

## The Bible and Rock Music: Are they Compatible?

As Christians, we are to test everything, and hold onto what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21). But how can we tell what is worth holding on to? Jesus gives us the answer in Matthew 7:16:

*Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

Blacky Lawless of heavy metal group W.A.S.P.



Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#).

In order to determine our response to the rock and pop industry, we must take a look at its fruit.

Here's what heavy metal musician Blacky Lawless has to say about rock and roll:

*Rock 'n' Roll is an aggressive art form, pure hostility and aggression. I believe in that like a religion.<sup>i</sup>*

We don't know whether Blacky Lawless is referring to religion here in the traditional sense. He may just be describing the passion that he feels for his music—a passion that obviously verges on the religious. What matters here is Lawless' statement about the fruits of rock: "pure hostility and aggression."

Rock and roll's fashions, attitudes, and interests are not fruit of the Spirit. They are the fruit of fallen humanity trying to live without God—and that just doesn't work. One example of this fruit is the idolatry found in all rock circles.



W.A.S.P. performing in 2006.

Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#).  
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Thousands of years ago, God set out some laws for His people. These laws, called the Ten Commandments, were to help His children throughout history stay close to Him; to

keep them from stumbling. One of these laws tells us that we must avoid making idols of anything or anyone (see [Exodus 20:1-5](#)). God is the only entity worthy of worship.

Rock music is defined by its icons: those people who are idolized because of their talent or "look." And even rock music itself is an idol when it becomes the sole focus of a person's life. Placing rock and roll, or anything else, above God is an act of spiritual unfaithfulness. The Bible even calls it spiritual adultery (see [Ezekiel 23](#)).

If the only problem with the rock industry was its idolatry, then it would be a whole lot easier to deal with. However, rock's skewed sense of worship is only the beginning.

The fruits that come abundantly from the tree of rock and roll are sexual promiscuity, drug abuse and addiction, love of money, and confused spirituality that causes an infatuation with the occult. This is not the fruit that grows from the True Vine—Jesus Christ.

In 1956 American minister Albert Carter condemned rock and roll as an art form having no Christian ethics and standards:

The effect of rock and roll on young people, is to turn them into devil worshippers; to stimulate self expression through sex; to provoke lawlessness; impair nervous stability and destroy the sanctity of marriage. It is an evil influence on the youth of our country.<sup>i</sup>

Carter's statements started a wave of condemnation of rock and roll across the United States. Radio songs, TV appearances, and just about anything that had anything to do with rock and roll was censored.

Many of the early rock heroes came from strong Christian backgrounds. A large number of them were significantly affected by this sudden burst of moral and spiritual conscience.

## Jerry Lee Lewis

Jerry Lee Lewis, an early rock icon, was forced into temporary retirement. Not only was he condemned for being a rebel, but was also viciously attacked by the press and moralists for marrying his thirteen-year-old cousin. He has always said that rock and roll would send him to hell:

I know the right way, I was raised a good Christian. But I couldn't make it.<sup>ii</sup>

Author Gary Herman explains Lewis' dilemma this way:



Despite his conviction that Jesus Christ is not inclined to do "a whole lotta shakin", Jerry himself (like Elvis, a member of the evangelical Assembly of God), is unable to break himself of the habit.<sup>iii</sup>

## Little Richard

There were many other rockers that also had strange, confused, love-hate relationships with their Christian conscience. Little Richard, for one, became a Gospel student after a vision he received while traveling in an airplane over Australia in 1958. Author Gary Herman sees the experience in this revealing light:



Perhaps becoming a preacher was just like joining another branch of show business, but the lure of rock 'n' roll for this most flamboyant of the early black rockers was too great. He found the perfect excuse—rock 'n' roll was to be the way he could "teach love, because music is the universal language." The Reverend Carter can't have approved, but Little Richard was not the only rocker to try and square the circle.<sup>iv</sup>

If Gary Herman, who is not a Christian, recognizes the contradiction between the spirit of rock and roll and the spirit of Christianity, we had better pay attention. The contradiction is expressed even more clearly in these words expressed by Little Richard in the late 70s, when he was once again seeking the Lord:

My true belief about Rock 'n Roll—and there have been a lot of phrases attributed to me over the years—is this: I believe this kind of music is demonic...

A lot of the beats in music today are taken from voodoo, from the voodoo drums. If you study music in rhythms, like I have, you'll see that is true. I believe that kind of music is driving people from Christ. It is contagious.<sup>v</sup>

## Elvis Presley

Elvis mixed the issue to such a degree that he tried to blend clear occultism with Christianity.

It is well known that Elvis was addicted to a variety of drugs. One of Elvis Presley's bodyguards claimed



that Presley's buttocks were so covered with needle marks that there was practically no room left for another injection.

Combined with the drugs was an interest in the metaphysical. Elvis studied the paranormal and communicated with a psychic in Colorado. He actually believed, according to close friends, that he was a reincarnation of Jesus. He thought he could heal people by touching them, and claimed that he could form clouds with his mind.

Elvis was also into the teachings of [Helena Blavatsky](#), a Russian spiritist who claimed to be guided by superhuman powers. She was the founder and head of the Theosophical Society and the most influential figure of the 19<sup>th</sup> century occult revival. Her teachings form the basis of [New Age philosophy](#).

Little Richard admitted rock music is demonic. Elvis was involved in occultism and drugs. It's starting to become pretty obvious [who's behind rock and roll](#).

i. Gary Herman, *Rock 'n Roll Babylon* (Plexus Publishing): 153.

ii. Ibid.

iii. Ibid.

iv. Ibid.

v. Charles White, *The Life and Times of Little Richard* (De Capo Press, 1994): 197.

## **Defining Rock From the Horse's Mouth: The Rock Industry Condemns Itself**

Most people who listen to rock music do not consider the damage it is causing on their [emotions](#), their [ears](#), and even their [souls](#). However, those in the music industry know exactly what it can do.

Jimi Hendrix, the guitar hero who wrote the hit song entitled "Voodoo Child," reveals the strength of music as a medium for setting atmosphere and indoctrinating minds:

The blues are easy to play but not to feel. The background to our music is a spiritual-blues thing. Blues is a part of America. We're making our music into electric church music—a new kind of Bible, not like in a hotel, but a Bible you carry in your hearts, one that will give you a physical feeling. We try to make our music so loose and hard-hitting so that it hits your soul hard enough to make it open. It's like shock therapy or a can opener. Rock is technically blues-based... We want them to realize that our music is just as spiritual as going to church.<sup>1</sup>

Claude Levi Strauss made this connection between spirituality and music:



Since music is the only language with the contradictory attributes of being at once intelligible and untranslatable, the musical creator is a being comparable to the gods, and music itself the supreme mystery of the science of man.<sup>ii</sup>

Blacky Lawless of W.A.S.P says this about rock and roll:

*Rock 'n' Roll is an aggressive art form, pure hostility and aggression. I believe in that like a religion.*<sup>iii</sup>

Little Richard, one of the early fathers of rock and roll, has this to say about the music:

*My true belief about Rock 'n Roll—and there have been a lot of phrases attributed to me over the years—is this: I believe this kind of music is demonic...*

A lot of the beats in music today are taken from voodoo, from the voodoo drums. If you study music in rhythms, like I have, you'll see that is true. I believe that kind of music is driving people from Christ. It is contagious.<sup>iv</sup>

(Jimi Hendrix.)

The metal magazine *Ultrakill* featured this statement about rock:

*We've got Satan, Beelzebub, Sataniel, the Serpent...and lord of misrule...But what about the musical connection with all of this? Well even before heavy metal the Devil took an interest in rock 'n roll. The very term rock 'n roll started life as a Black American expression for sex. And sinful procreation has been the Devil's province for a long, long time.*<sup>v</sup>

Rocker David Bowie has strong statements about his very own style of music:

*I believe rock 'n roll is dangerous, it could very well bring about a very evil feeling in the west...it's got to go the other way now, and that's where I see it heading, bringing about the dark era...*

*I feel that we are only heralding something even darker than ourselves.*

Rock 'n' roll lets in lower elements and shadows that I don't think are necessary. Rock has always been the Devil's music, you can't convince me that it isn't.<sup>vi</sup>

The manager of the Rolling Stones said this:

*Rock IS sex. You have to hit teenagers in the face with it!*<sup>vii</sup>

MTV, the most widely watched music channel on television made no bones about the fact that they were aiming at changing the way teenagers think. Consider this line from one of their advertisements:

*MTV, aggressively reorganizing your brain.*<sup>viii</sup>

This is why, even in the early years of MTV, they could confidently make this boast:

*At MTV, we don't shoot for the 14yr olds, we own them.*<sup>ix</sup>

MTV's founder, Bob Pitman, clearly understood the emotional power of the music-media combination to capture the minds of the teenagers:

*The strongest appeal you can make is emotionally. If you can get their emotions going, make them forget their logic, you've got them.*

Jimi Hendrix also said this:

*Atmospheres are going to come through music...You can hypnotize people with the music and when you get them at their weakest point, you can preach into the subconscious what you want to say.*

Rolling Stone magazine claimed this in its 20<sup>th</sup>-anniversary edition:

*It's not just an exaggeration to say that rebellion is more than just an occasional theme in rock, it is its very heart and soul.*

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- i. David Henderson, *'Scuse me while I kiss the sky* (Bantam Books, 1978): 9-10.
  - ii. Oliver Sacks, *Awakenings* (London: Pan, 1981): 56-57.
  - iii. Blacky Lawless, in an interview with *Washington Post* (February 8, 1987): F2. .
  - iv. Charles White, *The Life and Times of Little Richard* (De Capo Press, 1994): 197.
  - v. "The truth about the Devil," *Ultrakill* volume 3: back page.

vi. *Rolling Stone* (1972).

vii. *TIME* (April 28, 1967): 53.

viii. MTV advertisement, as shown on Hells Bells video series, pt. 2.

ix. MTV's Rock Around the Clock, *Philadelphia Enquirer* (November 3, 1982).

x. Bob Pitman as quoted by Eric Holmberg on Hells Bells Pt. 2 video series.

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