

Emotions & Feelings Evoked By Different Genres Of Music

Different genres of music have certain meanings behind their words and sounds. These words and sounds make a human being feel emotions, such as anger, sadness, or euphoria.

Throughout our combined research, we found that certain vibes and rhythms within compositions can trigger either positive, or, negative stimuli within the brain.

As a group, we have chosen different genres of music that have an array of sounds and pitches. Combined, we have to find that this spectrum of genres, such as - "classical", "easy listening", "country", "rap", "alternative", and, "heavy metal" - can have an effect on the feeling of individuals.

Classical Music

by Lee Feinerer

Throughout history, classical music has proven to have a significant impact on the human brain in terms of emotions and feelings.

According to Daniel J. Levitin, "Listening to music starts with subcortical and the moves up to auditory cortices on both sides of the brain" (Levitan - 86). Looking closer at the effect that music has on the brain, "The emotions that we experience in response to music, involve structures deep in the primitive, reptilian regions, of the cerebellar vermis, and the amygdale" (Levitan - 87)

This biological definition helps to explain exactly how the sound of music travels from our ears to the brain.

In regards to the bodily reaction to soothing music, . . . "classical music causes the heart beat and pulse rate to relax to the beat of the music". As the body becomes relaxed and alert, the mind is able to concentrate more easily. Furthermore, baroque music decreases blood pressure and enhances the ability to learn. It has been observed to cause the pupils to dilate, increase blood pressure, and increase the heart rate". (O'Donnell - 1)

Several musicologists have decided to implement music as a means of therapy. One stated that "calming music, (such as classical music), was found to have a very calming effect on the body and causes the increase of endormorphins, i.e., thirty minutes of such music was equal to the effect of a dose of valium". (Portnoy - 2)

Classical music is an alternative to drugs and many doctors see it as a better way to calm patients.

In regards to structure, classical music is best described as light, graceful, proportionate, and relaxing. Short melodies, frequent changes in dynamics and rhythm, and a variety of keys enable the listener to feel at peace while listening to classical music.

Even Daniel Levitin has had an experience with the effects of classical music, when he states, "My experience with oboes and violins is different, and the particular way that Rachmaninoff uses them may cause me to have the opposite reaction to his concerto than I have to the car horn. Rather than feeling startled, I feel relaxed. The same neurons that fire when I feel calm and safe in my

environment may be triggered by the calm parts of the concerto". (Levitin 92),

The reader is instantly tempted to listen to classical music. Classical music has proven to have a distinct effect on the human emotions, and anyone who is stressed out should try to listen to classical music.

In addition to a soothing feeling, classical music has also had an effect on the overall intelligence of listeners.

Classical music during the Baroque Era uses a 60 beats per minute beat pattern, which triggers the right and left hemispheres of the brain at the same time. This simultaneous action maximizes learning and allows the brain to process information much easier. This phenomenon is often referred to as the "Mozart Effect" of music.

This effect on the brain may seem faulty, but many studies have been done to verify this trend. The efficiency rates of students around the world continue to increase when classical music is being played in the background. Despite people's individual opinion of classical music, it has been proven that the body feels relaxed and tranquil while classical music is being played. So next time you need to unwind, play some Mozart and feel the immediate effects.

Easy Listening

my Mandy Sheaffer

Easy listening can be defined as the upbeat music that was created between 1946 and 1966.

The most famous singers and songs writers of this time include the legendary Frank Sinatra, Billie Holiday, Bobby Rydell, Bobby Darin, and many others. Keightley stated that, "This era of music can arguably be the most important and influential type of music of the 20th century next to rock".

This is the type of music that grandparents listened to. The voices of this genre are smooth and calming.

One of the most famous voices of all would be Frank Sinatra. Beston explains that, "Sinatra sounds like an American man, or the way American men used to sound, anyway, back in the days when men wore suits and hats, before presidential candidates danced on ladies' talk shows, before baseball players talked about psychotherapy, and . . . , well, you get the idea."

The music gives some people memories of when life was less hectic and complicated. For others [younger generations], it paints a picture of what life could have been like. Many people imagine a simple life and happy times. For the people of this generation, it gave them ideas as well. The music came at a time of distress and despair. This smooth and upbeat music was created during World War II.

The young people of this generation used this music as a way to cope with the war going on around them. Most of the songs talked about love and happy times. It gave many people the emotional escape they needed. Also, the beat and rhythms of the music have an effect on the way one can feel after listening to it. The music has a happy beat, and smooth voices, thus, Chen found that the strength of this bias is modulated by individuals' mood starts at each step of the information-processing stream. The positive mood intensifies the neural sensitivity of the brain to

emotionally positive stimuli."

This can mean that during the war, people wanted to escape and feel happy. This feeling, combined with the "happy sounds" of easy listening, can improve the mood of an individual.

Now, many times, people only hear this great soothing music in the lobbies of hotels, restaurants, and business.

Shea wrote that, "Skyscrapers signed on, hoping gentle melodies in elevators would calm nervous passengers."

Many people find this music to have a peaceful effect upon listening to it.

This could possibly be why it is called "easy listening" because it is easy music to listen to. There are not many complicated rhythms or pitches to keep up with. Also, probably most important, the lyrics are happy and appropriate for all ages. Many people have forgotten about this great era of music. It seems it is up to every generation to learn it on their own.

Some people do not have the proper appreciation for this genre, but this is what lead to rock 'n roll, and eventually to the genres created today.

Many young people hear this music, and feel old and hate it. It slows them down, or puts them to sleep. However, many people get that happy, old-fashioned feeling when listening to the many great hits of the time.

Country Music

by Corrin Gabbard

Country music like any other music can affect your mood, your life and your brain. However it affects different people in different ways.

For me, I have grown up always listening to Country music and really enjoy it. No matter what mood I am in, I can always listen to this genre of music.

In this section of our group essay, I will continue to discuss how Country music affects my brain and emotions, as well as, how it scientifically affects the brain. The brain is the main control of your body, so anything that you listen to, will affect your brain activity. This in turn affects the mood that you are in. If I wake up in a bad mood and hear a song on the radio that I enjoy, my whole day can turn around.

The opposite can be said, too. I think this can only be true for those who enjoy Country Music. I know that some people cannot stand this genre of music and hearing this type of song can put them in a bad mood or upset them.

These reactions are from the brain and the chemicals that are released.

Another reaction that this genre of music can cause is that of dancing.

When a person hears certain country songs, it makes them want to do certain dances that coincide with that song.

Some of these dances include some, such as Line Dancing, Boot-Scootin' Boogie, Cotton-Eyed Joe, and the Tush Push. Even though they are considered country western dances, they are related to specific songs and specific singers. Again, this is a reaction from the brain when it hears these certain rhythms.

Country music can also open up the fifth brain circuit of the right hemisphere. The right hemisphere of the brain controls such things as creativity and imagination, whereas, the left hemisphere is more factual and rational.

The right hemisphere also contains the fifth brain circuit, which according to Kundalini brings the feeling of bliss, a vision of wholeness, the ability to see holistically, and a neurosomatic ability, among many other benefits. (Kundalini-Tantra) This feeling of bliss can occur by hearing this genre of music for those who enjoy Country. For others however, it can cause the opposite affect.

Also, with the fifth brain circuit it is sometimes hard to reach this feeling of blissfulness and relaxation. It could be said that this fifth brain circuit is like reaching a state of meditation and like a different state of being. In order to reach this state there needs to be triggers that you use.

Some of these triggers can include those stated on kundalini-tantra.com instrumental music, principally classical, light classical, light jazz, and exclude heavy metal, strong drum beats, music with words, country / western music, or other second circuit and first circuit (primitive) music or rhythm. (Kundalini-Tantra)

This means that depending on a persons upbringing and the type of genre, they, like this fifth brain circuit, can be turned on through that medium.

For me, it would be country music that would send me to this unknown state. I can say that some songs in this genre have mesmerized me but I do not think that I, personally, have fully opened this fifth brain circuit.

Rap Music

by Abigail Newlin

Being able to escape reality for a couple minutes into a song, and live in someone else's world is somewhat comforting to most. But what happens when that world is filled with only "cash money", champagne, and women wearing only bathing suits?

Is this a negative atmosphere for our dreams and aspirations to take place? Or, is rap music just a fun, upbeat, party that only lasts while listening and doesn't roll over into our everyday lives?

Ever since the genre of Rap Music originated in the 1970's, it has caused an array of different opinions. Being more of a "street art", it has stirred the minds of the older generations, but it also helped to bridge the gap between different cultures.

Rap first started to gain followers in the 1980s when the Sugar Hill Gang got noticed for the song "A Rapper's Delight".

After that there were many other artists who began to hit it big.

Today, it is one of the most popular genres among teenagers. The amazing thing about Rap Music is that it brings together all different kinds of people.

Rap music has a following that ranges from many different backgrounds, ages, social status, and races. But it also has a lot of critics. Some say that its not real music at all and others just think that its not great art because of its lyrics.

It has been 40 years. now, and the question still arises, whether, or not, Rap music affects the brain in a negative way.

Because of its racy topics, Rap has been looked upon as a negative influence, and, if you've watched a current music video, you would probably understand why.

Some researchers even believe that rap music has the ability to brainwash its listeners. The Prevention Research Center at Berkeley did a study on how music affects behavior, and their objective was to investigate, "whether young people's substance use and aggressive behaviors are related to their listening to music containing messages of substance use and violence."

Their stated results where that, "listening to rap music was significantly and positively associated with alcohol use, problematic alcohol use, illicit drug use, and aggressive behaviors."

An article written by Flip Schrameijer in Copernicus, a scientific journal, stated that rap enthusiasts are also said to be more aggressive and, therefore, more likely to be involved in criminal activity.

When rappers become a person's idol and they are participating in irresponsible activities such as drugs, and their lyrics send the message across that it is okay to treat women in a negative way, that person sees those kinds of actions as cool. This is an example of observational learning. It is obvious that Rap Music has had a large effect on our generation because you see people dressing, talking, and acting like the rappers that they see on TV.

But this kind of music could also have some positive aspects.

It could help learning. Daniel Levitin states in his book This is Your Brain on Music that "listening or recalling lyrics invokes language centers, including Broca's and Wernicke's area, as well as other language centers in the temporal and frontal lobes. "Because many people who listen to Rap Music also enjoy learning every lyric so that they can sing along, they are actually invoking the language centers in their brains.

This is a positive development. Levitin explains that "Musical activity involves nearly every region of the brain that we know about and nearly every neural system." So, when we are listening to music, we are almost giving ourselves a brain work out.

In conclusion, there are negative and positive aspects of what Rap Music does to our brains. People have to decide for themselves if the positive outweighs the negative. We listen to music usually because we like the way it makes us feel and Rap Music can be described as empowering, and exciting.

Levitin states that "the emotions we experience in response to music involve structures deep in the primitive, reptilian regions of the cerebellar vermis, and the amygdala - the heart of emotional processing in the cortex."

In order to find out how Rap Music makes people feel, I asked ten random people from the ages of 17 - 23 years of age, what kind of emotions they feel when listening to Rap Music.

One girl, 19, from Depaw University, stated that she gets pumped up with Rap Music before a work out, but she also listens to it before she goes out because it gets her in the mood to go party.

Another response, from a 20 year old sophomore at Indiana University, was that Rap Music gets me in the mood to pimp some hoes.

Almost everyone made a reference to partying, dancing, drinking, or exercising, or a combination of all.

These are just some examples of what teenagers think about this music, how it makes them feel, and what it causes them to do.

These activities can be seen as positive, like going to exercise, but also negative like calling women "hoes."

Alternative Rock

by Megan Fassnacht

In contrast, Alternative Rock is a relatively new genre of music that emerged in the 1980's. It is largely associated with the guitar and is known for its socially relevant lyrics.

More often than in other rock styles, alternative rock lyrics tend to address topics of social concern such as drug use, depression and environmentalism. This approach to lyrics developed as a reflection of the social and economical strains of the United Kingdom and the United States in the 1980's.

As a result of the emphasis on the meaningful lyrics, the lyrics often have more of an effect upon the listener's brain than the actual music. In addition, because these lyrics are relevant, we listen more closely and anticipate what is to come next.

According to This is Your Brain on Music by Daniel Levitin, music is organized sound, but the organization has to involve some element of the unexpected or it is emotionally flat and robotic" (Levitin, 111).

He goes on to say, "The appreciation we have for music is intimately related to our ability to learn the underlying structure of the music we like, and, to be able to make predictions about what will come next.

Composers imbue music with emotion by knowing what our expectations are, and then, very deliberately, controlling when those expectations will be met, and, when they won't. The thrills, chills, and, tears, we experience from music are the result of having our expectations, artfully manipulated, by a skilled composer and the musicians who interpret that music."

In other words, the music needs to make sense and be fluid, similar to a sentence structure, so that the listener will be interested and stay alert.

As mentioned before, music helps keep the listener alert, allowing the mind to concentrate more easily.

However, when compared to classical music, alternative music increases the heart rate because of the upbeat tempo and catchy phrases.

Classical music will slow the heart rate and help the listener feel more relaxed. With regards to structure, alternative rock is best described as catchy, upbeat and relatable, in terms of lyrics.

Guitars blast out power chords, chiming riffs, and clever lyrics are sung. With a combination of all of the above, whether, or not, music listening exercises other parts of our minds, is in question. Levitin says, "Through studies of people with brain damage, we've seen patients who have lost the ability to read a newspaper but can still read music, or, individuals who can play the piano but lack the motor coordination to button their own sweater.

Music listening, performance, and composition, engage nearly every area of the brain and involve nearly every neural subsystem." (Levitin, 9) While alternative rock may not have the intellectual effects on the brain as classical music does, alternative rock has still been proven to enhance concentration, stimulate multiple areas of the brain, and helps its listeners relate to the rest of the world.

So if you're looking for music to sing and jam to, alternative rock is your genre.

Heavy Metal Rock

by Stephan Gibson

This is a particular genre of music has many names including; industrial metal/rock, secular metal, alternative metal, hard rock, etc. Although this particular genre of music can fall into many similar categories, the psychology behind it, is very intriguing and broadly studied.

Some particular studies that were found during research have released different outcomes of their findings.

One particular article, by Jennifer Copley, brings together many different categories that she has found. These studies have presented information regarding aggression, suicide, intelligence, and academic performance. She also found studies showing just the opposite.

Aggression: Although some studies show that many individuals become more angry, hostile, and aggressive when listening to heavy metal music. However researchers discovered that individuals that were angry and aggressive to begin with, became more carefree and untroubled but only when the heavy metal genre is their preferred music. (Copley)

Suicide: There are particular stereotypes that are associated with the heavy metal rock music.

The grunge, gothic types are the main group of individuals who are stereotyped to be avid listeners of this genre of music. It is assumed that this type person is down on life and the world around

them.

We know stereotypes can be wrong at times, as well, but studies show that suicide tends to be higher among those listeners of heavy metal.

However, people that have been found to have psychiatric disorder, who preferred heavy metal music, showed mood improvement after listening to that particular genre of music. (Copley)

Academic Performance & Intelligence: Mrs. Copley informs us that certain studies have shown that adolescent who listens to heavy metal music produces lower grades in school. Much of these lower grades are said to be due to personality, (stereotype), or social environment.

In contrast, it has been shown that college students who are given Intelligence Quota tests, and listen to heavy metal on a consistent basis, tended to score higher. These same students also did better on questions that were more abstract. (Copley)

Another article written by Jeffrey Arnett that was published in the "Journal of Youth and Adolescence", tells us that many studies show that music is a direct link to teenagers and many of the social and behavioral issues they promote. This study shows us how girls and boys react differently to the heavy metal / rock music they listen to on a regular basis.

It was stated that girls who listen to heavy metal music tend to perform activities like shoplifting, vandalism, and had reported lower self-esteem (Arnett).

On the other hand, boys who listened to heavy metal / rock music tended to be less satisfied with their family life and exhibit reckless driving behavior (Arnett).

However, Arnett found some things that this genre of music promoted both sexes to participate in sexual behavior and illegal drug use.

In addition, heavy metal music transmitted signals into the boys and girls brain, that tended to act more aggressively as compared to those who did not listen to the heavy metal music, regularly.

All in all, much research has been done with adolescence who listens to this genre of music.

Many studies seem to have a positive correlation to those kids who listen to the music and their violent behaviors and social problems.

It is apparent, in the research, that heavy metal music is a genre that can manipulate the way one feels and thinks while listening to the music.

It is also a common occurrence that weightlifters, or athletes, listening to heavy metal music, or heavy rock music, become focused and ready to perform their sport of choice. They will turn on heavy metal music to "pump themselves up", and "get angry", (although they aren't necessarily angry people) in general. While performing in a competitive sport, many people state that this genre of music will make them more determined to win.

In comparison, it is obvious, through our research, that classical music is on the opposite end of the spectrum as heavy metal music.

Thus, we have seen various emotions that have been the result of listening to this ladder of music.

As you have read, when scaling this ladder, we moved from individuals feeling "relaxed and soothing" to "angry and hullabaloo".

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