

# Music

## Negative Effects of Music

For kids with a healthy self-image and varied interests, music probably has little or no influence on their values and lifestyle choices. However, parents should be aware that violent, racist, homophobic or sexist lyrics in much of today's popular music could have an impact on impressionable young people who are just developing a sense of identity and self-worth. Parents should challenge these kinds of negative representations and discuss them with their kids.

Music preferences can be a warning sign of a distressed teen. Isolated, angry or depressed youth may be attracted to music that feeds their feelings of despair and hostility.

Numerous studies indicate that a preference for heavy metal music may be a significant marker for alienation, substance abuse, psychiatric disorders, suicide risk, sex-role stereotyping or risk-taking behaviors during adolescence. (Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, 1999)

If your child is withdrawn and alienated from peers, or shows violent tendencies towards self or others, pay attention to what music is being listened to. Use the *Checklist for Violent Youth* (on the right-hand side of this page) for identifying signs of potential violence. Make sure the child's mental health needs are being addressed through appropriate school, medical or social-service counseling.

## The Social Impact of Music Violence

Testimony of the American Academy of Pediatrics before the Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, Restructuring, and The District of Columbia

Presented by –Frank Palumbo, M.D., FAAP

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Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the social impact of music violence. My name is Dr. Frank Palumbo and I am a practicing pediatrician here in Washington D.C. I am testifying on behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), an organization of 55,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.

Pediatricians' concern about the impact of music lyrics and music videos on children and youth compelled the AAP Committee on Communications to issue a policy statement on the subject in December 1989, as well as one on media violence in 1995. Policy statements are the official

position of the Academy concerning health care issues, and help guide pediatricians in their assessment and treatment of patients.

Pediatricians with a specialty in adolescent medicine are keenly aware of how crucial music is to a teen's identity and how it helps them define important social and subcultural boundaries. One study found that teens listened to music an average of 40 hours per week.

During the past four decades, rock music lyrics have become increasingly explicit -- particularly with reference to drugs, sex, violence and even of greater concern, sexual violence. Heavy metal and rap lyrics have elicited the greatest concern, as they compound the environment in which some adolescents increasingly are confronted with pregnancy, drug use, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome and other sexually transmitted diseases, injuries, homicide and suicide.

For example, Nine Inch Nails released "Big Man with a Gun," with the following lyrics: I am a big man (yes I am) and I have a big gun; got me a big old dick and I like to have fun; held against your forehead, I'll make you suck it, maybe I'll put a hole in your head; you know, just for the f--k of it...I'm every inch a man, and I'll show you somehow; me and my f--king gun; nothing can stop me now; shoot shoot shoot shoot shoot...

Marilyn Manson has quite the way with a lyric: "Who said date rape isn't kind," "The housewife I will beat" and "I slit my teenage wrist" are just a sample from two songs.

To date, no studies have documented a cause-and-effect relationship between sexually explicit or violent lyrics and adverse behavioral effects, i.e., I'll listen to a song about killing someone and therefore I go out and kill. But we can all acknowledge the overall effect music has on people, including adolescents and children. Otherwise, we wouldn't listen to it. Music wakes us up in the morning, makes us want to dance, soothes us when we're feeling sad and grates on some folks' nerves in the elevator. From infancy to adulthood, it is an integral part of our lives. Mothers sing lullabies to babies, toddlers and children play "ring around the rosie," and teenagers become absorbed in songs they believe help better define them during this rocky transition into adulthood.

Make no mistake about it, music can summon a range of emotions, most of which are wonderful. Yet there is some music that communicates potentially harmful health messages, especially when it reaches a vulnerable audience.

A wide majority of adults surveyed in a 1997 report from Public Agenda, "Kids These Days: What Americans Really Think about the Next Generation," decried sex and violence in the media as threatening to the well-being of young people. The report, however, couches this as a problem without a solution. "Given the intense complaints about the media, it is somewhat surprising that only half of those surveyed (49%) think pressuring the entertainment industry to produce movies and music with less violence and sex will be a very effective way to help kids. Perhaps people doubt that the industry will be responsive to public pressure, or wonder just how much influence they as individuals can bring to bear," it states.

We believe something can and should be done. Poll after poll laments the belief that our country, including its youth, is losing its moral center. Responsibility, respect and discipline are thought to be a thing of the past. Crime and violence have escalated to the point where it is a public health problem. Although there is no one solution, awareness of, and sensitivity to, the potential impact of music lyrics and videos by consumers, the media and the music industry is one important piece of the puzzle. It is in the children's best interest to listen to lyrics or to watch videos that are not violent, sexist, drug-oriented, or antisocial.

Pediatricians should join with educators and parents in local and national coalitions to discuss the effects of music lyrics on children and adolescents. The possible negative impact of sexually explicit, drug-oriented, or violent lyrics on compact discs, tapes, music videos and the Internet should be brought to light in the context of any possible behavioral effects.

Parents should take an active role in monitoring music that their children are exposed to and which they can purchase, as well as the videos they watch. Ultimately, it is the parent's responsibility to monitor what their children listen to and view. Pediatricians should encourage parents to do so.

Pediatricians should counsel parents to become educated about the media. This means watching television with their children and teenagers, discussing content with them, and initiating the process of selective viewing at an early age. In order to help this process, the Academy has launched Media Matters, a national media education campaign targeted to physicians, parents and youth. The primary goal of the Media Matters campaign is to help parents and children understand and impact upon the sometimes negative effects of images and messages in the media, including music lyrics and videos.

For example, if a music video shows violence against women to any degree, a viewer, including young girls, could be led to believe such action is acceptable. If they are educated about the media, the premise in the video would be questioned and hopefully rejected.

Entertainment executives and teenagers who argue that pop music is "just music" do not take into account that "most human learning is incidental in nature and takes place outside of designated educational settings," the authors write. Poetry is "equipment for living," the late philosopher Kenneth Burke once wrote. Christenson and Roberts emphasize that in the adolescent years, pop music is the "heavy equipment" — more influential than television, movies and computers.

## **How youth use music**

On average, American youth listen to music and watch music videos four to five hours a day, which is more time than they spend with their friends outside of school or watching television. "Music matters to adolescents, and they cannot be understood without a serious consideration of how it fits into their lives," the authors say.

"Music alters and intensifies their moods, furnishes much of their slang, dominates their conversations and provides the ambiance at their social gatherings. Music styles define the crowds and cliques they run in. Music personalities provide models for how they act and dress."

Music also appears to alter study habits and damage eardrums.

"Such consequences may not spring as quickly to mind as sex and violence, but they may ultimately play just as crucial a role in adolescent development."

Many scholars have viewed television as the central media influence on adolescents, Christenson said, but adolescents devote more time and intensity to music.

They use music most to control mood and enhance emotional states. "Music can make a good mood better and allow us to escape or 'work through' a bad one," he said. But it can also be used to enhance bad moods, which has led some to believe music lyrics about suicide and violence against women have occasionally led troubled youth to commit suicide or violent crimes.

"In one study, a heavy metal devotee reported that he loved the music because it put him in a 'good mood,' by which he meant a mood conducive to smashing mailboxes with bricks," the authors report. "Another said hardcore metal put him in the mood to 'go beat the crap out of someone.' "

Movies and news reports tend to over-emphasize such extreme examples, Christenson said, but the evidence suggests that music is more likely to energize listeners than to de-energize or mellow them out.

Adolescents also use music to gain information about the adult world, to withdraw from social contact (such as using a Walkman as a barrier, not unlike an adult hiding behind a newspaper at the breakfast table), to facilitate friendships and social settings, or to help them create a personal identity.

## **Managing Music in the Home**

Listen to the music your children like. Read the lyrics and discuss them with your kids. But keep in mind that studies have shown that many kids don't pay a lot attention to lyrics, so putting too much emphasis on the words of favorite songs may be counter-productive.

Broaden your kids' musical tastes by exposing them to different kinds of music: jazz, classical, folk, country, blues, show tunes, etc., through recording and live concerts. Show them how the music they enjoy didn't develop in a void, but is a culmination of many different earlier musical influences.

If your kids like music videos, watch with them and use violent or sexist content as starting points for discussing gender stereotyping and media violence.

Talk about the role of gender stereotyping plays in the marketing of female artists. An examination of *Rolling Stone* covers will help illustrate how the industry continues to promote women artists as sex objects.

When your kids are young, you have the right to ban music you find inappropriate from your house. Talk to your kids about your decision and explain why you find the music objectionable. Even if they disagree, your kids will probably respect your decision if you explain your motivation.

Teens will object to censorship of their music, and they have the right to defend their viewpoint. Discuss freedom of expression versus censorship, and try to come up with a compromise that respects everyone's feelings.

When purchasing music for your kids, look for Parental Advisory labels that warn of explicit lyrics. Keep in mind that labelling is voluntary for recording companies, so you can't assume that music without a label will be appropriate for all ages.

If a CD or tape purchased by your child has objectionable lyrics and doesn't have an advisory label, return it to the store. Most stores have a "hassle-free" return policy if a parent disapproves of a child's purchase.

Ask music store staff for information about specific artists. Most music store employees are very willing to guide parents when they choose music for their kids.

Supervise your kids' access to music on the Internet. The music and lyrics for virtually any song can be freely downloaded from the Internet by anyone, regardless of age. In some cases there are even additional lyrics that have been censored in the retail version.

Canada's cable music station Much Music has strict guidelines regarding violent content, however the highly sexualized music videos of many artists make the station inappropriate viewing for children and even pre-teens. Parents should also be aware that music videos are not rated using the Canadian TV Classification System.

### **Music taste and school grades**

The relationship between academic success or failure and music taste may be very important, the authors say. Studies indicate early school achievement influences later music choices, not the other way around. Lower school commitment is generally associated with heavy metal, and in the view of at least one British researcher they cite, low-achievers embrace heavy metal as a "cultural solution" to their low standing in the traditional school pecking order. The music reinforces who one is and tells others what group he or she belongs to.

Given this connection, Christenson and Roberts urge adults to adopt a stance of "respectful

disagreement" with the negative values they see in the music some adolescents favor. When teachers and administrators stigmatize peer groups based on music, "the wedge between these kids — who, after all, are often the ones who most need to be reached — and the mainstream school culture is driven even deeper."

They finish their book with comments on these 1974 lyrics by the Rolling Stones: "I know it's only rock and roll, but I like it."

"The Stones knew this was a lie even as they sang it," Roberts and Christenson say. "Then as now, it wasn't only rock and roll, and kids didn't just like it, they *loved* it." SR

## **Music Videos Promote Adolescent Aggression**

By William J. Cromie

Gazette Staff

### **Music videos may be hazardous to your health.**

The largest sampling of music video content to date reveals a disturbing amount of violence, as well as unrealistic views of racial and sexual relationships, according to researchers at the Harvard Medical School.

"We did the first detailed analysis of interpersonal violence in the context of the powerful and well-documented association between media violence and real-life aggression," says Michael Rich, a pediatrician and former filmmaker. "Our findings raise concern for the effect of violent portrayals in music videos on adolescents' expectations about their own safety and the way they view people of another gender or race. Their approaches to interracial interactions and male-female relationships, and their strategies for conflict resolution are vulnerable to the effects of these portrayals."

Violence by teenagers, and even preteens, exploded into public consciousness recently as a result of shootings in Jonesboro, Ark., Paducah, Ky., and Pearl, Miss. As shocking as they are, such high-visibility incidents are just the tip of an iceberg that includes the murders of about 3,500 youths between 15 and 19 years old every year. More than 150,000 arrests of adolescents for violent crimes occur each year. Hundreds of studies have linked exposure to media violence to violent real-life behavior in adolescents.

## **Raves**

### **Introduction**

High energy, all-night dance parties and clubs known as "raves," which feature dance music with

a fast, pounding beat and choreographed laser programs, have become increasingly popular over the last decade, particularly among teenagers and young adults. Beginning as an underground movement in Europe, raves have evolved into a highly organized, commercialized, worldwide party culture. Rave parties and clubs are now found throughout the United States and in countries around the world. Raves are held either in permanent dance clubs or at temporary venues set up for a single weekend event in abandoned warehouses, open fields, or empty buildings.

Attendance can range from 30 "ravers" in a small club to tens of thousands in a sports stadium or open field. While techno music and light shows are essential to raves, drugs such as MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine), ketamine, GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate), Rohypnol, and LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), have become an integral component of the rave culture.

## **History**

Raves evolved from 1980s dance parties, aided by the emergence of European techno music and American house music. (See [Rave Music](#).) European clubs that sponsored raves in the 1980s tried to limit the exposure of attendees to the public and to law enforcement. Raves were secretive, after-hours, private dance parties and were often held in gay clubs where attendance was restricted to invitees or friends of invitees. The site of the party was often kept confidential, and invitees usually were not told the location of the host club until the night of the party. Because of the restricted access and the secrecy surrounding the locations, the growing rave culture was often described as an "underground" movement.

By the mid-1980s, rave parties overseas had developed such a following among youths and young adults that by 1987, London raves had outgrown most dance clubs. It then became common to hold all-night raves--which drew thousands of people--in large, open fields on the outskirts of the city. As the movement continued to grow in the late 1980s, the first rave parties emerged in U.S. cities such as San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Rave parties and clubs were present in most metropolitan areas of the United States by the early 1990s. Teenagers overtook the traditional young adult ravers and a new rave culture emerged; events became highly promoted, heavily commercialized, and less secretive. Many new U.S. rave promoters were career criminals who recognized the profitability of organizing events tailored to teens. Capitalizing on the growing popularity of raves, specialized industries were developed to market clothes, toys, drugs, and music. Private clubs and secret locations were replaced by stadium venues with off-duty police security.

By the late 1990s, raves in the United States had become so commercialized that events were little more than an exploitation of American youth. Today's raves are characterized by high entrance fees, extensive drug use, exorbitantly priced bottled water, very dark and often dangerously overcrowded dance floors, and "chill rooms," where teenage ravers go to cool down and often engage in open sexual activity. Moreover, many club owners and promoters appear to promote the use of drugs--especially MDMA. They provide bottled water and sports drinks to manage hyperthermia and dehydration; pacifiers to prevent involuntary teeth clenching; and menthol nasal inhalers, chemical lights, and neon glow sticks to enhance the effects of MDMA.

In addition, rave promoters often print flyers featuring prominent and repeated use of the letters "E" and "X" (E and X are MDMA monikers) or the word "rollin'" (refers to an MDMA high), surreptitiously promoting MDMA use along with the rave.

The increasing notoriety of raves has caused the rave culture to spread from major metropolitan areas to more rural or conservative locations. Rave parties are emerging in areas of Colorado, Iowa, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin that are not always prepared to manage unexpected crowds of teenagers.

### **Rave Music**

Rave music evolved from 1980s techno, house, and New York garage music. The mix of these different styles of dance music helped mold the modern version of electronic rave music. Today, rave music falls into several categories: ambient, techno, trance, progressive trance, cybertrance, house, jungle, drum 'n' bass, techstep, garage, and big beat.

Although a casual listener may not be able to distinguish between techno and trance, ravers know the music well, and several DJs and bands--unfamiliar to most people--are internationally famous within the rave community. Today's rave DJs are skilled stage performers and are considered artists much like musicians. They mix electronic sounds, beats, and rhythms, often synchronizing the music to a laser program. Popular DJs sell their music and perform live at the largest rave parties and clubs around the world. Rave organizers announce the appearance of famous DJs on their flyers and on the Internet to promote upcoming raves.

### **Rave Promotion**

Despite the commercialization of raves through the 1990s, many promoters have preserved the tradition of rave location secrecy, more as a novelty than as a necessity. In this tradition, raves are rarely promoted in open media but are advertised on flyers found only at record stores and clothing shops, at other rave parties and clubs, and on rave Internet sites. The flyers or Internet advertisements typically provide only the name of the city where the rave will be held and a phone number for additional information.

The location of the rave often is given to the caller over the telephone, but many promoters further maintain secrecy by providing only a location, called a "map point," where ravers go the night of the rave. At the map point, ravers are told the actual location of the rave. The map point is usually a record or clothing store within a 20-minute drive of the rave.

### **Raves and Club Drugs**

Drugs like MDMA, ketamine, GHB, Rohypnol, and LSD--known collectively as "club drugs"--are an integral part of the rave culture. Many ravers use club drugs and advocate their use, wrongly believing that they are not harmful if they are used "responsibly" and their effects are managed properly. Many of the commercially designed rave clothes display pro-drug messages, and rave posters and flyers often promote drug use.

MDMA is unquestionably the most popular of the club drugs, and evidence of MDMA use by teenagers can be seen at most rave parties. Ketamine and GHB also are used at raves, as is Rohypnol, although to a lesser extent. A recent resurgence in the availability and use of some hallucinogens--LSD, PCP (phencyclidine), psilocybin, and peyote or mescaline --has also been noted at raves and dance clubs and may necessitate their inclusion in the club drug category. Inhalants like nitrous oxide are sometimes found at rave events; nitrous oxide is sold in gas-filled balloons called "whippets" for \$5-\$10.

Rampant use of club drugs at raves may be leading to the use of other and highly addictive drugs by youths. There have been widespread reports of increasing availability and use of Asian methamphetamine tablets (frequently referred to as "yaba") at California raves and nightclubs. Heroin is being encountered more frequently at raves and clubs in large metropolitan areas, especially in the eastern United States. A wider variety of visually appealing and easy-to-administer forms of MDMA, LSD, heroin, and combination tablets are also found at raves and on college campuses.