frank Sinatra crowd.

Music hence signifies different things to different people often extending to a deeply personal level. Each generation's music represents the aspirations, heartbreaks, achievements of people living in that specific time period. And as they carry different viewpoints on many daily social and political issues they get further divided by varying taste of music. However, the feeling to be human and alive to the world around us, and the desire to express life's experiences through music remains common to all irrespective of the generation gap – and is capable of crossing the most guarded country borders.

Kirby Jones MBA, BSc is the webmaster for Dav Music – probably the largest information resource on music related topics. Visit his web site and get immediate access to his archive of articles here:

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