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Moving Forward With the Times

“As the present now will later be past, the order is rapidly fadin’, and the first one now will later be last, for the times they are a-changin’.” – Bob Dylan

Looking at the world in 1961 versus 1969, one would think it was an alternate universe. Moving from post-WWII traditional, family centered America, to the free love, anti-war and drug experimenting culture of the hippies, America saw a drastic change in culture, values, fashion and music. Music always reflects society’s thought at the time so when I began my research I was very interested in the change in the music from the beginning of the decade to the end of the decade.

Starting at the beginning of the decade I looked into The British Invasion that really started taking hold at the beginning of the decade. Looking specifically at The Beatles, I listened to some of their first songs from their albums in the U.S. in 1964. I listened to “I Want to Hold Your Hand” and “Can’t Buy Me Love.” I also read about other popular bands at the beginning of the decade like The Beach Boys. I listened to “Don’t Worry Baby” and “Surfin’ Safari.” The mood of these songs touched into my youthful ideal even today. They recalled times of relaxed, worry free, teen years.

Continuing through my research I was overwhelmed with the amount of diversity there was in the decade and the movement between genres. Talking to someone who was a young adult in the 60’s, I found that music was a significant channel through which races were brought together. The rise in African American

music and artists such as Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, The Supremes, The Temptations and many more led to white people listening to and appreciating black artists. This was especially significant as the 60's were the time for real movement towards civil rights for African Americans. This movement between races truly shows the influence of music on the times and the cultural movement.

As the decade progressed, the music scene became more serious. As the idealistic youth grew up, they began to see the world as how it was and how it should be. As the Vietnam war raged on, the sentiments of the anti-war streamed through the music scene. The Summer of Love in 1967 and Woodstock in 1969 depict the extreme reaction of the hippies and the counter-cultural movement throughout the country, particularly in the young adults. Woodstock was known as the "Three Days of Peace, Love and Music," and it lived up to its name. Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Joan Baez and many others played at Woodstock. Memorably, Jimi Hendrix played his rendition of the Star-Spangled banner in a spirit of irony that the country was not in a place of justice and freedom. This very clearly shows the contrast in the sentiments of the culture and the drastic change of those sentiments from the end of the 1950's to the end of the 1960's. I felt a real sense of urgency and call for justice and peace in those songs. A desire for liberation around the world and for all races rung very true in the music I listened to and the research I found of the time period.

Reviewing all that I discovered through my research and reflecting on the songs that I listened to, I was left with the resounding theme of movement – the movement between genres, the movement between races, the movement between

sentiments, the movements to end in justice and in general the movement of dancing and freedom that so much of the music inspires and incites upon listening to and being immersed in.

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