

Palacký University Olomouc
Faculty of Arts
Department of English and American Studies

Representations of the Vietnam War in Rock Music

Odraz Války ve Vietnamu v rockové hudbě

Diploma Thesis

Bc. Tereza Babralová

English Philology

Supervisor: Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D.

Olomouc, 2020

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI
Filozofická fakulta
Akademický rok: 2018/2019

Studijní program: Filologie
Forma studia: Prezenční
Obor/kombinace: Anglická filologie (ANGFN)

Podklad pro zadání DIPLOMOVÉ práce studenta

Jméno a příjmení: Bc. Tereza BABRALOVÁ
Osobní číslo: F170473
Adresa: Marie Majerové 1736/2, Ostrava, 70800 Ostrava 8, Česká republika
Téma práce: Odraz Války ve Vietnamu v rockové hudbě
Téma práce anglicky: Representations of the Vietnam War in Rock Music
Vedoucí práce: Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D.
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Zásady pro vypracování:

Diplomová práce se bude zabývat odrazem Války ve Vietnamu v rockové hudbě a analýzou vybraných protiválečných písní. V první části práce popíše historii Války ve Vietnamu, historii a vývoj protiválečných a protestních písní v minulosti a zaměří se i na písně pro-válečné. Následně se práce bude zabývat rozdělením a vývojem protestních rockových písní proti Válce ve Vietnamu a uvede nejznámější autory a textaře protestních písní. Další část práce se pak zaměří na rozbor a analýzu textů vybraných rockových písní daných protiválečných autorů.

Seznam doporučené literatury:

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Podpis studenta:

Datum:

Podpis vedoucího práce:

Datum:

I hereby certify that the present thesis is based on my own research work. I further declare that all reference material contained therein have been duly acknowledged.

Ostrava, 1 May 2020

Tereza Babralová

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor David Livingstone for his valuable advice, his kind guidance, constructive criticism, and the patience he provided, making the creation of the thesis possible.

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1 Introduction

The thesis aims to focus and analyze representations of the Vietnam War in rock music. The opposition to the Vietnam War and the nation's rejection of the USA's decision to interfere in Vietnam is reflected in numerous protest rock songs from the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s.

In the first two parts of the thesis, I provide an overview of the Vietnam War history, the roots of the conflict, its escalation, and the withdrawal of the USA army from Vietnam. In the thesis, the overview of the American nation during the Vietnam War, the pro-war as well as the anti-war movements during the Vietnam War in the USA are also included. I listed the most important factors that contributed to the anti-war movements, its development, the importance of media, and representations of opposition to the Vietnam War in arts together with historical background.

The anti-war movement in the USA during the Vietnam War was closely tied to music. During the duration and escalation of the War, many new protest songs were created as a reaction to the War. Rock protest songs from the 1960s and 1970s were mainly folk and rock songs and they became inseparable from the anti-war era. The rock and folk music that was influenced by the Vietnam War was highly anti-war oriented, it criticized the government and mirrored the overall protest attitude. It accompanied several protest manifestations, marches, and became the main source of resistance to the Vietnam War and the government.

Thus, in the second part of the thesis, I primarily focus on rock music, rock artists, and songs. Several folk, country, and soul songs and musicians are included in the thesis as well, as they are equally important to the Vietnam War era and the creation of anti-war rock songs.

I also think that it is important to mention the history of the protest songs, their origin, and development throughout the years since many rock and folk protest songs were influenced by the earliest protest songs of the American history.

Protest songs in history were usually a reaction to a war conflict, thus there was no exception with the Vietnam War. Also, during the Vietnam War, the USA music industry saw a shift from rock'n'roll and blues and experienced the birth of a new genre – rock. Rock music became in many cases more popular with the young generations, its lyrics dealt with modern issues and it reflected the problems of the protest era. This anti-war attitude, protests songs, and the rise of rock music in the

USA naturally led many rock musicians to focus their work to address the problems of the War, the unfairness, brutality, and absurdity of the War.

In the thesis, I give examples of the most famous rock songs that are influenced by the Vietnam War, I give the historical and musical background of the era of its creation and describe its impact on American society.

2 The Vietnam War

The Vietnam War was a military conflict between North and South Vietnam. The main allies in the War were the Soviet Union and China that supported North Vietnam and the United States of America that supported South Vietnam. The War lasted over twenty years, from the late 1940s to 1975. The roots of the conflict can be traced back to the eighteenth century of the French rule over Indochina and then its later decolonization. In the War, Laos and Cambodia were also involved. The long and cruel US soldiers as well as citizens.¹

2.1 The Roots of the Conflict

One of the main reasons for the Vietnam War was the weakness of the French influence in Indochina during the Second World War. Indochina was a French colony from the nineteenth century, however, after the defeat of France in Europe, Japan invaded Indochina and weakened French power in the area. As a reaction to the invasion of Japan to Vietnam, Vietminh a resistance movement, under the communist leader Ho Chi Minh was formed. Vietminh was a guerrilla group that fought the Japanese and was victorious in 1945. Soon after that, Ho Chi Minh proclaimed Vietnam as an independent state, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. France recognized Vietnam as a free state, however, it wanted Vietnam to limit its self-government and stay under French rule. This decision is considered to be the first important stage of the Vietnam War and marks the later involvement of the USA.² There were several conflicts between the French and Vietminh until the French surrendered and were forced to leave Vietnam after the defeat at the Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Later that same year, there was a conference held in Geneva and the Geneva Accord proclaimed that Vietnam, should be temporarily split into two parts, communist northern part, and capitalist southern part, with the 17th parallel being the border.³

¹ "Vietnam War Timeline," History.com, last modified February 26, 2020, <https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnam-war-timeline>.

² James A. Henretta et al., *America's History, Volume 2 Since 1865* (New York: Worth Publishers, 1993), 930.

³ Joseph R. Conlin, *The American Past: A Brief History* (New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1991), 598.

2.2 The NFL and the Reason for American involvement

It is important to realize that after World War II, especially during the 1950s and 1960s, the United States was thought of as being the strongest nation in the world, because of its victorious status. The Cold War between the Soviet Union and the USA, however, was a threat and with it, the fear of communism was increasing. The need to stop communism from spreading became one of the most important questions of foreign policy in the USA at that time.⁴ During this time of uncertainty and fear of the domino effect of communism, North Vietnam formed another pro-communist guerrilla movement the National Liberation Front (NFL) in 1960. The NFL also called Viet Cong, moved along the Ho Chi Minh's trail through Laos and Cambodia into South Vietnam, where together with pro-Communists in South Vietnam they fought for the unification of the country.⁵

2.3 The Involvement of the USA in the Vietnam War

President Kennedy was hesitant at first to send major military help to South Vietnam, partially because of his failure in the Bay of Pigs. Nevertheless, the threat of the domino effect that would come, if North Vietnam and Viet Cong were to be successful in spreading their communist rule over South Vietnam was still of high importance. Kennedy thus decided to send a considerably small number of American soldiers in 1960, which he called the military advisors. The number more than tripled after two years.⁶ After Kennedy's assassination, Lyndon B. Johnson became the next USA president in 1963. By this time, there were around sixteen thousand American military advisors and Johnson was, similarly to Kennedy, torn between intervention in Vietnam or being labeled as the one "who lost Vietnam".⁷

2.4 The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution

The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was a document passed on 7 August 1964. It was a reaction to the two incidents that happened on 2 and 4 August 1964. Both incidents happened near the North Vietnamese coastline in the Gulf of Tonkin. The

⁴ Jaroslav Peprník, *Británie a USA: ilustrované reálie*, (Olomouc: Nakladatelství Olomouc, 2004), 223.

⁵ Conlin, *The American Past*, 599.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 599.

⁷ George B. Tindall and David E. Shi, *Dějiny Spojených států amerických* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny, 2010), 705.

American navy destroyer The Maddox was attacked by the North Vietnamese patrol boat on 2 August. Two days later, the American destroyer the Turner Joy, was supposedly attacked again causing the Americans to strike back. These incidents led Lyndon B. Johnson to issue a document that allowed him to take any needed precautions in the upcoming war.⁸ Lyndon's arguments to the congress were as is quoted in Joseph R. Conlin as follows: "to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent future aggression".⁹ The document's vague formulation enabled the USA to go to the Vietnam War and send thousands of American soldiers into combat. Lyndon signed this document with the majority of congressmen on his side on 10 August 1964. It was also this document, that shocked people, who up to that day thought that Johnson disapproved of the War in Indochina.¹⁰

2.5 The Escalation and Americanization of the War

The so-called Escalation is the era after the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, resulting in many attacks and combats as well as casualties and losses. There were around five hundred thousand American soldiers sent to Vietnam, fighting Viet Cong either on foot in the jungles or bombing and spraying the areas from planes between the years 1965 and 1968. The American presence in the War was increasing rapidly, which caused also a bigger presence of the Soviet Union and China, the supporters of North Vietnam.¹¹ The Americanization of the Vietnam War was a name for a strategy of the USA foreign policy to never let communism spread too far. The idea was a simple one, to never let South Vietnam lose the War, thus never let North Vietnam and its communist vision spread to South Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, and other Indochina countries. The idea of Americanization served as a pretext for the USA to fight the Soviet Union at the time of the Cold War in the territory of Vietnam.¹²

2.6 The Tet Offensive

The Tet offensive was a sudden surprise attack by North Vietnam together with Viet Cong on the southern Vietnamese and American troops on the first day of

⁸ Lucie Hlavatá et al., *Dějiny Vietnamu* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny, 2018), 301–02.

⁹ Lyndon B. Johnson quoted in Conlin, *The American Past*, 601.

¹⁰ Hlavatá, *Dějiny Vietnamu*, 301-02.

¹¹ Conlin, *The American Past*, 601-02.

¹² Tindall, *Dějiny Spojených států amerických*, 706.

Vietnamese New Year on 30 January 1968. It marks one of the most important turns of the Vietnam War. The Viet Cong occupied the American embassy in Saigon and attacked more than thirty cities in South Vietnam. The American troops soon after that attacked the North Vietnamese, who suffered many casualties, however, these events did not win the War, nor did they lead the Americans out of the War victorious. The number of deaths increased every day, newspapers printed articles and photographs of the horrors in Vietnam, the public started to make mass demonstrations and Johnson's popularity dropped tremendously.¹³

2.7 The Withdrawal of American troops and the End of the War

Richard Nixon was elected President in 1969. Because of the immense unpopularity of the War among American citizens, Nixon proposed a Nixon Doctrine, the so-called Vietnamization. It was a gradual withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam and the effort to leave military decisions to South Vietnam at the same time. Conlin writes that the USA should: "participate in the defense and development of allies and friends" but should not: "undertake all the defense of the free nations of the world".¹⁴ Nixon's Vietnamization was the very opposite of Lyndon B. Johnson's strategy of Americanization, and it took about the same time to withdraw the American soldiers from Vietnam, as it was to send them there. The number of American soldiers reduced from 330 thousand to 24 thousand, however, the fighting did not stop. Vietnamization was a failure. Nixon intended to negotiate with North Vietnam based on the Nixon Doctrine, but in vain.¹⁵ The USA together with South Vietnam was still trying to fight North Vietnam, but unsuccessfully from 1970 to 1972. The peace between the USA and North Vietnam was not established until 1973 when both sides agreed on a peace treaty. Nevertheless, fighting in Vietnam continued, without the USA's interference, until 1975.¹⁶ After the USA's withdrawal, South Vietnam was defeated, Saigon was renamed Ho Chi Minh City, and together with North Vietnam, the country was unified as one country. After the War, the country was left devastated and with over 2 million Vietnamese dead.

¹³ Conlin, *The American Past*, 602.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 615.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 615.

¹⁶ "Vietnam War Timeline."

3 American society during the Vietnam War

In response to the events mentioned in the previous chapter, American society had naturally some, and in most cases strong, opinions on the War during the Vietnam War and especially towards the end of the conflict. Because of the failure to win, because of thousands of men who were sent to Vietnam in vain and because of the unfairness of the War that many people felt, the majority of the American society was criticizing the government's decisions throughout the years of the War, rather than supporting them. Various movements and anti-war groups, but in some cases pro-war groups as well, were formed throughout the USA in different countries and cities, including various social classes, ages, from various backgrounds.

For this chapter, I primarily rely on three main sources, Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* (2015), Mattew Israel's *Kill for Peace* (2013) and Mitchell K. Hall's "The Vietnam Era Antiwar Movement" (2004).

3.1 Pro-war Movement

During the Vietnam War, some groups of defenders of the War were formed in the USA. Though not as many as the anti-war protest groups, still the supporters of War existed. The nation was naturally split into two camps with two different views of the American involvement in Vietnam. To quote John A. Garraty and Robert A. McCaughey:

Defenders of the president's policy, who were called hawks, emphasized the nation's moral responsibility to resist aggression and what president Eisenhower had called the 'domino' theory.¹⁷

This would indicate that many people feared that communism would spread, after gaining control in Vietnam, then spreading to neighboring countries. The fear of communism felt by the supporters of the War, the hawks, was the main reason to defend the government's decision. Another argument for supporting the War was that the government wanted to maintain its trustworthiness concerning their decisions about the War. To quote John Lewis Gaddis, the USA wanted to preserve "the credibility of Washington's commitment to containing communism throughout the

¹⁷ John A. Garraty and Robert A. McCaughey, *The American Nation: A History of the United States Since 1865* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987), 899.

world”.¹⁸ In support of the Vietnam War, the hawks organized even several pro-war rallies, one of them being held in Washington on 8 April 1970.

The supporters alone were not the only ones attending these rallies, as Mark Murrmann wrote in his article: “neo-Nazis and other extreme right-wingers also showed up, as did pro-peace counterprotesters”.¹⁹ This would indicate that these rallies were often violent and very radical. The pro-war supporters came with various signs such as “Let’s demand victory in Vietnam” and “Why lose when you can win”.²⁰

Although the pro-war groups and small movements existed, they were never in such number as the anti-war movements. They were never in the spotlight of the media and they were not the main representatives of the Vietnam War era in the USA.

3.2 Anti-war Movement

The anti-Vietnam War movement during the 1960s and the 1970s was one of the largest opposition movements against any war in American history. As I mentioned before, the War in Vietnam had supporters, however, those who were in favor of the War were greatly outnumbered by those who protested against it. The nature of the organizations that demonstrated against the War was also a significant one, as Mitchell K. Hall describes in his article:

The movement’s diverse composition was an extraordinary achievement as it united people of numerous occupations, ideologies, ages, and backgrounds into a sometimes uneasy and fragile coalition.²¹

In other words, movements against the War in Vietnam were of unlikely composition because of different social classes as well as ages and gender, that were all unified to fight against the USA’s involvement in the War.

In the War, American society saw a great injustice against the Vietnam nation as well as responsibility for what is happening. Howard Zinn describes this consciousness of Americans as follows:

¹⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, “Were the Hawks Right About the Vietnam War?” *The Atlantic Monthly*, April, 2000, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2000/04/were-the-hawks-right-about-the-vietnam-war/378155/>.

¹⁹ Mark Murrmann, “‘Why Lose When You Can Win?’ Scenes from a pro-Vietnam War Rally 45 Years Ago.” *Mother Jones*, April 8, 2015, <https://www.motherjones.com/media/2015/04/vietnam-pro-war-rally-washington/>.

²⁰ Murrmann, “‘Why Lose When You Can Win?’ Scenes from a pro-Vietnam War Rally 45 Years Ago”.

²¹ Mitchell K. Hall, “The Vietnam Era Antiwar Movement”. *OAH Magazine of History*, no.5 (October 2004): 16.

There may be a limit beyond which many Americans and much of the world will not permit the United States to go. The picture of the world's greatest superpower killing or seriously injuring 1000 non-combatants a week, while trying to pound a tiny backward nation into submission, on an issue whose merits are hotly disputed, is not a pretty one.²²

In other words, the USA nation did not agree with the government's decision, because people felt it was unjust to interfere in the country smaller and weaker than the USA and felt responsible for the killings of so many innocent people.

There were many reasons why this movement was on such a great scale and one of the reasons was the period alone in which the Vietnam War was happening. The nature of American society was changing significantly during the 1960s.

Several social and political initiatives were created, such as the Civil Rights Movement, the movement for gay rights, the counterculture of hippies and the Women's liberation movement in the 1960s. All of them had a significant matter in the anti-war movement and a society's perception as well. The anti-war movement, as suggested by Mathew W. Israel: "did not function independently from the rest of the 1960s socio-political engagement but was consistently involved in and intertwined with other political and social movements".²³ To put it differently, the reason for the anti-war movement being so widespread, was its correlation with other major socio-political changes in the USA at that time.

3.2.1 Development of the Anti-war Movement

One of the reasons the anti-Vietnam War movement even began was the Civil Rights Movement with Martin Luther King Jr. as its key figure. African American society felt discouraged to go to the War and fight for the USA when at the same time experiencing injustice in freedom in everyday life. To quote Zinn: "The experience of black people with the government led them to distrust any claim that it was fighting for freedom".²⁴ This would indicate that many African American people felt dissatisfied and were engaged in the Civil Rights Movement and refused to fight for the country that could not meet their demands concerning the Civil Rights Movement. An organization SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was formed,

²² Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2015), PDF e-book, 370.

²³ Matthew Israel, *Kill for Peace: American artists against the Vietnam War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 20.

²⁴ Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 358.

to help young African Americans to participate in The Civil Rights Movement.²⁵ Soon, SNCC started to protest against the USA's involvement in Vietnam as well and demanded a departure of men from Vietnam.²⁶ Martin Luther King Jr., the most known and recognized civil rights activist addressed the inequality and injustice of the War several times and contributed to the anti-war arguments.²⁷ One of the important events that also contributed to the anti-war activism was Muhammad Ali's, the nation's most famous boxer, refusal to be drafted into the War.²⁸ These events that were highly covered by media encouraged thousands of men across the USA to refuse or even burn their draft cards. Hall writes: "Thousand resisted the drafts through both legal and illegal methods".²⁹ The so-called draft cards turn-in were organized with the famous slogan "We Won't Go" that spread across the country and were seen as one of the most important anti-war activities by the year 1964.³⁰ The model used for the turn-ins was the sit-ins gatherings concerning the Civil Rights Movement.³¹

3.2.2 Students, Schools, and Teach-ins

The draft to the Vietnam War affected mainly young men in the USA and students were no exception. Students tried to avoid the drafts, they did not support the War and were heavily involved in anti-war activism. The turn-ins became one of the most significant protests together with teach-ins. The first-ever teach-in was organized at Ann Arbor at the University of Michigan by college professors to educate students in the matters of the War. These teach-ins were modeled once again after the Civil Rights' sit-ins. The goal was to introduce an awareness of the Vietnam War and the USA involvement in the War.³² The teach-ins were a type of protest that quickly spread across the country to several colleges and universities.³³ It became a model of its own,

²⁵ "SNCC," History.com, November 12, 2009, https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/sncc#section_1.

²⁶ Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 359.

²⁷ Hall, *The Vietnam Era Antiwar Movement*, 14.

²⁸ Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 359.

²⁹ Hall, *The Vietnam Era Antiwar Movement*, 15.

³⁰ Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 359.

³¹ Robert McNamara, "An Overview of the Vietnam War Protests," ThoughtCo., last modified July 28, 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/vietnam-war-protests-4163780>.

³² ThoughtCo, "An Overview of the Vietnam War Protests."

³³ "First anti-war teach-in conducted," History.com, last modified March 23, 2020, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/first-teach-in-conducted>.

and with the War expanding, so were the protests at universities, changing from at first local demonstrations to mass marches all over the country.³⁴

3.2.3 Role of the media

Vietnam War was a highly televised conflict with a great deal of footage either directly from Vietnam or the anti-war protests and marches. Pictures and articles in various newspapers and magazines reached every household in America. Israel suggests that: “Television was crucial to the domestic understanding of the Vietnam War”.³⁵ In other words, this kind of publicity was also one of the reasons the anti-war opposition reached such importance and such a high number of people involved.

One of the best examples of the influence of media on the USA nation during the War was the picture of the Buddhist monk in Saigon. Monk Thich Quang Duc committed suicide by setting himself on fire on 11 June 1963, expressing his protest to the War. The photograph was seen in every newspaper the very next day and reached every household in the USA. This picture shocked the American nation and another wave of protests and demonstrations appeared on an even bigger scale.³⁶

As I mentioned before, students and their protestations played an important role in the whole anti-Vietnam War movement, and so these protesters had most of the publicity in the TV and press. It is important to say, however, that the students were not the only ones protesting as Zinn explains: “The publicity given to the student protests created the impression that the opposition to the War came mostly from the middle-class intellectuals”.³⁷ This would indicate that the strong refusal and opposition to the USA intervention in Vietnam could be seen in the working class as well, but the media did not cover it on such a scale. More than half of the nation, to be exact 61 percent of Americans, was against the USA involvement in the Vietnam War by the year 1971.³⁸

3.2.4 Marches

Many Americans who opposed the Vietnam War and the government’s decisions were attending several different marches. The anti-war marches in America

³⁴ Hall, *The Vietnam Era Antiwar Movement*, 13.

³⁵ Israel, *Kill for Peace*, 19.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 15-6.

³⁷ Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States*, 364.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 364.

during the 1960s and 1970s were gatherings scattered around the USA. All groups of people, teachers, students, war veterans, women, and even children attended those demonstrations all in hope of getting their message of disagreement to the government's and media's attention. Those gatherings were usually accompanied by various and omnipresent slogans, such as "Hey, Hey L.B.J, how many kids did you kill today?" or "One side's right, one side's wrong, victory to the Viet Cong".³⁹ An inseparable part of marches and rallies was also music. Anti-war songs were sung either by the massive crowds or by the songwriters themselves. Most of these songs were anti-war oriented and criticized the government and expressed the nation's disagreement with the War.

As one of the first mass demonstrations is considered the one that started at the University of Michigan on 24 March 1965. Several teach-ins with thousands of people took place and went on for two days and gained national interest in media.⁴⁰ The same year, protests held in Washington and New York in Madison Square Garden took place.⁴¹ After that, many more mass protests and numerous marches occurred. During March of 1966, thousands of people all around the United States attended marches in several cities, including New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington.⁴²

On 21 October 1967, anti-war rally estimated at 35,500 to 50,000 people gathered in Washington in one of the largest demonstrations up to that day, demanding the end of the Vietnam War. The rally called the March on the Pentagon was organized by two anti-war groups joined together and named the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam.⁴³ The crowd marched from Washington D.C. to the Pentagon, where many of the demonstrators stayed up to the next day. Some of the attenders tried to break into the Pentagon itself, however, they were stopped by the military police immediately. Around seven hundred protesters were arrested, by the next day, including the award-winning novelist Norman Mailer for disobedience and

³⁹ Bill Zimmerman, "The Four Stages of the Antiwar Movement," *The New York Times*, October 12, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/24/opinion/vietnam-antiwar-movement.html>.

⁴⁰ Hall, *The Vietnam Era Antiwar Movement*, 14.

⁴¹ ThoughtCo, "An Overview of the Vietnam War Protests."

⁴² David Smith, "How this 1967 Vietnam war protest carried the seeds of American division," *The Guardian*, October 21, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/oct/21/1967-vietnam-war-protest-american-division>.

⁴³ David Greenberg, "The March on the Pentagon: An Oral History," *The New York Times*, October 20, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/10/20/opinion/sunday/march-on-the-pentagon-oral-history.html>.

breaking-in.⁴⁴ The march, nevertheless, became a symbol of peaceful opposition and nation-wide consciousness of the anti-war movement.

A defining moment for the American nation was the effort of peaceful negotiations between protesters and MPs, accompanied by flowers, as David Smith writes in his article:

Marching on the Pentagon, control center of the world's most powerful fighting force, pointed directly at their heads. Among the demonstrators was a long-haired man with a bulky sweater – and a bunch of flowers. A moment of flower power and a turning point in the anti-war movement protesters against the Vietnam War were confronted by military police (MPs) with rifles.⁴⁵

Several different mass demonstrations around the country continued up to the 1970s, but the March on the Pentagon was perhaps one of the most important ones in American history up to that date.

3.2.5 Disapproval of the Vietnam War in the Arts

Many writers, painters and of course musicians were involved in the anti-war movements, expressing their protest through the form of art. Musicians, and especially songwriters played perhaps the most important role in the anti-war movement, and these will be discussed more thoroughly in the following chapters.

One way of non-violent protests became anti-war propaganda, especially poetry and literature. The poetry reading was the most widely spread type of anti-war propaganda in colleges and universities during teach-ins and likewise during peace marches.⁴⁶

Anti-war poetry and literature became influenced by the Vietnam War as well as becoming the propaganda against it. Norman Mailer's *The Armies of the Night* (1968) was among many a novel influenced by the anti-war movement, especially by the March on the Pentagon. The author was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1969. He was drawing inspiration from his own experience as he was one of the participants in the March on the Pentagon in 1967.⁴⁷ In the novel, he portrays the picture of American

⁴⁴ Katie Mettler, "The day anti-Vietnam War protesters tried to levitate the Pentagon," *The Washington Post*, October 19, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/10/19/the-day-anti-vietnam-war-protesters-tried-to-levitate-the-pentagon/>.

⁴⁵ Smith, "How this 1967 Vietnam war protest carried the seeds of American division."

⁴⁶ Louis Simpson, *Studies of Dylan Thomas, Allen Ginsberg, Sylvia Plath & Robert Lowell* (London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1978), 158.

⁴⁷ ThoughtCo, "An Overview of the Vietnam War Protests."

society and the generation, that was divided in terms of class but connected in protests for the same shared emotional matter.⁴⁸

The poet Robert Lowell and the playwright Arthur Miller were also active participants in the opposition to the White House. Both refused an invitation to the White House, and this gesture drew immense attention from the media.⁴⁹ Perhaps the most known writer of the time, concerning anti-Vietnam literature was Allen Ginsberg. His poetry was widely read and interpreted among protesters, especially at universities and college campuses.⁵⁰

In addition, sculptures, paintings, and whole galleries were dedicated to the resistance to the USA's involvement in the War. As I mentioned earlier, the War in Vietnam and America's involvement in it was a highly publicized and televised conflict. The media played an important role in sharing the awareness about the War and government's decision, which resulted in either unintentionally or deliberately sharing anti-war propaganda. Magazines and periodicals became the main source of the artists' opposition and were accessible to everyone. The most popular magazines were *The Nation*, *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly* or *The New York Review of Books*.⁵¹

3.2.6 The Counterculture in the 1960s and 1970s

Along with the numerous socio-political movements in the 1960s, a new wave of lifestyle emerged – the counterculture. The Vietnam War was unpopular among many people, but so were the traditional ideals of the American lifestyle. Young and mostly white people who rejected the mainstream and conventional way of education, the pursuit of well-paid jobs and materialism, were called the hippies. Their ideals were not the pursuit of money, but a naïve pursuit of love and peace and a world without violence.⁵²

The counterculture was inseparable from the anti-war movement. Hippies gathered in communes, marches, and rallies and became a symbol of love and peace

⁴⁸ Adam Gopnik, "The Strange Prophecies in Norman Mailer's 'The Armies of the Night'," *The New Yorker*, July 11, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/books/second-read/the-strange-prophecies-in-norman-mailers-the-armies-of-the-night>.

⁴⁹ Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 360.

⁵⁰ Simpson, *Studies of Dylan Thomas, Allen Ginsberg, Sylvia Plath and Robert Lowell*, 78-9.

⁵¹ Israel, *Kill for Peace*, 20.

⁵² Lubomír Dorůžka, *Panoráma populární hudby 1918/1978 aneb Nevšední písničkáři všedních dní* (Praha: Mladá Fronta, 1981), 32.

in the 1960s. The reasons the counterculture came into existence varied from the reasons of the general anti-war movement, for example, students or members of the Civil Rights Movement. The counterculture felt strongly against the aggression and unfairness of the War and the whole meaning of the conflict, nevertheless, the counterculture as a whole started mainly as a refusal of the mainstream and establishment as is explained by Sarah Pruitt: “Hippies saw mainstream authority as the origin of all the society’s ills which included the War”.⁵³

Inseparable from Hippies was music, especially rock music. Rock groups were rising from the counterculture at a rapid speed and boosted the young generation towards the rejection of conventions and traditions even more. Rock music of this era was a part of their everyday life.⁵⁴ Singers and songwriters accompanied marches and rallies, their lyrics were sung across the generation and many festivals of love, music, drugs, and peace were organized.

The counterculture of the 1960s with their newly adopted lifestyle, a new way of thinking, expressing and dressing became a symbol of the anti-war era. Hippies as such did not function, however, solely as a protest movement, but rather as an anti-establishment lifestyle.

4 Anti-war Songs in the Past

Protests songs in the past were always a reaction to some events, unjust realities and public unease of a certain time. They helped to boost morale during difficult times and draw attention to injustice. In the past, people spread songs, melodies or simple lyrics orally in many cases before they were popularized. Moreover, many of them, that existed but were never published, were lost.

New lyrics were added to already existing tunes in the beginning, mostly church melodies, and later distributed via broadsides. Many of the earlier songs were also poems or well-known texts, to which a melody was added, but many of them cannot be traced back to one single author, place or date. Later protest songs became recognized as a single genre and the lyrics were in most cases written by the singers themselves. Protest songs became highly popular at times of unease and several new

⁵³ Sarah Pruitt, “How the Vietnam War Empowered the Hippie Movement,” History.com, September 14, 2018, <https://www.history.com/news/vietnam-war-hippies-counter-culture>.

⁵⁴ Dorůžka, *Panoráma populární hudby 1918/1978*, 32.

songs were written as a reaction to new social issues in the USA. A considerable part of protest songs became a foundation stone to many folk and rock music today and they can be connected to social changes and social problems of today as well.

I primarily rely on two of the main sources for this chapter, Hardeep Phull's book *Story behind the Protest Song* (2008) and Dorian Lynskey's book *33 Revolutions per Minute* (2010).

4.1 The Earliest Protest Songs

The most common reason for new protest songs was some kind of injustice or dissatisfaction that people felt. In the United States, the oppression by the British and later the Civil War was among the first themes that occurred in the early protest songs. It is also important to mention that the majority of war songs sung during these two conflicts were not protesting against wars, as it was later in the USA during the Vietnam War, but they were the anthems supporting and glorifying soldiers in the wars. Robert D. Cohen explains that in the past, only a minority of songs sung during the War of Independence were indeed protesting against the war but it was rather a criticism of the realities, social issues and poor conditions of people in the course of the war, not the war itself.⁵⁵ This argument is supported in an article by Frankie Hill, who explains: "Songs were written by well-educated individuals whereas common folk, the ones most affected by war and thus the ones most likely to argue for peace didn't have a public voice".⁵⁶ In other words, the earlier protest songs were in a way censored and did not support the voice of those, who suffered because of the war, but rather glorifying it in a "propaganda-like style".⁵⁷

During Civil War, a similar approach to protest songs was taken as Cohen explains: "Civil War songs were vital in encouraging the soldiers, white and black (the latter basically on the northern side), to continue fighting".⁵⁸ In other words, the songs were not necessarily peace songs to end the War, but they helped to boost the morale of soldiers and their families. Hill describes two types of anti-war songs of the Civil War era. The first type were war songs that carried patriotic messages like the song

⁵⁵ Ronald D. Cohen, *Singing for Peace: Antiwar Songs in American History*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), PDF e-book, 13.

⁵⁶ Frankie Hill, "Songs of War: The Evolution of Protest Music in the United States," *Harvard Political Review*, March 14, 2016, <https://harvardpolitics.com/covers/songs-of-war-the-evolution-of-protest-music-in-the-united-states/>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Cohen, *Singing for Peace*, 22.

“Battle Hymn of the Republic”. Those songs were created by composers, not soldiers or people affected by the war. Hill explains: “Despite their popularity, these tunes offered little comfort to those rocked by the horrors of war around them. The average soldier instead tended to embrace ballads about going home”.⁵⁹ The second type were songs usually about home, families, and expectations of the War’s end, and those were usually sung by soldiers. Among these were, for example, the song “When Johnny Comes Marching Home” or songs with an optimistic message, for example, the song “Better Times Are Coming”.

In the United States, wars in the past were indeed a great motivation for protest songs to be created and spread, however, the military conflicts were not the only inspiration behind the protest songs in the United States. In reality, an important initiative for new protest songs to emerge was slavery and abolition. During the 1840s a singer family – The Hutchinson Family from New Hampshire became highly popular. This singing group borrowed most of their melodies from church songs and lyrics from poems. The Hutchinson family became one of the first singing group of protest songs in the USA in the past. Most of their songs dealt with emancipation, abolition, and liberation but also women’s suffrage and prohibition of alcohol. The most successful songs and songs the family singing group was best known for was the anti-slavery hit “Get Off the Track”. This family managed to bring these songs that dealt with social problems to a broader audience on their tours around the USA.⁶⁰

The unfairness, lack of freedom and overall dissatisfaction with slavery nonetheless came directly from slaves themselves. Since protest songs are a way of expressing social issues and social dissatisfaction, songs by African Americans in the past can be considered as being protest songs as well.

Singing was deeply rooted in African American culture. It was a means of communication either between people themselves but also as a means of conveying their emotions and a state of mind. The most famous protest songs among many were “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child” or “Oh Freedom”. Kenyatta D. Berry explains: “Music was a way for slaves to express their feelings whether it was sorrow, joy, inspiration or hope. Songs were passed down from generation to generation

⁵⁹ Frankie Hill, “Songs of War: The Evolution of Protest Music in the United States.”

⁶⁰ Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute: A History of Protest Songs, from Billie Holiday to Green Day*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), PDF e-book, 506.

throughout slavery”.⁶¹ In other words, these songs were meant to help boost morale in difficult times, however, they were not meant directly as a protest song functioning to end slavery as it was. What Berry further suggests is that these songs were at first influenced by the African culture and religion and next they combined with the dissatisfaction. At last, this combination merged with the American culture and the Christian religion. The result is what is nowadays considered to be known as Negro Spirituals. Expressing Christianity and faith but also the hardships of slavery in the past. Lastly, these songs lasted and were preserved till after the abolition and emancipation, to quote Berry: “Singing at contraband camps helped former slaves navigate the gray area between slavery and freedom”.⁶² This would indicate that these songs, similar to other protest songs, persisted even after the times of anxiety and social unease and could be used and interpreted for more contemporary problems either in the past or today. A collection of protest songs by African American people was put together and publicized by Lawrence Gellert In 1936, named *Negro Songs of Protest*, including over two hundred protest songs.

4.2 Twentieth-century Protest Songs

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Labor movement, the Great Depression, the First World War, the Second World War, and the earliest segregation movements occupied most of the social thinking. These events and social issues influenced many musicians and folk singers and a great number of protest songs arose from this era.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the protests songs that were created were mainly focused on the working-class struggles. Labor movement and working conditions were the biggest sources of inspiration for protest songs from this period. People felt dissatisfied with several issues concerning working conditions, working hours, wages or the overall injustice that people felt. A labor movement called the Industrial Workers of the World, known as the Wobblies was founded to improve working conditions and to voice people’s dissatisfaction. According to Hardeep Phull, Wobblies were not the only group that focused on improving working conditions, but they were the most radical. He explains:

⁶¹ Kenyatta D. Berry, “Singing in Slavery: Songs of Survival, Songs of Freedom,” Mercy Street, January 25, 2017, <http://www.pbs.org/mercy-street/blogs/mercy-street-revealed/songs-of-survival-and-songs-of-freedom-during-slavery/>.

⁶² Ibid.

They encouraged workers to unite as an entire class and move toward actually overthrowing their employers rather than simply demanding a fair day's wage, and songs were a crucial part of the group's weaponry.⁶³

In other words, protest songs played an important role in this rather radical movement. The most famous voice of the Wobblies was Joe Hill. His protest song "The Preacher and the Slave" calls for working people to lift their voices and ask for fairness and freedom. Dorian Lynskey describes Joe Hill as follows: "a vigorous but crude, not one for the ages".⁶⁴ Furthermore, Lynskey defines Hill as: "Joe Hill the myth: the biggest, boldest voice of working-class protest in the land martyred by the system he opposed".⁶⁵ Joe Hill became the forerunner of the most important voices that would come, such as Woody Guthrie or Bob Dylan.

The First World War, though not fought directly in the USA, affected many people in the time of its duration. Moreover, people were dissatisfied with the USA's decision to interfere in the War and for what cost. And since the military conflicts are one of the most influential events and impulses to a social movement and popularization of protest songs, the First World War was no exception. Several protest songs were created on the impulse of the First World War, mainly dealing with the fear of future prospects and the loss of relatives sent to the War. The most influential and well-known anti-war protest song from this period was the protest song "I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier" by Alfred Bryan. According to John Meachan and Tim McGraw: "the song was an embodiment of the strain of sentiment the First World War brought".⁶⁶ In other words, the First World War peace songs were filled with fear, loss, and horrors the War started.

After the First World War, another wave of social challenges and unrest came in the years of the Great Depression. During this great economic depression in America in the 1930s, topics of labor struggle with unfair working conditions and poverty of the first decade of the twentieth century persisted in the lyrics of many protest songs recorded at this time.

⁶³ Hardeep Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song: A Reference Guide to the 50 Songs That Changed the 20th Century*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008), 5.

⁶⁴ Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute*, 28.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁶⁶ John Meachan and Tim McGraw, *Songs of America: Patriotism Protest and the Music That Made a Nation* (New York: Random House, 2019) 157.

In the following passages, I would like to include three most influential protest songs of this era and their authors: “Strange Fruit” by Billie Holiday, “If I Had a Hammer” by Pete Seeger and “This Land is Your Land” by Woody Guthrie.

Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie were perhaps the most important singers of that particular era, and in some respect, they were also politicians.⁶⁷ They managed to address the social problems of their time while remaining popular singers. Both of them laid foundations for what will follow. Phull summarizes these two singers as follows: “Both folksingers took a special interest in playing for the recreational and political benefit of the country’s most disenfranchised, but both saw it as an act of simple patriotism rather than as being an attempt to incite a class struggle”.⁶⁸ To put it differently, both singers made an impact on ordinary people, singing about the most burdensome issues, but never intended to provoke or stir up the nation. Despite being both great singers of the same era and being often discussed simultaneously, each could be seen as focusing on slightly different political issues. To quote Phull:

This state of affairs left the pair under heightened political suspicion, but Seeger could still be heard pledging allegiance to his fellow man on ‘If I Had a Hammer’ (1949), while Guthrie stood resolutely by his notion that America had a duty to serve Americans and not just the other way around through ‘This Land Is Your Land’ (1951).⁶⁹

Both Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger represented the period in their protest songs, but each took a slightly different approach to the political tension.

4.2.1 Pete Seeger “If I Had a Hammer”

Years of the 1940s and 1950s in the USA became one of the most fertile years for new protest songs to be created. Furthermore, this era saw an immense increase in popularity in protest songs and folk music and its way to the popular culture. It was partly caused by the distribution of recorded songs with the new technology and partly because of the significant popularity protest singers gained.

One of the most popular and well-known protest singers of this era was Pete Seeger. A left-wing folk singer who, during the World War Two, engaged in writing and producing protest and peace songs. He was a member of the Almanac Singers of

⁶⁷ Noah Berlatsky, “Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie: More Politicians Than Musicians,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 24, 2012, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/09/pete-seeger-and-woody-guthrie-more-politicians-than-musicians/262758/>.

⁶⁸ Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song*, 7.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

which Woody Guthrie was a member as well. His most known and influential song is “If I Had a Hammer”. It was a controversial song at first, because of pro-communist sympathies, but later it became associated with great American patriotism as well as pro-union tendencies. Pete Seeger played an important role and is responsible for great influence on protest songwriters in years to come.

Pete Seeger is arguably known for numerous other songs apart from “I Had a Hammer” but no other song could match the impact this song made. A version of “We Shall Overcome” by Pete Seeger was certainly an important and successful piece and certainly very influential during his time. This song, however, is not originally written by Seeger, and he was not the only one singing this important song. “We Shall Overcome” can be seen as a universal protest song that can be applied to almost every occasion of social struggle, and thus this song was popular in many periods. Perhaps the most important impact this song made was during the Vietnam War, and that is partly because of the song’s most famous interpreter – Joan Baez. I decided to list “We Shall Overcome” in the following chapters, where I would discuss this song’s impact in more detail.

4.2.2 Woody Guthrie “This Land is Your Land”

Woody Guthrie was yet another folk singer, who saw an opportunity to point out ills of the USA, that were troubling the American society in his years, through protest songs. Woody Guthrie was influenced by the previously mentioned Great Depression. He saw a great injustice with working-class people, who still believed in the old American patriotism. His song “This Land is Your Land” questions the American nature and politics of his time. He became a nationally known and popular singer. Steinbeck is quoted in Dorian Lynskey’s book describing Woody Guthrie as follows: “He sings the songs of people and I suspect that he is, in a way, that people,”.⁷⁰ He adds that Guthrie’s songs are not pleasant to listen but adds that: “there is something more important for those who will listen. There is the will of people to endure and fight against oppression”.⁷¹ Woody Guthrie managed to lay foundations to protest songs that will follow in the next two decades. The songs about patriotism but also a harsh criticism and mockery of those in power.⁷² He inspired most of the 1950s and

⁷⁰ Steinbeck quoted in Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute*, 24.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁷² Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute*, 24.

1960s singers and his work can be attributed to sparking a Civil Rights Movement and peace movement songs in the following years.⁷³

4.2.3 Billie Holiday “Strange Fruit”

The most important shift in the perception of protest songs in the history of the USA according to Hardeep Phull came with the famous song “Strange Fruit”. Prior to this song, there were many protest songs and musical expressions about slavery, racism and overall African American unhappiness in the USA as I mentioned earlier, however, never was one song associated with the shift from being just a protest song in one community with one purpose to a nationally known musical piece understood as an art.⁷⁴

The song was initially written as a poem by Abel Meeropol under his pseudonym Lewis Allan and later sung and recorded by blues singer Billie Holiday in 1939. “Strange Fruit” depicts pictures of lynching in the south of the USA, showing great injustice and horrors.⁷⁵

What is the most crucial with this song, is that “Strange Fruit” started the shift of perception of protest songs, from solely a means of expressing discontent or propaganda to being an art and entertainment. As Lynskey describes: “Strange Fruit” was not by any means the first protest song, but it was the first to shoulder an explicit political message into the arena of entertainment”.⁷⁶ To put it differently, this song became a part of the mainstream music, due to its controversial nature and lyrics, and turned into being immensely popular and well-known. Dorian further explains that in the past, protest songs could be seen as propaganda-like style songs, intended for various audiences with specific functions, until the release of “Strange Fruit”.⁷⁷

“Strange Fruit” also played an important role in the earliest stages of the Civil Rights Movement. This song would, as Phull writes: “eventually grow into something that would create another epoch of American social Evolution”.⁷⁸ It alerted a nation of injustices made towards the African American community and helped to shape what we know of as the biggest social movement in American history.

⁷³ Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song*, 25.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷⁵ Meachan, *Songs of America*, 178.

⁷⁶ Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute*, 14.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁸ Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song*, 16.

This protest song proved to be very powerful, at least what a social perception of it concerns, however, a question of whether a protest song can change minds and politics arose. That is, in my point of view, one of the fundamental functions later songs had. This song became a milestone between the old perception of protest songs and the new – the belief that a piece of music can change minds and history.

4.3 Country, Folk and Blues Anti-Vietnam Protest Songs

The 1960s and 1970s were years of several various socio-political movements such as the Civil Rights Movement, anti-war movement, the counterculture movement and many more as I mentioned earlier. It was also a time of great disagreement of the interference in the Vietnam War and great distrust with politics. This constant social tension led to the rise of many protest and peace songs. New songs were created and distributed constantly but so were the old protest songs with messages and lyrics that suited the issues of that time. These songs were sung at every occasion possible, mostly at social gatherings and public protests and marches. Some of the most successful and respected singers such as Phil Ochs, Pete Seeger, and others also set up and performed at several teach-ins.⁷⁹ Anti-war songs became an inseparable part of social movement and thinking in the USA during the 1960s and 1970s. James M. Lindsay describes protest songs from this era as follows: “Anti-war songs provide a window into the mood of the 1960s. It was one of anger, alienation, and defiance”.⁸⁰ To this quote, I would add, that this was also an era of hope, peace and most of all change.

Most importantly, the era saw the rise of the most respected, well-known and encouraging peace songs in the USA. A countless amount of protest songs come from this fertile era together with some of the most influential protest and folk singers such as Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and Phil Ochs. Folk music, together with rock music, became a genre in which a protest and anti-war themes occurred most frequently. Folk singers also became the symbol of the anti-Vietnam movement in the USA. To quote Piero Scaruffi: “Folk-singers became the voice of both the Civil Rights Movement and the peace movement. A song was expected to be a miniature political rally, its title a political slogan, its lyrics a political speech”.⁸¹ In other words, folk songs with anti-

⁷⁹ Anne Meisenzahl and Roger Peace, “Protest Music of the Vietnam War,” United States Foreign Policy and Resource Guide website, last modified March, 2017, <http://peacehistory-usfp.org/protest-music-vietnam-war/>.

⁸⁰ James M. Lindsay, “The Twenty Best Vietnam Protest Songs,” Council on Foreign Relations, March 5, 2015, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/twenty-best-vietnam-protest-songs>.

⁸¹ Piero Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music: 1951-2000* (New York: iUniverse, 2003), PDF e-book, 21.

war themes had the ability to stir up the nation as well as unite it against the injustice of the War.

In the following section, I listed mainly folk, country or soul anti-war songs, that were influenced by the Vietnam War. It is important to introduce non-rock anti-war songs before introducing the rock anti-war songs because folk and rock music of this era is tied together and influenced partly by the Vietnam War and partly by one another. Rock music, that will be discussed in the following chapter, was influenced by the Vietnam War but it also drew inspiration from these first folk and country anti-war songs.

4.3.1 Phil Ochs “I Ain’t Marching Anymore”

The first author of this list is folk singer Phil Ochs. He is considered to be the most successful and popular singer-songwriter of folk protest songs from 1964 to 1965.⁸² He was among the first songwriters to deal with the issue of the Vietnam War. The lyrics of “I Ain’t Marching Anymore” from 1965 are dealing with anger but also the determination to stop drafting young men into the War and sending there in vain. This song accompanied the burning of the draft card turn-ins and functioned as a resistance to the government decision.⁸³

The success of the song is caused partly because of the message, partly because of the time of release and partly because of its catchy and easily rememberable melody. “Sung flawlessly, presented with a proud melody, and delivered in a resolute tone of defiance, the song had unmistakable integrity while still managing to be every bit as patriotic as any expression of jingoism”⁸⁴, explains Phull.

4.3.2 Tom Paxton “Lyndon Told the Nation”

The second protest singer and song that I included in this list is Tom Paxton’s folk song “Lyndon Told the Nation” from 1965. It is a direct criticism of Lyndon’s decisions concerning the Vietnam War and a clear display of disillusionment of American soldiers sent to the War. This satirical song, as explained by Anne Meisenzahl and Roger Peace: “highlighted President Johnson’s deceptions”⁸⁵ and also gained popularity because of catchy and easily rememberable lyrics. Many Americans

⁸² Meisenzahl, “Protest Music of the Vietnam War.”

⁸³ Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song*, 46.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁸⁵ Meisenzahl, “Protest Music of the Vietnam War.”

of that time were torn between what is good and what is wrong and even Tom Paxton himself said: “I love my country, but I am ashamed of it”⁸⁶ as is quoted in Meachan and McGraw. In this song, he managed to capture the disappointment, shame, and anger of many Americans.

4.3.3 “We Shall Overcome”

Perhaps the most known protest song of American history is “We Shall Overcome”. “We Shall Overcome” reached the highest peak of popularity in the mainstream culture with regards to protest songs, especially during the Vietnam War era. It was sung by several artists, saw several different interpretations and was used at several different times of the American past because of its message of hope and peace. Never was “We Shall Overcome” more associated with one period of time as it was with the Vietnam War era.

The song is most commonly attributed to Reverend Charles Tindley, who published it in 1901.⁸⁷ Since then, the song was re-sung, changed and used for many occasions in the USA history.

“We Shall Overcome” also became an international anthem for peace around the world with numerous different translations. “Jednou budem dál” is a Czech version of this song, translated by Ivo Fisher and sung by the folk group Spirituál Kvintet and it accompanied the Velvet Revolution in 1989 in Czechoslovakia.⁸⁸

Joan Baez was perhaps the most recognized anti-war activist in the protest music, together with Bob Dylan. She became the face of the anti-Vietnam movement and her version of “We Shall Overcome” became an anthem to the whole movement. Joan Baez and this song accompanied many protest marches in the 1960s. Her performance during the March on Washington on 28 August 1963 belongs to one of her most profound performances.⁸⁹

“We Shall Overcome” is a simple song, of six short sentences repeating. The strength of the song is in its simple melody and repetitive nature. The song expresses hope of better tomorrows, togetherness, and the belief in the truth. Though this song

⁸⁶ Meachan, *Songs of America*, 210.

⁸⁷ Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song*, 1.

⁸⁸ Jab, “Jednou budem dál, až v USA. Spirituál kvintet potěšil krajany v zámoří,” *ČT24 – Nejdůvěryhodnější zpravodajský web v ČR*, November 11, 2019, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/kultura/2974646-jednou-budem-dal-az-v-usa-spirituál-kvintet-potesil-krajany-v-zamori>.

⁸⁹ Meachan, *Songs of America*, 214.

is associated with Baez and the whole anti-war movement, I think her protest ballad “Saigon Bride” addresses more complex and painful picture of the Vietnam War. It tells the story of a man who says goodbye to his wife in Saigon. I think these lyrics are a metaphor for the sorrow realities that Vietnamese people felt during the War in Vietnam. It is the picture of never-ending fighting for meaningless purposes and the loss of hope of recovery.

4.3.4 Pete Seeger “Waist Deep in the Big Muddy”

Pete Seeger’s folk song from 1967 called “Waist Deep in the Big Muddy” is an indirect criticism of those in power and those who have authority over the events in Vietnam. In the song, Seeger describes a day from a battle in 1942, where a troop is ordered to cross the river on the commands of their captain.⁹⁰ The soldiers know the river cannot be crossed but their commanding officer orders them to “push on”. Even though it is not a scene from the Vietnam War directly, it is an allusion to the Vietnam War. What Seeger was trying to convey, is the stubbornness of those in power, and who are sending men to the War which they know they cannot win.

4.3.5 Edwin Starr “War”

In contrast to Pete Seeger’s subtle and indirect criticism of the Vietnam War, Motown singer Edwin Starr’s soul song “War” from 1970 is a straightforward attack of the War. “War” captures the anger and frustration that surrounded the decisions about the Vietnam War. It opens with strong first lines that and powerful lyrics of the anger and frustration that go on through the whole song:

War, huh, yeah
What is it good for?
*Absolutely nothing!*⁹¹

It depicts the picture of the brutality of the War, destruction of people’s lives as well as the nonsensicality of the War.

The lyrics of this song can describe any other war, not necessarily the Vietnam War, however, because of the time of its release of the peak of the anti-war demonstrations in the USA, it clearly protests against the Vietnam War. Phull explains:

⁹⁰ Meachan, *Songs of America*, 250.

⁹¹ Edwin Starr, “War”, track 1 on *War & Peace*, Motown Records, January 1, 1970.

“although ‘War’ did not mention Vietnam directly, its firm sense of anger and bitterness no doubt echoed the emotions of so many young Americans in regard to the conflict”.⁹² The song gained immense and quick popularity among Americans, mainly because of its intense melody as well as its outspoken and raw anti-war message in the form of a musical attack. Lynskey comments on the intense character of the song and its popularity as follows: “Funnelled into one almighty roar, it punched a hole in the radio”.⁹³ The song became a number 1 hit that year and became one of the most popular and associated songs of the Vietnam War.

4.3.6 Marvin Gaye “What’s Going On”

Marvin Gaye, another Motown soul singer, released “What’s Going On” in 1971 and it could not have been more different from Edwin Starr’s “War”. Gaye’s anti-war song is a subtle, emotional and a personal cry over the Vietnam War and the situation back in the USA. Lynskey comments on these differences:

Compared to Edwin Starr’s “War”, “What’s Going On,” on the other hand, was tender and tentative, a cry from the heart rather than the head, and it found a sympathetic audience in Marvin Gaye.⁹⁴

Gaye drew his inspiration for this song from his personal experience, as his brother was a Vietnam War veteran. “What’s Going On”, according to *Rolling Stone* magazine: is an “exquisite plea for peace on Earth, sung by a man at the height of crisis”.⁹⁵ He tries to understand what is happening with the world and asks questions of why not to solve problems with love rather than brutality. “What’s Going On” is listed on the 4th position of *Rolling Stone*’ definitive list of the 500 greatest songs of all time and is one of the most popular anti-war and peace songs of all time.⁹⁶

5 Rock Music and the Influence of the Vietnam War

The rock genre is undeniably the most spread, popular and also the most branched music genre. Together with folk music, it creates the genre that is the most

⁹² Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song*, 95.

⁹³ Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute*, 152.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁹⁵ “500 Greatest Songs of All Time: Rolling Stone’s definitive list of the 500 greatest songs of all time,” *Rolling Stone*, April 7, 2011,

<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-lists/500-greatest-songs-of-all-time-151127/marvin-gaye-whats-going-on-37363/>.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

influenced by the issues of the world, follows the social challenges of its time and mirrors social changes and ideas. According to Lubomír Dorůžka, rock music became the universal medium, or musical “language”, that was affected by the time and place it occurred in.⁹⁷ Rock music evolved from several different musical genres and backgrounds, expanded with the experimenting of new technologies and reacted to the social shifts in history.

Its roots are in the 1940s and 1950s rock’n’roll and since then it spread, evolved and it became mainstream music in the USA by the 1960s. Rock genre developed to several sub-genres, such as folk-rock, blues rock, and later psychedelic rock, punk rock, hard rock and many more. The use of electric guitar, bass guitar and drums became the basic components of many of the earlier rock songs.

Rock songs that dealt with the problems of the USA’s presence in Vietnam are considered as a demonstration against the War and became a symbol of the revolutionary 1960s and 1970s. Demonstrators, celebrities and musicians themselves sung these highly popular songs at gatherings and marchers against the Vietnam War. The rock genre and the overall anti-war mood in the USA became inseparable from people and their mentality, it became a part of people’s lives. Also, the beginnings of the rock genre and the first rock tracks were seen by some people as scandalous and very harsh and that is also one of the reasons the counterculture of the 1960s identified with this genre. Rock music influenced young counterculture and vice versa.

It is, however, also important to say that not every rock musician or band of the era was influenced by the events of the Vietnam War and that not all the rock songs produced in the 1960s and 1970s were anti-war, anti-establishment or considered to be protest songs. Rock songs were in many cases protest songs, nevertheless not every song written in the two decades dealt with the Vietnam War agenda. In other words, the rock genre cannot be considered solely as protest music.

The reason rock genre was so popular throughout history is its ability to react and mirror social challenges through its songs and lyrics. The most recognized period of the rock genre development and its importance is in the 1960s, the period of the Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam War demonstrations. Vietnam War was a milestone in the creation, understanding of rock music and its rise to popular culture in the USA. Rock singers and songwriters were influenced by the War, they reflected

⁹⁷ Dorůžka, *Panoráma populární hudby 1918/1978*, 145.

their ideas in their works and helped to create one of the most meaningful and complex songs in the American history of music.

Vietnam War played perhaps the most important role in the creation of many rock songs during its time. The anti-war movement was highly publicized, and songs published during its time were given the most attention by the media.

Mike Evans, the author of *Woodstock: Three Days That Rocked the World* published in 2009, mentions the importance of rock songs for the anti-war supporters in America and also points out the importance of these anti-war songs for the soldiers who were sent to the War. Evans says that: “many draftees took these songs with them, armed with guitars as well as rifles”.⁹⁸ In other words, these anti-war rock songs were important not just for the protesters and anti-war representatives back in the USA but represented a symbol of hope and resistance even for those fighting in Vietnam. Evans also adds that the number of rock songs influenced by the conflict was so high and its rise so quick, that: “the conflict was often dubbed as the ‘rock’n’roll’ war”.⁹⁹

Some artists even compared rock music to the whole Vietnam War conflict. It brought people who were fighting against the Vietnam War closer to the idea of how it is to fight in Vietnam. Richie Evans, the first artist to perform at the Woodstock Music Festival in 1969 compares his songs to the soldiers’ feelings and his guitar to guns, he recalls: “This is what it’s like in Vietnam, only it’s guns, right?”.¹⁰⁰ He comments on his feelings he had, coming to the stage at Woodstock Music Festival, and feeling responsible for the work he did, representing the anti-war movement. Alexander E. Hopkins, claims that: “popular music artists began to record songs that reflected this disapproval and ultimately became a new method of protest”.¹⁰¹ Rock artists and their songs indeed became the main means of protest for the anti-war movement and according to Lynskey: “were in the vanguard of the antiwar movement”.¹⁰² In other words, rock singers, who were interested in the War and were influenced by it, were also the main representatives of the Vietnam War opposition.

⁹⁸ Mike Evans, *Woodstock: Three Days That Rocked the World*, (New York: Sterling Publishing, 2009), 18.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁰⁰ Richie Havens quoted in Joel Makower, *Woodstock: The Oral History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2009), 190.

¹⁰¹ Alexander E. Hopkins, “Protest and Rock n’ Roll During the Vietnam War,” *Inquiries Journal*, no.11 (October 2012): 1.

¹⁰² Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute*, 89.

In this chapter, I will follow the development of the rock genre from its roots and highlight those artists, rock songs and events, that were the most important for the development of the genre. I will also focus on those artists, rock songs or events that were influenced by the Vietnam War and made an impact on the anti-war protests and movements. I will follow the history only to the first half of the 1970s since the later development after the end of the Vietnam War is no longer relevant for the thesis.

I primarily rely on three sources for this chapter, *A History of Rock Music* (2003) by Piero Scaruffi, *Icons of Rock - An Encyclopedia of the Legends Who Changed Music Forever* (2008) by Scott Schinder and Andy Schwartz and *Panoráma populární hudby* (1981) by Lubomír Dorůžka of which I will be using my translation.

5.1 Early Rock Music

Rock genre evolved from rock'n'roll, a popular, but controversial music genre from the 1940s and 1950s that derived from blues, gospel, and jazz. At first, rock'n'roll music, a quicker and more rhythmical version of blues, was the music of the black, called rhythm'n'blues. It was not until Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock" (1954) that rock'n'roll reached popularity among the broader audience in the USA and: "turned rock'n'roll into a nation-wide phenomenon"¹⁰³ according to Scaruffi. The popularity of rock'n'roll can be attributed to several reasons, however, it was the controversy around teenage love, the sexual revolution, and topics of the generation gap that were among many the most powerful and important factors at that time.¹⁰⁴ Since then, this "exotic" or "forbidden"¹⁰⁵ music that relied mostly on its aggressive rhythm and simple and repetitive melodies changed the attitude towards popular culture and "electrified millions of white kids"¹⁰⁶, according to Scaruffi. Singers and their singles, such as Chuck Berry and his "Roll Over Beethoven" (1956), Elvis Presley and his "Jailhouse Rock" (1957) or Buddy Holly's "That'll Be the Day" (1957) took over the nation and became the model for what would follow. Other singers such as Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard, Fats Domino or Ray Charles became an enormous influence on the genre and its future as well.

During these early years of rock'n'roll, the music became mostly guitar-based and the use of electric guitar was more common and it became the main instrument of

¹⁰³ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 12.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 12.

¹⁰⁵ Dorůžka, *Panoráma populární hudby 1918/1978*, 147.

¹⁰⁶ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 12.

rock'n'roll and the decade. It stressed the rhythm and the lyrics over the harmony.¹⁰⁷ The importance of rock'n'roll, nevertheless, lays in its impact on society. To quote Scaruffi, rock'n'roll: "bridged the gap between the white public and the black public. It invented the notion of a rebellious youth".¹⁰⁸ Rock'n'roll mirrored the injustice of African American society and projected it onto the white. The perception of music changed and became a means for young Americans to express and rebel against establishments and older generations.¹⁰⁹ Scaruffi describes the shift of perception of music as follows: "Music became a revolutionary tool for the youth of the USA".¹¹⁰ In other words, apart from being just rhythmical music, it was rebellious and inspiring and it channeled the emotions of the singers and created art.

According to Dorůžka, this early version of rock showed and established rock as a protest genre, a protest against the music and values of older generations.¹¹¹ Rock'n'roll of the 1950s meant a shift of music perception, the popularity of younger generations and its publicity, and inspired many rock musicians to come.

5.2 1960s Rock Music and the British Invasion

The 1960s became the decade of several socio-political changes as well as the development and major shift in music and popular culture. It is the decade that most of the famous and profound rock songs were created and it is the decade that established rock genre as the most popular and most powerful and revolutionary genre. Scaruffi describes 1960s rock music as follows:

Music became the vehicle for young people to vent their (political) frustration. It was a different kind of music, and a different kind of frustration, but the similarity with rock'n'roll was obvious. It was just a matter of time before the personal (rock'n'roll) and the public (protest song) would find common ground.¹¹²

In other words, the 1960s was the decade that protest genre, which was increasing in popularity, and rock music mixed. Together, music became the means of expressing social troubles and mirrored social events. It was the years in which the limitations of music and lyrics were tested as well as the years of great experimentations with drugs, overall liberality, tolerance, and renunciations of old generation traditions.

¹⁰⁷ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 12.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰⁹ Dorůžka, *Panoráma populární hudby 1918/1978*, 147.

¹¹⁰ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 14.

¹¹¹ Dorůžka, *Panoráma populární hudby 1918/1978*, 148.

¹¹² Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 14.

In the early 1960s music industry, the most important change from the previous decade of rock'n'roll was the expansion of the creation of new rock bands. Early 1960s rock music in the USA was dominated by the surf-rock that emerged in California. The embodiment of surf-rock represented the Beach Boys, who offered the picture of the Californian lifestyle and youth in its music.¹¹³ Their song from 1961, "Surfin' Safari" was listed in the USA music charts in early 1961 and the Beach Boys established themselves as the leading rock group in the USA.¹¹⁴

The real boom and development of rock music, however, came with the British Invasion. In Britain, rock genre flourished and evolved into a nation-wide phenomenon. In contrast to surf-rock from the USA, British rock was characterized by the beat sound, or Mersey sound, a British take on rock'n'roll featuring simple guitar chords and catchy melodies. The music scene in England, and the majority of Europe, was dominated by the Beatles. A Liverpool based group, that reached such popularity and mass hysteria, that its success could not be matched to anything in the music industry before. The Beatles' hit single "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" (1963) written by John Lennon and Paul McCartney reached the USA and placed as a number 1 hit on the US's music charts for seven weeks.¹¹⁵ It was not until Ed Sullivan's show that the Beatles gained nationwide recognition and swept the United States with the same popularity as they did in England. Scaruffi describes their success and influence on the future development of rock genre as follows: "Just like Presley's success spawned a generation of rockers, the success of the Beatles spawned a generation of rock bands".¹¹⁶ In years to come, the Beatles influenced the course of rock genre in the USA and shaped the development of rock music throughout the whole decade. The Beatles managed to shape rock music in the next ten years with their innovative approach and songs and evolved from catchy rock'n'roll hits to sophisticated and experimental art.¹¹⁷ Scott Schinder described the influenced of the Beatles as follows:

The Beatles spent the rest of the 1960s expanding rock's stylistic frontiers, consistently staking out new musical territory on each release. The band's increasingly sophisticated experimentation encompassed a variety of genres, including folk-rock,

¹¹³ Dorůžka, *Panoráma populární hudby 1918/1978*, 158.

¹¹⁴ Scott Schinder and Andy Schwartz, *Icons of Rock: An Encyclopedia of the Legends Who Changed Music Forever* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008), 102.

¹¹⁵ Tim Hill, *Beatles... a byla hudba: Kompletní příběh čtyř mladíků, kteří otráslí světem* (Praha: Slovart, 2009), 72.

¹¹⁶ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 12.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

country, psychedelia, and baroque pop, without sacrificing the effortless mass appeal of their early work.¹¹⁸

In other words, the Beatles achieved to shape the rock genre in the 1960s as well as to adapt to it. Despite the Beatles' effort not to be seen too political, their attitude towards the Vietnam War and their sympathy to the anti-war movement was seen in their song "Revolution" from 1968. Among the Beatles' most successful and recognized songs are "Hard Day's Night" (1964), "Eleanor Rigby" (1966), and "Penny Lane" (1967).¹¹⁹ Their album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band* released in 1967 was the climax of their creativity and innovation with regards to the "concept, sound, songwriting, cover art, and studio technology"¹²⁰ according to the *Rolling Stone* magazine and is listed as the best album of all time.

The Beatles opened doors to many British rock bands and enabled the British rock scene to expand to the USA which helped to shape the rock genre as we know it today. During the British Invasion, bands such as the Rolling Stones, the Animals, the Kinks, the Yardbirds, the Hollies and many more were among the most popular and successful. The Rolling Stones, with Mick Jagger as their frontman, was the group that made an impact comparable to the Beatles'. The Rolling Stones established themselves as the band of: "bad attitude" and an: "embodiment of all that was dangerous and transgressive about rock and roll"¹²¹, according to Schinder. Scaruffi also comments on the raw energy the Rolling Stones brought during the British Invasion and describes their attitude as: "vulgar" and "provocative".¹²² Their song "I Can't Get No Satisfaction" (1965) proved their more aggressive and sexually-oriented lyrics and also created one of the most recognizable guitar riffs in rock history.¹²³ Later years, the Rolling Stones were also influenced by the counterculture and the anti-Vietnam War movements, which was represented in the hit "Gimme Shelter" from 1969.

Since the British Invasion, British rock groups were dominating the rock scene in the USA. In contrast to the Beatles, many of these rock bands also showed a more aggressive or controversial approach, which in turn ensured them publicity and

¹¹⁸ Schinder, *Icons of Rock*, 159-60.

¹¹⁹ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 23.

¹²⁰ "500 Greatest Albums of All Time: Rolling Stone's definite list of the 500 greatest albums of all time," *Rolling Stone*, May 31, 2012, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-lists/500-greatest-albums-of-all-time-156826/the-beach-boys-pet-sounds-54298/>.

¹²¹ Schinder, *Icons of Rock*, 209.

¹²² Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 23.

¹²³ Gaylord Fields, "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," *Rolling Stone*, May 29, 2012, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/i-cant-get-no-satisfaction-67964/>.

popularity. According to Schinder, many of the British rock bands: “embodied the rougher, rootsier end of the British Invasion”¹²⁴ than the Beatles and provoked the American youth and popular culture. The Kinks and their song “You Really Got Me” (1964), the Yardbirds and their song “For Your Love” (1964) and the Who and their song “My Generation” (1965) and many more British Invasion groups and their songs succeeded in the USA and each of them brought new, innovative and their own original style to the rock industry and helped to develop rock genre in what it is today.¹²⁵ Many of these bands also continued to produce music throughout the decade and similarly to the Beatles adapted and reacted to social changes and problems the society faced.

The Animals were another prominent group of the British Invasion from the 1960s, primarily known for their hit song “House of the Rising Sun” (1964) and “We Gotta Get Out of This Place” (1965) and, according to Scaruffi, the Animals were among the most creative and innovative groups of the British Invasion.¹²⁶

The American rock scene was taken over by the British Invasion and not many prominent American rock groups from this era were created. The Beach Boys, nevertheless, continued to create their material and were one of few to represent the American response to the British Invasion. Beach Boys, inspired by the Beatles’ album *Rubber Soul* (1965), created *Pet Sounds* (1966), which is considered to be the first to introduce the concept of an album as a whole instead of single hits.¹²⁷ The Beach Boys also released their song “Good Vibrations” in 1966, which introduced elaborate sounds, experimental instrumentation and became one of the most innovative songs from the decade.¹²⁸

In the following section, I listed two most prominent rock songs important for the Vietnam War era from the bands of the British Invasion, “Gimme Shelter” by the Rolling Stones and “We Gotta Get Out of This Place” by the Animals.

5.2.1 The Rolling Stones “Gimme Shelter”

“Gimme Shelter” is the first record featured in the Rolling Stones’ album from 1969 *Let it Bleed*. The song is heavily influenced by the Vietnam War and the protests connected to the anti-war movement. It deals with controversial topics of rape and

¹²⁴ Schinder, *Icons of Rock*, 210.

¹²⁵ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 23.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹²⁷ Larry Starr and Christopher Waterman, *American Popular Music: The Rock Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 122.

¹²⁸ Starr, *American Popular Music*, 123.

murder, it points out that these topics are a part of everyday life because of the high publicity the War was given, but at the same time mentions the importance of love and that it is crucially important to find peace. Mick Jagger addressed the situation over the Vietnam War and its influence on the record in an interview with *Rolling Stone* in 1995 conducted by Jann S. Wenner: “Well, it’s a very rough, very violent era. The Vietnam War. Violence on the screens, pillage, and burning. And Vietnam was not war as we knew it in the conventional sense”.¹²⁹ The impact the Vietnam War had on the Rolling Stones was very intense despite this band was not from the USA and lived there only partially.¹³⁰ This proves the scale of the impact these constant images of violence and desperation from the Vietnam War had on the band. Jagger further describes the song as: “a kind of end-of-the-world song”¹³¹ with apocalyptic feel to it.¹³²

“Gimme Shelter” stresses the constant and real threat of death in the War conditioned only by the immediate founding of a shelter – a peace. The song addresses the inevitability of the end of the War because of the meaningless dying:

*Oh, a storm is threat'ning
My very life today
If I don't get some shelter
Oh yeah, I'm gonna fade away*¹³³

The average age of men sent to the Vietnam War was very low, only about nineteen years of age and the violence these boys had to go through and the violence that was seen on the TV is also expressed in the main chorus of the song:

*War, children, it's just a shot away
It's just a shot away
War, children, it's just a shot away
It's just a shot away*¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Mick Jagger, “Mick Jagger Remembers,” interviewed by Jann S. Wenner, *Rolling Stone*, December 14, 1995, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/mick-jagger-remembers-92946/>.

¹³⁰ Jagger, interview.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Rolling Stones, “Gimme Shelter,” track 1 on *Let it Bleed*, Decca, December 5, 1969.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

The record even refers to the often violent protests held in the streets, and compares the violence to a fire, in that violence spreads uncontrollably:

*Ooh, see the fire is sweepin'
Our very street today
Burns like a red coal carpet
Mad bull lost its way*¹³⁵

The most horrifying images of the Vietnam War were perhaps of the My Lai Massacre. Over five hundred innocent villagers were raped and murdered by the USA soldiers in 1968.¹³⁶ “Gimme Shelter” points out the horrible deeds the War brings with it and refers to the My Lai Massacre:

*Rape, murder yeah!
It's just a shot away*¹³⁷

The last part puts the violence and brutality to juxtaposition with flower power movement and the necessity to find peace, or a shelter, as soon as possible:

*I tell you love, sister
It's just a kiss away*¹³⁸

5.2.2 The Animals “We Gotta Get Out of This Place”

“We Gotta Get Out of This Place” is a record from 1965 that was originally written by Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil and recorded by the Animals, who intended this song to be a critique of Newcastle society, social class, and poverty. James E Perone, the author of *Mods, Rockers and the Music of the British Invasion* (2008), says that Eric Burdon, the lead singer of the Animals, intended this song to become: “a cry of escape from the British working class, with its poverty and widespread industry-caused illness”.¹³⁹ This song was considered as being the representative of a British protest song of 1965, but it was not intended to be a protest song against the Vietnam

¹³⁵ Rolling Stones, “Gimme Shelter.”

¹³⁶ Michael Ray, “My Lai Massacre: United States-Vietnamese History,” *Britannica*, last modified March 9, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/event/My-Lai-Massacre>.

¹³⁷ Rolling Stones, “Gimme Shelter.”

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ James E. Perone, *Mods, Rockers and the Music of the British Invasion* (Westport: Prager Publishers, 2009), 129.

War.¹⁴⁰ Despite this song being the critique of British society:, “We Gotta Get Out of This Place” became the Vietnam War anthem and is considered to be one of the best Vietnam War songs of all time. This was caused by the popularity of this song among the USA armed forces in Vietnam, who took the verses of the song as their motto and words of hope to go home to their loving ones:

*We gotta get out of this place
If it's the last thing we ever do
We gotta get out of this place
'cause girl, there's a better life for me and you¹⁴¹*

As I mentioned earlier, the rock songs recorded during the Vietnam War era were as much as important to the soldiers in Vietnam as they were to the Americans back in the USA, if not more. The main lyrics: “We gotta get out of this place/ If it's the last thing we ever do” symbolize every hope and longing of the soldiers in Vietnam to go home. Doug Bradley, the author of *We Gotta Get Out of This Place, The Soundtrack of the Vietnam War* (2015) explains, that the song was sung by the soldiers on every occasion, was frequently requested and that: “more than any other song, ‘We Gotta Get Out of This Place’ was the glue that held the improvised communities of Vietnam together”.¹⁴² It was an unlikely song to become the number one Vietnam War song and protest one, but it resonated with everything the USA troops felt during their time in Vietnam, and that is what made this record the Vietnam War anthem.¹⁴³

5.3 Folk-Rock

The 1960s in the USA was a decade very important to folk singers because of the increasing social tension during these years. It was also the decade of a fusion of folk with rock music.

For this chapter and the following ones, I primarily rely mostly on those sources that I listed previously, but I added two more sources, Larry Starr and Christopher Waterman’s book *American Popular Music: The Rock Years* (2005) and Christopher Gair’s book *The American Counterculture* (2007).

¹⁴⁰ Meisenzahl, “Protest Music of the Vietnam War.”

¹⁴¹ The Animals, “We Gotta Get Out of This Place,” Columbia Graphophone, July 16, 1965.

¹⁴² Doug Bradley and Craig Werner, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place, The Soundtrack of the Vietnam War* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015), 9.

¹⁴³ Doug Bradley, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place*, 10-3.

Scaruffi comments on the folk-rock and its importance to the USA culture as follows:

The fusion of music and politics that occurred in the early 1960s had lasting effects on the very nature and purpose of rock music. Rock music became a primary vehicle for expressing dissent within the Establishment, and therefore one of the most relevant aspects of the “counterculture”¹⁴⁴

One of the biggest influences on the rock and folk genre in the USA and the influence on the public perception of music was Bob Dylan.

Bob Dylan was a folk singer who followed Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie and he is considered the most famous singer and songwriter of urban folk music.¹⁴⁵ His songs are filled with politically charged messages and urban life-style and perfectly capture the social tension of the 1960s and mirror the “truths” and well as the “conflicts” of his time, as states Dorůžka.¹⁴⁶ His songs were filled with political themes, metaphors, and irony and were written in an intricate and beautiful poetic manner.¹⁴⁷ Among many, “Times They Are a-Changin’” (1964), “Mr. Tambourine Man” (1965), and “Blowin’ in the Wind” (1967) are considered as his most complex and influential songs.

Dylan started to use an electric guitar in his songs instead of acoustic guitar in 1965, and his style became more rock-oriented.¹⁴⁸ Dylan was criticized for bringing the electric guitar to the folk genre, and many of his fans were concerned with the disruption of the “purity” of the folk genre, and at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965, Dylan was even booed off of the stage by folk fans.¹⁴⁹ This fusion of rock and folk style became called folk-rock, and many of the folk singers of Dylan’s time became labeled as “electrified” folk singers.¹⁵⁰ The turning point of Dylan’s career and success was the release of his 6-minute long folk-rock ballad “Like a Rolling Stone” in 1965 which became a revolutionary song that bent all the rules of length or topics of rock music up to that time. *Rolling Stone* magazine comments on this song as follows: “no other pop song has so thoroughly challenged and transformed the commercial laws

¹⁴⁴ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 27.

¹⁴⁵ Starr, *American Popular Music*, 139.

¹⁴⁶ Dorůžka, *Panoráma populární hudby 1918/1978*, 168.

¹⁴⁷ Starr, *American Popular Music*, 140.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹⁴⁹ Christopher Gair, *The American Counterculture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2007), 163.

¹⁵⁰ Dorůžka, *Panoráma populární hudby 1918/1978*, 168.

and artistic conventions of its time, for all time”.¹⁵¹ Proving that, Dylan was not just a singer of folk or protest songs, but he is considered as the most influential figure of rock music and popular culture of all time.

Another important figure of folk-rock was Barry McGuire, often called the protest singer together with Bob Dylan, but refused this label just as Dylan did.¹⁵² His songs are known mostly because of the apocalyptic and unoptimistic outlook on the American society.¹⁵³ His folk-rock song “Eve of Destruction”, which he released in 1965 is his most profound song, and is considered to be among the best protest songs dealing with numerous social problems of the 1960s. It deals with racial tension and injustice the war brings.¹⁵⁴ It shows an image of the destructive results of the Vietnam War as well as the nuclear war.¹⁵⁵ It also protests against the absurdity concerning young men, who are not being able to vote but have to go to war and fight, which is shown in the following lines:

*The eastern world it is explodin’
Violence flarin’, bullets loadin’
You’re old enough to kill but not for votin’*¹⁵⁶

“Eve of Destruction” was a number 1 hit on the radio, it reached great popularity, and set the idea of mainstream folk-rock protest song.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Barry himself said that: “It’s not exactly a protest song. It’s merely a song about current events”¹⁵⁸ as is quoted in Lynskey. It stressed the world’s ills and the War’s consequences, but it also proved that political and anti-war songs can reach mainstream culture.

Dylan was not the only “electrified” folk artist during the 1960s. Just as Dylan left the acoustic guitar for the electric one, so did a singer duo from New York, Simon & Garfunkel and a band from Los Angeles, the Byrds.¹⁵⁹ According to Scaruffi, the Byrds were responsible for: “creating an American sound in the 1960s”.¹⁶⁰ In other

¹⁵¹ “500 Greatest Songs of All Time.”

¹⁵² Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute*, 9.

¹⁵³ Phull, *Story behind the Protest Song*, 52.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁵⁵ Dave White, “Antiwar protest songs of the ‘60s and 70’s: Popular songs about an unpopular war,” LiveAbout, last modified April 12, 2018, <https://www.liveabout.com/anti-war-protest-songs-of-the-60s-and-70s-748278>.

¹⁵⁶ Barry McGuire, “Eve of Destruction,” Dunhill, August 1965.

¹⁵⁷ Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song*, 52.

¹⁵⁸ Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute*, 9.

¹⁵⁹ Dorůžka, *Panoráma populární hudby 1918/1978*, 168-69.

¹⁶⁰ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 29.

words, the Byrds managed to bridge the folk-rock and British Mersey sound and build a foundation for a new genre in the era of counterculture in the USA, called the “acid-rock”.¹⁶¹ Their stance against the Vietnam War and their criticism of conscription in the US was expressed in their rock ballad from 1968 “Draft Morning”, that was accompanied by the sounds of battle that are incorporated into the song.

Lastly, according to Dorůžka, folk-rock and especially the vocal harmonies in folk-rock were: “mastered to the edge of perfection”¹⁶² by the Californian band Mamas & Papas, with their song “California Dreamin’” released in 1965.

5.4 The Counterculture, Psychedelic Rock and Roots Rock

The second half of the 1960s were the most innovative, experimental, radical, and intense years in the rock genre development. As I mentioned before, the 1960s, were the years of intense social movements and protests. The uneasiness of the Civil Rights Movements in the first half of the decade shifted to the Anti-Vietnam War movements in the second half of the 1960s. Young Americans did not want to identify with the successful life of their parents, it was the generation that just lost their innocence over the loss of President Kennedy and it was also the generation that was sent to the Vietnam War.¹⁶³ The first hippie movement and underground groups were emerging and rock music became the main medium of communication of these young Americans. The fusion of political tension, social uneasiness, and rise of rock genre created the American counterculture, a lifestyle and thinking that soon spread across the country. The influence of political events and tension on rock music describes Larry Starr:

In the later 1960s the meeting of the culture surrounding new rock music with the political and social discontents that largely defined the era resulted in a famous if slippery, phenomenon: the emergence of what was called the counterculture.¹⁶⁴

According to Scaruffi: “the youth of America was still searching for an identity, the process that had begun with rock’n’roll. Underground music provided several ways to achieve that goal”.¹⁶⁵ In other words, the rock music of the 1960s was an important definition of counterculture and hippies who through music tried to express their ideas

¹⁶¹ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 29.

¹⁶² Dorůžka, *Panoráma populární hudby 1918/1978*, 169.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁶⁴ Starr, *American Popular Music*, 151.

¹⁶⁵ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 27.

of peace, love, and tolerance and above all the anger at the Vietnam War. Young Americans identified with rock music and in return, rock music mirrored all the principles that young Americans fought against or dealt with.¹⁶⁶ “It is obvious that rock lyrics inevitably had a great deal to do with the counterculture’s values. They reflected those values, and in turn, they helped shape them”.¹⁶⁷ explains Timothy Miller, the author of *The Hippies and American Values* (2011).

The second decade of the 1960s were also the years of sexual liberation, experimenting with drugs, LSD and marihuana, spiritualism and promotion of pacifism.¹⁶⁸ These newly adopted values of American youth influenced the creation of new rock music and rock music became the most powerful medium for spreading the attitude. Scaruffi claims, that psychedelic rock or “acid-rock” evolved from folk-rock that was influenced by hallucinogenic drugs. To quote Scaruffi:

The music of the hippies was an evolution of folk-rock, renamed “acid-rock” because the original idea was that of providing a soundtrack to the LSD parties, a soundtrack that would reflect as closely as possible the effects of an LSP trip¹⁶⁹

Rock became the most powerful tool of the hippies, who celebrated their philosophy of life, peace, and love and protested against the establishment and politics through it. Miller explains that: “rock was a totality, one infused with power. Rock fueled the cultural revolution because it was immediate, spontaneous (at least to the listener), and total”.¹⁷⁰ The mutual influence of counterculture and the political tension surrounding the Vietnam War to rock music is undeniable and it is responsible for numerous rock songs created in this dynamic era.

Spiritualism, use of drugs and experimenting with new instruments, and sound were reflected in the revolutionary Beatles’ album from 1967 *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* which marked the start of psychedelic rock, or “acid-rock”. It was a foundation stone for psychedelic rock songs to come, with regards to the complexity of songs and lyrics, orchestral instruments, use of Indian instruments and album covers.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ Starr, *American Popular Music*, 151.

¹⁶⁷ Timothy Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2011), 46.

¹⁶⁸ Starr, *American Popular Music*, 152.

¹⁶⁹ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 38.

¹⁷⁰ Miller, *The Hippies and American Values*, 43.

¹⁷¹ Starr, *American Popular Music*, 154.

The development of this new counterculture rock and psychedelic music scene was centered mainly in San Francisco, creating the “San Francisco sound”.¹⁷² Dorůžka compares San Francisco to a: “New Liverpool”¹⁷³ because of the revolution in music it sparked. Dorůžka mentions the band Jefferson Airplane as one of the groups that capture the development of the counterculture the best. The fact that the Jefferson Airplane embodied the counterculture also admits Christopher Gair, who writes that Jefferson Airplane follows: “the many dimensions of San Francisco’s Summer of Love, from celebrations of communal spirit through the sounds of urban hustle to psychedelic weirdness and lengthy passages of instrumental jamming”.¹⁷⁴ In other words, Jefferson Airplane embodied the Hippie movement with their use of different sounds, creativity with lyrics and clear counterculture and pacific messages. Jefferson Airplane is responsible for several important songs of psychedelic rock, but two of them are the most known, “Somebody to Love” (1967) and “White Rabbit” (1967) which became the first hits to reach the success that come out of the counterculture scene. Their hit song “Volunteers” from 1969, is considered to be among the best anti-war songs written and embodies the political tendencies against the Vietnam War.

Counterculture, anti-Vietnam War marches, and protests attracted a lot of attention during the later 1960s, and some of the rock groups were influenced by it and wrote songs about these events. Buffalo Springfield published “For What It’s Worth” in 1966, a song that is considered to be the most known anti-Vietnam War and protest song of the 1960s. The creation of “For What It’s Worth” was inspired by one of the anti-Vietnam War riots that happened at Sunset Strip Hollywood in California. There, several conflicts between young hippie Americans or “longhairs”¹⁷⁵ and police took place in 1966, and during which Neil Young, a member of Buffalo Springfield was injured. As is quoted in Gair, Richie Unterberger – an American journalist focused on popular music, claims that this song: “is a strong contender for the best protest song of the 1960s” and that it is a “defense of the right to self-expression”.¹⁷⁶ In other words: “For What It’s Worth” became the counterculture anthem as well as song, through which people could express themselves.

¹⁷² Starr, *American Popular Music*, 157.

¹⁷³ Dorůžka, *Panoráma populární hudby 1918/1978*, 170.

¹⁷⁴ Gair, *The American Counterculture*, 172.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.

Another great representative of the counterculture and psychedelic rock was the Los Angeles group the Doors. According to Scaruffi, the Doors may have been the most creative band of that generation, if not all the history. Their strength lied with their lead singer and songwriter Jim Morrison – who was responsible for the unconventional and controversial lyrics that often dealt with sex, drugs, and suicidal tendencies.¹⁷⁷ Their most well-known and popular songs were “Light My Fire” (1967) and “L.A. Woman” (1971). As is stated in Michael Lyndon’s article in *The Guardian*, Jim Morrison was a: “new kind of poet-politician” who could express himself through music. The Doors’ most political songs are “The End” (1967), that capture the US’s most bitter and rough period and “The Unknown Soldier” (1968) the anti-war protest song.

In 1969, at the peak of counterculture, psychedelic rock and experimental music, Creedence Clearwater Revival, was dominating the music charts. Their music was similar to classic rock’n’roll and according to Starr:

Untouched by the trappings of the psychedelic era: no exotic instruments, no unusual or extended guitar solos, no studio effects, no self-conscious experimentation with novel harmonies, rhythms, or song forms.¹⁷⁸

Their music of catchy melodies and 3-minute long singles resembled early 1960s classic rock’n’roll and returned to the “roots” of early rock, folk, and country. Their roots rock sound succeeded even in the times of psychedelic rock and established Creedence Clearwater Revival as one of the best bands from the later 1960s and even if their rock sound did not resemble any of the “modern” sounds of counterculture, their songs and lyrics proved the opposite. Songs such as “Bad Moon Rising” (1969) and “Fortunate Son” (1969) reflected the political tension and awareness of that time and became one of the best anti-Vietnam War songs of all time. As Starr further suggests: “Creedence’s best songs have arguably stood the test of time better than a lot of other music from the 1960s that might have seemed much more adventurous and relevant at the time”.¹⁷⁹

The later years of the 1960s saw a rise in the use and popularization of the electric guitar as well as experimentation with the electric guitar in the psychedelic

¹⁷⁷ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 42.

¹⁷⁸ Starr, *American Popular Music*, 165.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 165.

sound. Jimi Hendrix is considered to be the greatest guitar player in history and the biggest icon of the later 1960s rock music.¹⁸⁰ To quote Schinder:

Jimi Hendrix forever redefined the role of the electric guitar in rock, altering the instrument's basic vocabulary while drastically expanding guitarists' technical and creative options for generations to come.¹⁸¹

Jimi Hendrix, a Seattle born guitarist, was influenced by blues and rhythm'n'blues at first but his non-traditional approach to electric guitar soon made him the most important rock instrumentalist of the decade.¹⁸² Hendrix's style of singing can be compared to Bob Dylan, regarding the "lazy" intonation and spoken-word style of singing. Jimi Hendrix was influenced by Bob Dylan in many ways, one of them is his version of "All Along the Watchtower" from 1968. The song topped several music charts and became the most successful song of Jimi Hendrix. Dylan himself often claimed that he preferred Hendrix's version of the song over his.¹⁸³ The song embodied the counterculture and overall atmosphere of the end of the decade. According to Schinder, "All Along the Watchtower" was a: "haunting aural assault that perfectly embodied the chaotic state of affairs in America during a time of civil unrest and dissent over the Vietnam War".¹⁸⁴

Jimi Hendrix's experimental and extravagant style of playing the guitar as well as his talent came to the public's attention at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967, where he amazed the public and according to Starr:

stunned the audience with his flamboyant performance style, which involved playing the guitar with his teeth and behind his back, stroking its neck along his microphone stand, pretending to make love to it, and setting it on fire with lighter fluid and praying to it.¹⁸⁵

Monterey Festival became an important event for many new artists as well as old ones such as Jefferson Airplane, Mamas & Papas or the Who. Many artists that performed at this festival came to public attention and became successful. Janis Joplin, the most recognized voice of the "acid-rock" sound, established herself as a household name after the festival and became the icon of the greatest women voices of rock music.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁰ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 42.

¹⁸¹ Schinder, *Icons of Rock*, 287.

¹⁸² Dorůžka, *Panoráma populární hudby 1918/1978*, 167.

¹⁸³ Schinder, *Icons of Rock*, 198.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 297.

¹⁸⁵ Starr, *American Popular Music*, 163.

¹⁸⁶ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 46.

In the following section, I listed the most important psychedelic and roots rock songs influenced by the Vietnam War.

5.4.1 Jefferson Airplane “Volunteers”

The politically-charged song “Volunteers” was recorded in 1969 and is featured in the album of the same name – *Volunteers*, released in the same year. Jefferson Airplane was known for their opposition to the Vietnam War and is considered to be the embodiment of the anti-war movement in the USA with “Volunteers” as the peak of their anti-political rock music. According to Jeff Tamarkin, the author of *Got a Revolution!: The Turbulent Flight of Jefferson Airplane* (2005), this song: “became another instant rallying cry”.¹⁸⁷ In other words, the song praised the anti-war movement and it celebrated those young people who spoke out. It embodied all the hopes of change, or revolution, and expressed the belief that peace was coming soon.¹⁸⁸ The song was instantly popular at marches and rallies and Jefferson Airplane even attended several anti-Vietnam events.¹⁸⁹

The belief, that the change is near, and the end of the War is coming closer, as well as the celebration of the protests concerning the War, is expressed in the first lines of the song:

Look what's happening out in the streets
Got a revolution
Got to revolution
Hey I'm dancing down the street
Got a revolution
*Got to revolution*¹⁹⁰

“Volunteers” also expressed the joy that was connected to all the people, from various social classes and backgrounds that were involved in the opposition to the War:

¹⁸⁷ Jeff Tamarkin, *Got a Revolution!: The Turbulent Flight of Jefferson Airplane* (New York: Atria Books, 2003), 195.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹⁸⁹ Schinder, *Icons of Rock*, 334.

¹⁹⁰ Jefferson Airplane, “Volunteers,” track 6 on *Volunteers*, RCA Victor, November 1969.

Ain't it amazing all the people I meet

Got a revolution

*Got to revolution*¹⁹¹

Perhaps the most significant message the “Volunteers” bring, is the difference between two generations in the USA at that time. While the older generation, that went through the World War II was making the decision, the new generation saw the mistakes and opposed the decisions. It was the generation, as I mentioned before, more skeptical of the government’s decisions and questioned the policies and choices of the old generation. The song encourages the youth, to be aware of the opportunity to make a change, and to take responsibility. It also suggests that the younger generation had more empathy as well as social consciousness of what was happening in Vietnam, than the older generation, which can be seen in the following lines:

One generation got old

One generation got soul

This generation got no destination to hold

Pick up the cry

Hey now it's time for you and me

Got a revolution

*Got to revolution*¹⁹²

The record is also critical towards the nonsensical sending of young men to the War overseas, away from their homes:

Come on now we're marching to the sea

Got a revolution

*Got to revolution*¹⁹³

Lastly, the meaning of the term – volunteers, can be perceived from two different points of view. Firstly, not all the soldiers in the Vietnam War were drafted to Vietnam, there was also a considerable amount of those who joined the army voluntarily.

¹⁹¹ Jefferson Airplane, “Volunteers.”

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

Secondly, it could also symbolize all those who were in the opposition to the war - volunteers who took the responsibility of stopping the War:

*Who will take it from you
We will and who are we
We are volunteers of America*¹⁹⁴

5.4.2 Buffalo Springfield “For What It’s Worth”

“For What It’s Worth” was released as a single in 1967 and appeared in the *Buffalo Springfield* album of the same year. Throughout the years, the record established itself as the number one Vietnam War song, and was used at several occasions connected to the Vietnam War, and was featured in various movies with Vietnam War theme, such as *Born on the Fourth of July* (1968) or *Forest Gump* (1994).¹⁹⁵

The song is a reaction to events that happened in Los Angeles on Sunset Street in the 1960s, particularly the incidents of 1966. Sunset Street attracted young people, as well as hippies, sharing anti-war ideologies, gathering around clubs and as Gair describes: “developing a party and drug culture to rival that in San Francisco”.¹⁹⁶ There were, however, many police confrontations and mistreatments of hippies, which sometimes led to arrests and beatings. In 1966, there were many beatings between the police and the “longhairs”¹⁹⁷ which inspired Buffalo Springfield to write the protest song “For What It’s Worth”. To quote Phull: “although there was no shortage of youngsters willing to buy into this vision of a hippy utopia, there were also many who treated the culture with violent contempt”.¹⁹⁸ This would indicate that many people did not understand this peace and love anti-war movement, which often led to violent confrontations. These misunderstandings caused many harsh treatments and interventions by the police In November 1966. The song was originally written to reflect the events of the Sunset Street, but almost immediately became identified with the whole Vietnam War protests and counterculture and sparked the anger of the young Americans even more after the song’s release.

¹⁹⁴ Jefferson Airplane, “Volunteers.”

¹⁹⁵ Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song*, 61.

¹⁹⁶ Gair, *The American Counterculture*, 175.

¹⁹⁷ Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song*, 46.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

Stephen Stills, the member of the band, wrote this song, inspired by the events and created a song that encapsulated the fear that many of the young Americans had when being involved in the anti-war opposition. The first verse, Phull says, embodies the uncertainty of danger and: “the threat of an armed man looming with a menacing intent over young people trying to make their voices heard”.¹⁹⁹ It sets the scene of the Sunset Strip and creates a tension and suspense, and implies that the man holding the gun is probably a member of the police, which is indicated in the following lines:

*There's something happening here
What it is ain't exactly clear
There's a man with a gun over there
Telling me I got to beware²⁰⁰*

The intention to stop the War, and to continue fighting in the opposition to the war is expressed in the record. There are also children mentioned, which could be interpreted to be the members of the flower power movement, sometimes called also the flower children and it could also create the picture of innocence and the need for protection, which is indicated in the following lines:

*I think it's time we stop
Children, what's that sound?
Everybody look what's going down²⁰¹*

The defiance the people are presented with while expressing the opposition to the War is also indicated in the song. It implies that the protests were happening in a non-violent nature²⁰² and that there was certain solidarity and no need for violence:

*Young people speaking their minds
Getting so much resistance from behind
Singing songs and carrying signs
Mostly say, hooray for our side²⁰³*

¹⁹⁹ Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song*, 60.

²⁰⁰ Buffalo Springfield, “For What It’s Worth,” track 1 on *Buffalo Springfield*, Atco, March 6, 1967.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song*, 60.

²⁰³ Buffalo Springfield, “For What It’s Worth.”

The song also addresses the prize the opposition and defiance brings. The violence and arrests, which spark the paranoia and anger it brings with it:

*Paranoia strikes deep
Into your life it will creep
It starts when you're always afraid*²⁰⁴

The unrest concerning the Vietnam War is expressed in the main chorus. As Phull mentions: “what had started off as a document of small-scale unrest would quickly become a national anthem for fighting the good fight and a plea for awareness of the changing social landscape”.²⁰⁵ The overall intensity of the situation over the Vietnam War, the fear, anger, and unrest is implied in the chorus:

*Stop, hey, what's that sound?
Everybody look what's going down*²⁰⁶

5.4.3 The Doors “Unknown Soldier”

“The Unknown Soldier” Was recorded and released in March 1968 and was later added to the album *Waiting for the Sun* the same year. It was written by Jim Morrison, who was influenced by the military conflict and opposed any war, mainly because of his father, who served in the USA army. John Densmore, a drummer in the Doors, explained in his memoir *Riders on the Storm, My Life with Jim Morrison and the Doors* (1990) that:

I didn't realize back then that with Jim's father an admiral in the navy, “Unknown Soldier” was a direct challenge to dad. The lyrics weren't talking specifically about the Vietnam war, but I thought it was more powerful with its universal imagery.²⁰⁷

The song did not achieve to be the most appraised Door's song, nor did it place on the top of musical charts, however, the song was popular among listeners at the time of uncertainty and became one of the most iconic songs to perform during the Door's live performances.

²⁰⁴ Buffalo Springfield, “For What It's Worth.”

²⁰⁵ Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song*, 60.

²⁰⁶ Buffalo Springfield, “For What It's Worth.”

²⁰⁷ John Densmore, *Riders on the Storm: My Life with Jim Morrison and The Doors* (Quince Cottage: Delta, 1991), PDF e-book, 154.

The main reason this song is unusual and considered to be one of the most intriguing anti-war songs is Jim Morrison's unique approach. To quote Phull: "slightly different spin to the standard musical protest about the War".²⁰⁸ "The Unknown Soldier" critiques the Vietnam War's disturbing pictures shown on television and newspapers every day. By the time of the Vietnam War, almost every household in the USA owned a TV, where everyday pictures, videos, and interviews about the Vietnam War were broadcasted. As I mentioned before, the War became a "television war" or sometimes called the "living-room war" and with the War escalating, the pictures of the War on TV became more and more gruesome, violent and dealt with death on an everyday basis. "The Unknown Soldier" criticizes this newly adopted entertainment style with pictures of death becoming part of everyday life.²⁰⁹

The main chorus of the song critiques the reality of news and reports of deaths being shown on TV and people becoming so used to it, that the TV is on even during breakfast. Phull describes the verse as: "an almost literal consumption of war in the modern age by referencing breakfast news bulletins being fed to children, exposing them to gruesome images of anonymous soldiers perishing in warfare".²¹⁰ The main chorus captures the critique of the reality of TV becoming a normal activity with even children being present:

Breakfast where the news is read

Television children fed

Unborn living, living dead

*Bullet strikes the helmet's head*²¹¹

The verse, "Unborn living, living dead", can also suggest that the soldiers in the War were of very young age, and implying that they were still children at that time and that they were killed even before they could eventually grow up.

The song is accompanied by sounds of battle and marches and depicts a chaotic and brutal reality of the Vietnam War by inserted shouts of army commanders, a drum roll that is intensifying by the end creating a suspense and sounds of guns and shots being fired:

²⁰⁸ Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song*, 65.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

²¹¹ The Doors, "The Unknown Soldier," track 6 on *Waiting for the Sun*, Elektra, July 3, 1968.

Company

Halt

Present!

*Arms!*²¹²

This part of the song was also the most intense part performed by the Doors' members at live performances as Densmore remembers:

Robby would aim his guitar at Jim like it was a gun; Ray would hold a fist in the air with one hand and pick up the top of his amplifier with the other, dropping it on cue. The sound blasted out like a gunshot. The audience was so stunned it didn't know whether to keep quiet or applaud.²¹³

The idea of the "unknown soldier" comes from the TV and newspapers as well. The deaths of the soldiers being broadcasted on TV became an everyday event, but those boys still remained in certain anonymity. The most striking message of the song is the verse, where Morrison applauds and declares that the War is over. Unfortunately, it was quite the opposite. "The Unknown Soldier" suggests, that the War is over, but only for the unknown soldier who died in the War, and can finally find peace, because for him, the War was over:

And it's all over

For the unknown soldier

It's all over

For the unknown soldier

And it's all over

The war is over

It's all over

*War is over*²¹⁴

The song shows the sad reality of, what seemed to be, never-ending years of the War, and that the War was not over yet, except for those who died in the War.

²¹² The Doors, "The Unknown Soldier."

²¹³ Densmore, *Riders on the Storm*, 178.

²¹⁴ The Doors, "The Unknown Soldier."

5.4.4 Creedence Clearwater Revival “Fortunate Son”

“Fortunate Son” is a record released in 1969 and is probably the most famous anti-Vietnam protest song of all. John Fogerty, the lead singer of Creedence Clearwater Revival wrote this song as a critique of the Vietnam War, the draft lottery and the social class privileges. To quote Jon Meachan: “a rock number incorporating the timeless motif of poor men fighting the rich men’s wars”.²¹⁵ This would indicate that the reason for John Fogerty to write this song was the feeling of injustice over the draft lottery and his perception of social class injustice.

The period of the Vietnam War in the USA saw a rapid decline of patriotism, as I mentioned before. Young Americans felt confused over the US policy and decision over the Vietnam War, some felt unjust over the draft lottery and many of them felt ashamed over the USA’s interference in Vietnam. John Fogerty explains these feelings about the Vietnam War in his memoir *Fortunate Son: My Life, My Music* (2015) as follows:

Vietnam was on every young person’s mind. The draft loomed large. We’d start to talk about it and ask each other: “Well, why are we in Vietnam?” And we’d go around and around and around and never really have a good answer. Thinking that’s what America should do. But the reasoning started sounding more and more flimsy.²¹⁶

Fogerty further explains, that his generations felt “powerless” and writing protest music was the only thing that made sense during that time.²¹⁷ This frustration over the Vietnam War and the change in patriotism in the USA is expressed in the first verse of the song:

*Some folks are born made to wave the flag
Ooh, they're red, white and blue
And when the band plays “Hail to the chief”
Ooh, they point the cannon at you, Lord²¹⁸*

²¹⁵ Meachan, *Songs of America*, 251.

²¹⁶ John Fogerty, *Fortunate Son: My Life, My Music* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2015), 95.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Creedence Clearwater Revival, “Fortunate Son,” track 1 on *Willy and the Poor Boys*, November 2, 1969.

John Fogerty himself was drafted to Vietnam and felt frustrated over the unfairness. In the song, he expresses that he should feel patriotic and go: “fight for Uncle Sam”²¹⁹, but he felt discouraged and angry instead.

The main idea in writing this song, was one particular political event. The event that led to the writing of this song, was the marriage of Julie Nixon, President Nixon’s daughter, and Dwight David Eisenhower II, former President Eisenhower’s grandson.²²⁰ It inspired Fogerty to write the lines:

*It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no senator's son, son
It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no fortunate one, no*²²¹

Fogerty wanted to express that he was not fortunate enough to be born into a wealthy family and that the members of the richest and highest social classes did not have to deal with the War and they were not drafted. The song points out, that it was mostly men from poorer social classes that were sent to Vietnam and that the “senator’s sons”, as Fogerty explains: “weren’t being affected like the rest of us”.²²² The notion of unfairness and that most of the Americans did not have a choice over the War²²³ was expressed in the following lines:

*Some folks are born silver spoon in hand
Lord, don't they help themselves, oh*

*It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no millionaire's son, no
It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no fortunate one, no*²²⁴

Lastly, “Fortunate Son” also points out the false hopes of many people, that the Vietnam War was only just a help or military advice at first, but with the War escalating, more and more soldiers were sent there, turning it into a large scale War, from which Nixon did not want to withdraw, because of his selfish and stubborn fear of becoming the first American President to ever lose a war. This is expressed in the following lines:

²¹⁹ John Fogerty, *Fortunate Son*, 95.

²²⁰ Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song*, 92.

²²¹ Creedence Clearwater Revival, “Fortunate Son.”

²²² John Fogerty, *Fortunate Son*, 95.

²²³ Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song*, 90.

²²⁴ Creedence Clearwater Revival, “Fortunate Son.”

*Ooh, they send you down to war, Lord
And when you ask them: "How much should we give?"
Ooh, they only answer "More! More! More!" yoh*²²⁵

5.4.5 Jimi Hendrix "Machine Gun"

"Machine Gun" was a song written and performed by Jimi Hendrix and the Gypsies, a band that consisted of the drummer Buddy Miles and Billy Cox, which Hendrix formed in 1969. The live performance of "Machine Gun" at the New York City's Fillmore East festival on 1 January 1970, was recorded as a part of the album *Band of Gypsies* (1970), an album that consisted of live recordings from the festival.²²⁶

The "Machine Gun" is dedicated to the Vietnam War soldiers as well as the protesters of the 1960s who attended Civil Rights protests and Vietnam War marches at the University of California, Berkeley. Before the performance, Hendrix said: "I'd like to dedicate this to all the soldiers fighting in Berkeley, you know what soldiers I'm talking about. And to the soldiers fighting in Vietnam, too."²²⁷

Hendrix's protest song was different from the rest because apart from the lyrical contents of the song, Hendrix managed to incorporate the sounds of his guitar, to express the overall atmosphere of the War. Lynskey describes the connection and the resemblance of the War and "Machine Gun" as follows: "The war in Vietnam was noisy, mechanized, hallucinatory, and chaotic—qualities that Hendrix understood".²²⁸ This would indicate that Hendrix's music can be compared to the noise that an automatic machine gun in the War makes.²²⁹

Hendrix, in the first verse of the song, refers to the heavy machinery used in the War and the horrible consequences it brings upon the Vietnamese people as well as American soldiers. The lines could also suggest Hendrix's feelings concerning the brutality, in that it "tears him apart" to see the violence:

²²⁵ Creedence Clearwater Revival, "Fortunate Son."

²²⁶ Kory Grow, "Hear Jimi Hendrix's Electrifying First Band of Gypsies Performance," *Rolling Stone*, August 9, 2016, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/hear-jimi-hendrixs-electrifying-first-band-of-gypsies-performance-111588/>.

²²⁷ Charles R. Cross, *Room Full of Mirrors: A Biography of Jimi Hendrix* (New York: Hyperion, 2005), 297.

²²⁸ Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute*, 107.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 107.

Machine Gun
*Tearing my body all apart*²³⁰

In the “Machine Gun”, Hendrix further points out that both sides of the conflict suffer and that both sides are forced to kill as ordered by the commanders, or the government. In the following lines, the perspectives of American soldiers and Vietnamese soldiers both show:

Evil man make me kill you
*Evil man make you kill me*²³¹

Hendrix also reminds the listener of the horrible reality, that many of the Vietnamese people were innocent villagers, or farmers, who were either killed or forced to join the Viet Cong:

*Well I pick up my axe and fight like a farmer*²³²

Lastly, in “Machine Gun” the theme of justice and punishment for those who initiated the War and continue in it is introduced in the following lines:

The same way you shoot me down baby
You'll be going just the same
Three times the pain
*And your own self to blame*²³³

Jimi Hendrix managed to capture the overall frustration over the War, the violence and the pointless dying as well as pay respect to the people fighting either in the USA or in the War. He managed to do so by the song’s lyrical content as well as the musical one.

5.5 Woodstock Music & Art Fair

Monterey Pop Festival in 1967, which I mentioned previously, was a model to what will follow. The biggest open-air festival in America took place In 1969. Woodstock festival or the Woodstock Music & Art Fair was held over three days from

²³⁰ Jimi Hendrix, “Machine Gun,” track 2 on *Band of Gypsys*, Capitol, March 25, 1970.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

15 till 19 August of 1969 in Bethel, New York on a local farm. More than 400 000 people attended the festival, in contrast to the 50 000 expected. Woodstock festival represented the counterculture community at its peak and marks an important milestone in culture, popular music and most importantly rock genre.²³⁴

The posters that advertised the festival announced: “Three days of Peace & Music” but the festival became much more than just peace and music, it became the symbol of sexual freedom, experimentations with drugs, spiritualism and for many, it became a moment that was “forever enshrined as heaven on earth”²³⁵ as is suggested by Miller in his book *The 60s Communes, Hippies and Beyond* (1999). It also saw the peak of psychedelic rock and the rise of many rock artists, and for many artists, Woodstock festival marks the peak of their careers. It was also the biggest manifestation of opposition to the Vietnam War through the flower power movement and the biggest gathering of counterculture community of the later 1960s. Despite the horrible conditions caused by heavy rain and serious failures of hygienic and food facilities, for many Woodstock became “the epitome of joy and peace”²³⁶ as stated by Miller. To quote Evans, Woodstock:

is acknowledged as the defining moment of the rock-driven counterculture of the late 1960s, when half a million fans descended on a small farm in upstate New York from what was promised to be ‘3 days of peace & music’.²³⁷

In other words, Woodstock represented the ideals of counterculture and all that is connected to it, rock music above all. It was also the manifestation of the counterculture values of life and their criticism of American consumerism. According to Miller, who named Woodstock also a “political event”²³⁸, it was a manifestation of opposition to the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam War indeed played an important role during Woodstock, the counterculture, or as Mike Evans calls the “Woodstock Nation” felt the need to demonstrate their unhappiness and state their stance against the Vietnam War. “Woodstock was basically an anti-war event more than anything else”²³⁹ as is stated

²³⁴ Alan Taylor, “Photos of Woodstock 1969, on Its 50th Anniversary,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, August 14, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2019/08/woodstock-50-photos-1969/596107/>.

²³⁵ Timothy Miller, *The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 68.

²³⁶ Miller, *The Hippies and American Values*, 49.

²³⁷ Evans, *Woodstock*, 8.

²³⁸ Miller, *The Hippies and American Values*, 49.

²³⁹ Evans, *Woodstock*, 20.

by Isabel Stein, a Woodstock attendee and quoted in Mike Evans' book. The most important and memorable performances of Woodstock were the anti-war songs. Woodstock festival attracted thousands of attendees because of the exciting lineup consisting of several famous artists, but it also attracted those people because it was the largest manifestation against the Vietnam War up to that date. To quote Alexander E. Hopkins: "not only has music been a direct means of anti-war protest, but the culture of peace and love, seen especially in the Woodstock festival, has also pervaded the minds of the public".²⁴⁰ Woodstock became a festival filled with the most memorable rock performances in history and most of them were also the representations of the anti-war opposition in rock. Among many, some performances stood out the most, such as Richie Havens' "Freedom", Country Joe McDonald's "The 'Fish' Cheer/ I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die-Rag" or Jimi Hendrix's version of the "Star-Spangled Banner". These three performances are further analyzed in the following section.

Apart from these three most important and memorable performances, Woodstock festival saw several great performances, such as Joan Baez' performance of "We Shall Overcome", Janice Joplin's "Piece of my Heart", or Joe Cocker's version of the Beatles' song "With a Little Help From My Friends".

The Woodstock festival was a symbol of counterculture and its values and is responsible for some of the best rock performances and acts of rock history. The counterculture, psychedelic rock, and folk-rock were at its peak and Woodstock became the most legendary rock festival and none other festivals reached such success, with regards to the rock music and non-violent spirit.

Another festival just four months after Woodstock was held in Altamont in California in 1969. The festival was advertised as "The West Coast Woodstock" and was attended by over 300 000 people with the lineup of rock stars similar to Woodstock festival: Jefferson Airplane, Santana, Grateful Dead, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young and also the Rolling Stones.²⁴¹ The festival, however, turned out to be a disaster, with four attendees dead, one of them being stabbed in the crowd by the notorious motorcycle gang security Hell's Angels. There were also several injuries, violence and

²⁴⁰ Hopkins, "Protest and Rock n' Roll During the Vietnam War."

²⁴¹ Geoff Edgers, "Altamont ended the '60s with chaos and death," *The Washington Post*, November 21, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/lifestyle/altamont-rolling-stones-50th-anniversary/>.

damaged adjacent properties. The Altamont Speedway Free Festival is associated with the end of the counterculture and spirit of peace and love.²⁴² Geoff Edgers from *Washington Post* describes this symbolic end to the hippie era as follows: “This fiasco was about far more than opportunism and poor planning. It marked an end – literally and spiritually – to a decade of cultural upheaval like no other.²⁴³ Lastly, rock music of the 1970s was influenced by the event of 1969 more than anything.

5.5.1 Richie Havens “Freedom”

Richie Havens, a folk-rock singer, was the first singer to perform at Woodstock and his spontaneous song “Freedom” based on the protest spiritual song “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child” became, according to Evans: “one of the true anthems to come out of the three days of peace and music”.²⁴⁴ In this song, Havens reminded everyone in the audience of the omnipresent worry about the Vietnam War and the everlasting fight for freedom of those who were sent to the War:

*A long
Way
From my home, yeah
Yeah
Sing
Freedom
Freedom*²⁴⁵

Havens himself recalled the conditions and moment of his performance as follows: “I saw the freedom we were looking for. And every person was sharing it”.²⁴⁶ In other words, Havens inspired by the Woodstock Festival managed to compose a song that captured the whole situation, frustration but also hopes connected to the Vietnam War.

²⁴² Gair, *The American Counterculture*, 176.

²⁴³ Edgers, “Altamont ended the ‘60s with chaos and death.”

²⁴⁴ Evans, *Woodstock*, 71.

²⁴⁵ Richie Havens, “Freedom,” track 1 on *Taking Woodstock (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)*, Rhino Entertainment, August 21, 2009.

²⁴⁶ Richie Heavens quoted in Evans, *Woodstock*, 72.

5.5.2 Country Joe McDonald “The ‘Fish’ Cheer/ I-Feel-Like-I’m-Fixin’-To-Die-Rag”

One of the best moments of anti-Vietnam performances at Woodstock was the song “The ‘Fish’ Cheer/I-Feel-Like-I’m-Fixin’-To-Die-Rag” performed by Country Joe McDonald. Dorian Lynskey describes this performance and compares it to others as follows:

several other protest songs were performed over the weekend, but none captured the gestalt quite like ‘Fixin’-to-Die’. Preserved and popularized by the following year’s hit documentary, it was one of Woodstock’s defining moments.²⁴⁷

Sarcastic undertones and lyrics that can be easily remembered and chanted astounded the half a million crowd at Woodstock and became “the premier Vietnam War protest anthem”²⁴⁸ as well as one of the most memorable moments of Woodstock as is claimed by Patrick Sauer in his article in *New York Times*.

The song was written by Country Joe McDonald but originally it belongs to the band Country Joe and the Fish that was recorded in 1967. The song succeeded with the listeners of rock and the supporters of the protests against the Vietnam War mainly because of the dark humor and sarcasm which resonated with people’s frustration and anger concerning the War.

In the first verse, the lyrics humorously point out that people should go to the War and support the United States in Vietnam, because it was suggested by Uncle Sam, which is expressed in the following lines:

*Come on all of you big strong men
Uncle Sam needs your help again
He’s got himself in a terrible jam
Way down yonder in Viet Nam so
Put down your books and pick up a gun we’re
Gonna have a whole lotta fun²⁴⁹*

²⁴⁷ Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute*, 106.

²⁴⁸ Patrick Sauer, “Country Joe’s Obscene Truths,” *The New York Times*, October 10, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/10/opinion/country-joe-vietnam-woodstock.html>.

²⁴⁹ Country Joe and the Fish, “The ‘Fish’ Cheer/ I-Feel-Like-I’m-Fixin’-to-Die Rag,” track 1 on *I-Feel-Like-I’m-Fixin’-to-Die Rag*, Vanguard, November 1967.

The frustration and confusion about the US's intervention in Vietnam, the absurdity of the War and the pointless deaths of soldiers expressed in the song are embodied in the following lines:

*And it's one, two, three, what are we fighting for
Don't ask me I don't give a damn, next stop is Viet Nam
And it's five, six, seven, open up the pearly gates
Ain't no time to wonder why, whoopee we're all gonna die²⁵⁰*

McDonald further sarcastically points out his disagreement with the killings of so many innocent Vietnamese people, because of the government's excessive fear of the domino effect of communism, which is expressed in the following lines:

*Come on generals, let's move fast
Your big chance has come at last
Now you can go out and get those reds
Cos the only good commie is the one that's dead and
You know that peace can only be won when we've
Blown 'em all to kingdom come²⁵¹*

The song further criticizes the greed of the government and the reckless founding of the War. It suggests that the victory of the War would be profitable for the USA at the end:

*There's plenty good money to be made by
Supplying the army with the tools of its trade²⁵²*

Lastly, McDonald also criticizes the age of soldiers sent to the War, by implying that they were so young that only mothers and fathers could do the decision for them. Moreover, if their son went to the War, it would be something to feel proud of:

*Come on mothers throughout the land
Pack your boys off to Viet Nam
Come on fathers don't hesitate*

²⁵⁰ Country Joe and the Fish, "The 'Fish' Cheer/ I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die Rag."

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

*Send your sons off before it's too late
And you can be the first ones on your block
To have your boy come home in a box²⁵³*

The song managed to capture many aspects of the War, the greed of the government, the pointless deaths of Americans as well as Vietnamese, the young age of the soldiers and the change of the patriotic attitudes with young Americans through dark humor and sarcasm, and that are the reasons for the song's success.

5.5.3 Jimi Hendrix "The Star-Spangled Banner"

Perhaps the most significant and unforgettable performance during Woodstock was the one of Jimi Hendrix's, particularly his version of the "The Star-Spangled Banner". Even though "The Star-Spangled Banner" is a national anthem of the United States and was by no means inspired or connected to the Vietnam War when written, Hendrix's version of the song embodied the overall feel of patriotic Americans disappointed in the US's actions and the overall feel of the Vietnam War protests in his rendition. Hendrix's performance is remembered and described by numerous people who attended Woodstock, as well as authors and critics, establishing Hendrix's "The Star-Spangled Banner" to always be considered as one of the most important performances during Woodstock if not as one of the most important performances in the rock history. As is quoted in Joel Makower's book *Woodstock, The Oral History* (2009), Chip Monck, a lighting designer at Woodstock, describes Hendrix's rendition of the "The Star-Spangled Banner" as "exquisite"²⁵⁴ and the announcer at Woodstock, Wavy Gravy, an American entertainer and peace activist compares Hendrix's songs to a "musical version of World War Three".²⁵⁵ Simply put, Hendrix achieved to capture the US's situation and people's concerns in this instrumental number with only his guitar. To quote Lynskey: "Jimi Hendrix's rendition of 'The Star-Spangled Banner', without a doubt the most eloquent instrumental protest song rock has ever produced".²⁵⁶ That is to say, he managed to depict the picture of the anti-war protests with the electrified, psychedelic and chaotic sounding version of the anthem and compares it to the chaotic and disturbing picture of the War. Tom Law, a member of a

²⁵³ Country Joe and the Fish, "The 'Fish' Cheer/ I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die Rag."

²⁵⁴ Makower, *Woodstock: The Oral History*, 287.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 287.

²⁵⁶ Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute*, 106.

Hog Farm commune recalls Hendrix's performance as follows: "when he did the national anthem on Sunday morning, that was a quintessential piece of art because he hooked us up with Vietnam, with the devastation and the sin and the brutality and the insanity of that end of the world".²⁵⁷ To put it differently, not only did he managed to portray the generation's anger and disappointment but he was also the last one to be on the stage, and his performance completed the three days of the festival. Evans describes Hendrix's performance as follows: "the high point of his set was the sensational, psychedelic rendition of the US national anthem, 'The Star-Spangled Banner', which encapsulated both the musical and political spirit of Woodstock".²⁵⁸

5.6 1970s Rock Music

The 1970s saw the decline of the psychedelic rock and the counterculture and saw the division and branching of rock genre to several rock subgenres. The popularity of counterculture and festivals such as the Woodstock festival or the psychedelic rock ended rather rapidly, and it was caused mainly because of two reasons.

Firstly, the Altamont festival, which I mentioned previously was a disaster and symbolized in many ways the poignant end of the counterculture. Moreover, the beginning of the 1970s saw several drugs or alcohol-related deaths of many musicians, such as Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix, and member of the Rolling Stones - Brian Jones, which in many ways symbolized the bitter end of the counterculture at its peak.²⁵⁹ Additionally, in 1970 the Beatles broke up, which left many rock fans devastated, because as Starr suggests, it was the Beatles: "who, more than any other group, inspired the triumphs (and excesses) of rock music".²⁶⁰ The years of rock music experimentations and breaking of music boundaries started to wear out and the end of the 1960s decade was also the end of the most fertile period of the rock genre.

Secondly, people started to feel a necessity to step away from this free spirit attitude and counterculture values of life and move towards more mature ones. According to Starr, young Americans started to divert: "away from the communitarian, politically engaged ideals of the 1960s counterculture, toward more materialistic and conservative attitudes".²⁶¹ To put it differently, the interest in the Vietnam War started

²⁵⁷ Makower, *Woodstock: The Oral History*, 288.

²⁵⁸ Evans, *Woodstock*, 215.

²⁵⁹ Gair, *The American Counterculture*, 177.

²⁶⁰ Starr, *American Popular Music*, 168.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 167.

to fade away with the gradual withdrawal of American soldiers and the approaching end of the War. Similarly to political interests, young adults also started to seek more mature music material.

As a result of these two reasons, the rock genre underwent a significant transformation. There were suddenly two types of consumers, young adults who deviated from the experimental rock music to a more mature and composed one and another group, teenagers whose need for entertainment turned the American music scene into a profit-making industry. Starr explains that the rock genre shifted from “an experimentalist, countercultural movement into a profit-making center of the American entertainment industry”.²⁶² Under those circumstances, rock music started to branch into several different subgenres, such as hard rock, punk rock, heavy metal, art rock, glam rock, country rock and many more.²⁶³ There was also a rise of individual performers and artists, such as John Lennon, Paul McCartney, David Bowie, Elton John or Joni Mitchell. The 1970s mark the beginning of the clash between music that was made only to make money or music that was authentic and reminiscent of the early music scene. To quote Starr: “it was during the 1970s that the tension between commercialism and authenticity that characterizes rock music right up to the present day arose in a clear form”.²⁶⁴ At the beginning of the decade, however, there was still tension and dissatisfaction over the Vietnam War, which resulted in several anti-war songs of the 1970s. Some of them are perhaps the most influential and known of all.

Because of the extensive number of new subgenres in popular music in the 1970s, I included just a brief development of the most important subgenres and corresponding artists and bands until the year 1975. I will also highlight those artists, bands, and songs that were still influenced by the Vietnam War. Despite many of the rock bands were created in the late 1960s, their prominent years were in the 1970s, thus they are listed in this part of the chapter.

Psychedelic rock of the 1960s started to evolve into what is called progressive rock. The development into the progressive rock was most notable in Britain, and according to Scaruffi, rock music “emigrated” to Britain, where evolved into music, that was not influenced so much by the social issues that the USA dealt with and

²⁶² Starr, *American Popular Music*, 166.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 168.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 166.

became focused more on the sound, creating almost an instrumental and symphonic art. Scaruffi explains the basis of progressive rock as follows:

the most notable of this processes of “de-contextualization” of rock music was the process that led to progressive-rock, whose goal was not to comment on the youth culture, but simply to offer technical innovation. Progressive-rock was obviously an evolution of the eccentricities of psychedelic-rock, but was no longer related to a social practice.²⁶⁵

Among these elaborate rock British groups were, for example, Jethro Tull, Genesis or Pink Floyd. Pink Floyd became the epitome of progressive rock, with their “technically complex and thematically provocative concept albums”²⁶⁶ as is suggested by Schinder. He further explains that they broke barriers of standard music formats, exceeded in live concerts and established album as a main “creative medium”.²⁶⁷ Their breakthrough album *Dark Side of the Moon* released in 1973 exploring “dehumanization, alienation and aggression” through the album even became one the most selling albums of all time.

In New York, a different type of rock was evolving, an avant-garde rock with the band Velvet Underground as its main representative. The Velvet Underground represented the very opposite of the San Francisco counterculture movement. According to Gair, they: “offered an often dark, ironic counterpoint to Flower Power”²⁶⁸ and represented the more gruesome, ominous and disturbing society of heroin.

In the 1970s a new rock sound was beginning to be more and more popular: a hard rock. According to Scaruffi, the reason for hard rock to reach such popularity was that it, too, had roots in blues, like rock’n’roll, but: “it was a faster, louder and stronger kind of music, that buried the suffering of the Black people under thousands of decibels”.²⁶⁹ In several aspects, the rise of hard rock meant the end of the experimental and creative years, but it thrived because of its “apolitical” approach and the rise in popularity of live concerts. Among the most prominent and iconic rock bands of the 1970s are Led Zeppelin, a pioneer in the hard rock sound, followed by Deep Purple and Black Sabbath. Despite hard rock bands being mostly “apolitical” as I mentioned,

²⁶⁵ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 57.

²⁶⁶ Schinder, *Icons of Rock*, 436.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 436.

²⁶⁸ Gair, *The American Counterculture*, 173.

²⁶⁹ Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*, 72.

there still were some songs inspired by the Vietnam War, such as “Child in Time” (1970) by Deep Purple or “War Pigs” (1970) by Black Sabbath.

“Child in Time” deals with the notion of what is good and bad as well as the consequences that may reckless decisions bring. It also depicts a picture of a man, who blindly follows orders given without hesitation or a thought, which can be considered as an allusion to the Vietnam War.

In response to the British hard rock, the south of the USA developed its own specific sound, a southern rock. Perhaps, the best representative of southern rock in the 1970s was the band Lynyrd Skynyrd, who, with their hits “Sweet Home Alabama” (1973) and “Free Bird” (1973) were able to bring the south rock to the mainstream popular music.

In the first half of the 1970s, despite the interest in Vietnam War wearing out, California still offered many bands and artists influenced by the events of the War and perhaps one of the best bands was the folk-rock band Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. It was a so-called supergroup, consisting of former members of the Byrds, the Hollies and Buffalo Springfield. The CSNY was known for its political activism and songs filled with messages of protests against the Vietnam War and the establishment. The band was firstly established in 1968 with only three members, David Crosby, Stephen Stills, and Graham Nash, and it was not until 1969 that Neil Young the last member joined this group. Their first breakthrough happened at the Woodstock festival, but it was not until the 1970s that the band reached great popularity and recognition. The CSNY continued composing music to support anti-war movements and their songs were still politically very engaged. Their anti-Vietnam War song “Ohio” from 1971 was a reaction to the killings of four University students who attended a march against the Vietnam War. It was one of the best protest and anti-Vietnam War songs ever written and according to Dorian Lynskey who wrote an article in *the Guardian*: “Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young’s remarkable single is arguably the perfect protest song: moving, memorable and perfectly timed”.²⁷⁰ “Ohio” will be discussed at the end of the chapter.

The 1970s were also the years of many solo artists and their rise to popularity. As I mentioned before, there were many subgenres of rock, and some of them are sometimes associated with one single musician. Glam rock, for example, was

²⁷⁰ Dorian Lynskey, “Neil Young’s Ohio – the greatest protest record,” *The Guardian*, May 6, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/may/06/ohio-neil-young-kent-state-shootings>.

represented by David Bowie and the significance of pop-rock is attributed to Elton John. The solo careers also flourished for Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and John Lennon after the breakup of the Beatles.

The most prominent solo career of the ex-Beatles members in terms of anti-war songs or anti-Vietnam War activism was the one of John Lennon. In the Beatles, Lennon was responsible for some of the best Beatles songs and he was considered as having the more experimental and artistic approach of the Lennon & McCartney songwriting duo. Lennon's songs displayed deep emotional processes as well as concerns about everyday life problems and politics. Ben Urish, the author of *The Words and Music of John Lennon* (2007) describes Lennon's work as follows:

A song of his may have been excellent at the level of craft, structure, story, and harmony, but if it did not express and communicate something vital, he considered it empty hack work and was often the most dismissive critic of his own efforts.²⁷¹

Lennon was the most politically engaged member of the Beatles and, his approach to politics intensified in the post-Beatles era. After the band's break up, Lennon even held several anti-war protests in Europe and Canada in forms of bed-ins, which was Lennon's take on the 1960s sit-ins. During bed-ins, Lennon and his wife, Yoko Ono, stayed for several days in bed to, in Lennon's words: "to protest war (in bed) and preach world peace"²⁷² as is quoted in Gillian Brocknell's article in *Washington Post*. During the Montreal bed-in, Lennon also created the famous anti-war song "Give Peace a Chance" (1969), which in my opinion, is the best anti-Vietnam War song written and the term "the protest anthem"²⁷³ used by Ben Ursich is the most fitting. In the 1970s, Lennon continued to write songs and created two other most important protest pieces of the era, "Happy Xmas (War is Over)" (1971), and a utopian plea for peace "Imagine" (1971). "Imagine" became the 3rd best song of the 500 Greatest Songs in History and is described as "22 lines of graceful, plain-spoken faith in the power of a world, united in purpose, to repair and change itself"²⁷⁴ as is stated in *Rolling Stone* magazine. Lennon became a peace icon and the key figure of the later anti-war

²⁷¹ Ben Urish and Ken Bielen, *The Words and Music of John Lennon* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2007), xvi.

²⁷² Gillian Brocknell, "John Lennon and Yoko Ono shared their bed with the world 50 years ago – a plea for peace," *The Washington Post*, March 25, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/03/25/john-lennon-yoko-ono-shared-their-bed-with-world-years-ago-plea-peace/>.

²⁷³ Urish, *The Words and Music of John Lennon*, 9.

²⁷⁴ "500 Greatest Songs of All Time."

movement in the USA, with songs, that perhaps were the best songs to protest against the Vietnam War.

In the last section of this chapter, I listed the most important rock songs influenced by the Vietnam War from 1970s, “Ohio” by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young and “Give Peace a Chance” and “Happy Xmas (War is Over)” by John Lennon.

5.6.1 Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young “Ohio”

“Ohio” released in 1970, was a song written by Neil Young as a reaction to the Kent University Shootings on 4 May 1970, also known as the Ken Shooting or The Kent State Massacre²⁷⁵, a lot of protests and marches took place as a reaction to President Nixon’s decision of incursion to Cambodia in May. This event sparked a new wave of protests in an already tired and angry nation. There was a protest on a Kent University, Ohio On May 4, which turned out to be one of the most violent protests. Four students were killed and nine injured by the Ohio National Guard and left the nation in a horrified and shocked state.²⁷⁶

Neil Young wrote the song just a few days after the incident upon seeing photographs of that incident, in his book *Waging Heavy Peace* (2012) he writes:

The weight of that picture cut us to the quick. We had heard and seen the news on TV, but this picture was the first time we had to stop and reflect So full of this feeling of disbelief and sadness. I picked up my guitar and started to play some chords and immediately wrote “Ohio”; *four dead in Ohio*.²⁷⁷

Neil Young felt responsible for the whole generation of his, and that in this song he expressed the feeling of grief within the whole Woodstock generation.²⁷⁸ “Ohio” provided a picture of the Nation’s youth and the hopelessness after the killings, which in some terms also meant a violation of their right to speak their minds.

The first lines of the song mention President Nixon as well as the Ohio National Guard and straightforwardly speaks about the deaths of the four unarmed and innocent students:

²⁷⁵ Paola Sarappa, “The Vietnam Conflict: The Rock ‘n’ Roll War,” *Paola Sarappa* (blog), August 8, 2011, <https://paolasarappa.wordpress.com/2011/08/18/the-vietnam-conflict-the-rock-%E2%80%99n%E2%80%99-roll-war/>.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Neil Young, *Waging Heavy Peace: A Hippie Dream* (New York: Penguin Group, 2012), 117.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 117.

*Tin soldiers and Nixon coming
We're finally on our own
This summer I hear the drumming
Four dead in Ohio²⁷⁹*

The allusion of the “tin soldiers” is probably a reference to the Ohio National Guard which was being under President Nixon’s administration and the “drumming” paints a picture of the march and protests that took place.

In the second verse, the song also mentions the counterculture movement and suspects government in wanting to put an end to the whole counterculture movement even before the Kent Shooting. Lastly, he shows his grief and sadness over the killings adding a personal feel to the whole situation:

*Gotta get down to it
Soldiers are gunning us down
Should have been done long ago
What if you knew her and
Found her dead on the ground
How can you run when you know?²⁸⁰*

“Ohio” became one of the most appraised, touching and best-known protest songs from the Vietnam War era, capturing grief and shock of the counterculture youth. Phull says that the song: “unquestionably provided a starkly definitive pop-culture document of both a crucial event in American history and the backlash that resulted—a factor that no doubt explains why.”²⁸¹ “Ohio” became one of the most powerful protest songs and whenever it is played, it is immediately associated with the Kent Shooting as well as the whole anti-Vietnam War movement.

5.6.2 John Lennon “Give Peace a Chance” and “Happy Xmas (War is Over)”

John Lennon became the face of the anti-war movement; he became the peace icon and used his fame as a post-Beatle to promote his political agenda. Lennon was known for elaborate songwriting in the Beatles, but he combined his songwriting with political messages, pacifism, and anti-war agenda in his solo career that he shared with

²⁷⁹ Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, “Ohio,” track 1 on *4 Way Street*, Atlantic, April 7, 1971.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song*, 101.

Yoko Ono. Together they created some of the best anti-war and peace anthems to that date. In an interview with Jonathan Cott to *Rolling Stone* on 5 December 1980, Lennon said: “We’re not the first to say ‘Imagine No Countries’ or ‘Give Peace a Chance’, but we’re carrying that torch, like the Olympic torch, passing it hand to hand, to each other, to each country, to each generation . . . and that’s our job”.²⁸² This would indicate that Lennon and Ono managed to spread the peace and anti-war ideologies at every opportunity given, sometimes even in a controversial style, but it provided the kind of publicity and attention needed.

Lennon and Ono, composed and recorded “Give Peace a Chance” during their bed-in protest in 1969 in the presence of countless journalists and other celebrities. Abbie Hoffman, leading political and social activist of the flower movement and Tom Smothers, member of the Smothers Brothers, were for example present during the recording of “Give Peace a Chance” which ensured the song even more publicity. Lennon also admits that he wanted “Give Peace a Chance” to succeed on such a scale, it would replace the everlasting “We Shall Overcome”. In an interview by Jann S. Wenner on 21 January 1971, to *Rolling Stone*, Lennon said:

In my secret heart I wanted to write something that would take over “We Shall Overcome.” I don’t know why. The one they always sang, and I thought, why doesn’t somebody write something for the people now, that’s what my job and our job is.²⁸³

Lennon was actively and truly interested in the anti-Vietnam movement, he became the face of the anti-war movement and managed to create what is now considered as one of the best peace songs in history.²⁸⁴

In “Give Peace a Chance” Lennon criticizes several different ideologies, some of them that were even made up for the song. Lennon was known for using made-up words and expressions in his songs, and “Give Peace a Chance” was no exception. He mocks several different ideologies here, even including his and Ono’s concept of bagism. An idea, to hide oneself in a bag to avoid being judged by one’s appearance, race or sex. The reason Lennon names several ideologies, in the first verse, was to point out the absurdity of people investing energy into something insignificant, instead

²⁸² John Lennon, “John Lennon: The Last Interview,” interviewed by Jonathan Cott, *Rolling Stone*, December 23, 2010, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/john-lennon-the-last-interview-179443/>.

²⁸³ John Lennon, “Lennon Remembers, Part One,” interviewed by Jann S. Wenner, *Rolling Stone*, January 21, 1971, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/lennon-remembers-part-one-186693/>.

²⁸⁴ Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute*, 126.

of focusing on finding peace and stopping the War. After the first verse, there is the main message which Lennon and Ono tried to convey:

*Ev'rybody's talking 'bout
Bagism, Shagism, Dragism, Madism, Ragism, Tagism
This-ism, that-ism, is-m, is-m, is-m*

*All we are saying is give peace a chance
All we are saying is give peace a chance²⁸⁵*

In the song, Lennon also criticizes several religions, and that people should not be invested in, and arguing over who's religion and belief is the right one, but again, focus on obtaining peace:

*C'mon, ev'rybody's talking about
Ministers, sinisters, banisters and canisters
Bishops and Fishops and Rabbis and Popeyes and bye-bye, bye-byes*

*All we are saying is give peace a chance
All we are saying is give peace a chance²⁸⁶*

In the last verse, Lennon lists famous people, who are in some way more or less interested in the anti-war opposition, opposition to government or in peace in general. Including even famous theology Hare Krishna, which talks about finding love and peace. The song ends with numerous repetitions of "Give peace a chance", ending in collective applause of everyone present:

*Ev'rybody's talking 'bout
John and Yoko, Timmy Leary, Rosemary, Tommy Smothers, Bobby Dylan, Tommy
Cooper
Derek Taylor, Norman Mailer, Alan Ginsberg, Hare Krishna, Hare, Hare Krishna*

*All we are saying is give peace a chance
All we are saying is give peace a chance²⁸⁷*

²⁸⁵ Plastic Ono Band, "Give Peace a Chance," Apple, July 4, 1969.

²⁸⁶ John Lennon, "Give Peace a Chance."

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

“Happy Xmas (War is Over)“, released 1971, was created with the same intention as “Give Peace a Chance”, as Urish explains: “motivated by a similar desire to create a new holiday standard as he had tried to create a new protest standard in “Give Peace a Chance,” Lennon came up with his fourth single of the year”.²⁸⁸ Before the release of “Happy Xmas (War is Over)”, Lennon and Ono, invested in an extensive billboard campaign that said: “War is Over, If you want it – Happy Christmas from John&Yoko” and it was displayed in twelve different countries in multiple major cities.²⁸⁹

In the song, Lennon asks the listeners, if they had done anything to contribute to the peace, and that it is possible to end the War, if everyone is interested and tries. He also expresses his hope that the end of the War is close, and that the fear, anger, and dying will be over soon:

So this is Christmas and what have you done?

Another year over, a new one just begun.

A very merry Christmas

And a happy new year,

Let's hope it's a good one

Without any fear²⁹⁰

Lennon also points out that Christmas is about love and peace, and that everyone should now be involved in trying to stop the War. In the two lines, Lennon could also talk about Vietnamese and communists, when including the “yellow and red ones” line in the song, expressing his support and indicating, that peace can be reached only if everyone is involved:

And so this is Christmas (War is Over)

For weak and for strong (If you want it)

For the rich and the poor ones (War is Over)

The road is so long. (Now)

And so happy Christmas (War is Over)

for black and for whites (If you want it)

²⁸⁸ Urish, *The Words and Music of John Lennon*, 52.

²⁸⁹ Phillip Norman, *John Lennon: The Life* (New York: Ecco Press, 2008), 688.

²⁹⁰ Plastic Ono Band, “Happy Xmas (War is Over),” Apple, December 1, 1971.

For the yellow and red ones (War is Over)

*Let's stop all the fight. (Now)*²⁹¹

In his last interview before he was murdered, Lennon talked about peace, as if it is something people can reach if they only tried, he said: “Give Peace a Chance,” not “Shoot People for Peace.” It’s damn hard, but I absolutely believe it”.²⁹² His anti-Vietnam ideologies and his peace songs are the reason, Lennon became the peace icon and the face of the peace movement in the USA and all around the World.

²⁹¹ Plastic Ono Band, “Happy Xmas (War is Over).”

²⁹² John Lennon, “John Lennon: The Last Interview.”

6 Conclusion

The thesis aimed to focus and analyze rock songs from the 1960s and 1970s that were influenced by the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War was highly unpopular and the nation's opposition to the War was reflected in several rock protest songs from the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s. The War was highly unpopular due to its long duration and the draft system that allowed even young men to go to the War. The main reason that the opposition to the government and the anti-war movements started was, however, the moral issues the American people felt. It was the unjustified interference of the USA to the Vietnam War, resulting in the deaths of millions of soldiers as well as civilians. This dissatisfaction and the overall change of American attitudes of the 1960s gave way to the creation of many rock protest songs. The 1960s and 1970s saw a rise of rock music as a popular entertainment as well as the main source of opposition to the War. The American nation turned to music to express their attitudes as well as to unite against the establishment. Rock songs that were created during the USA's interference in the Vietnam War, became symbolic songs that showed the nation's disagreement.

The first two chapters of the thesis dealt with the history of the Vietnam War as well as the nation's response to the government during its duration. The 1960s and the first half of the 1970s were years of dramatic changes regarding politics, entertainment, relationships, and lifestyle. It was the years, that saw several social and political movements such as the Civil Rights Movement, the counterculture movement as well as numerous anti-war movements. The shift in popular culture and entertainment, as well as the rise of the importance of media, changed rapidly in the 1960s as well. Music became the most powerful tool in the resistance to the War and government. It accompanied every aspect of everyday life, it embodied the need for a change of the establishment and mirrored the overall dissatisfaction that people felt. The socio-political changes, the shift in entertainment, and the opposition to the War resulted in the creation of the most powerful anti-war protest songs. This attitude and the history of the Vietnam War and the changes in the American nation were presented in the first half of the thesis.

The second half of the thesis dealt with protest music in the USA. The history of protest music in the USA and causes that gave way to its creation. The thesis looked

at the protest songs influenced by wars in American history and analyzed the most important folk, country, and soul protest songs influenced by the Vietnam War. Those protest songs marked the change of the perception of popular culture and entertainment during those two decades and influenced the rise and creation of anti-war rock songs, described in the main part of the thesis.

The main part of the thesis focused on rock music. The history and development of rock genre in the USA was given together with the examples of the most important and well-known artists and their anti-Vietnam War songs.

Rock music from the two decades was categorized into several subgenres and the most important songs influenced by the Vietnam War were given and analyzed. The songs helped the American nation, as well as the soldiers fighting in the War, to overcome the difficult times and created a generation that could express their dissatisfaction. Some of the songs became inseparable from the Vietnam War era and some of them even became peace anthems all over the World. Rock music from the Vietnam War era reflected various problems the society faced. The unfairness of the draft lottery, the age of men sent to the War, the horrors, brutality, and the consequences the War brought. The songs, however, displayed also hope and the need and importance of peace and love. Some of the songs were created as a result of spontaneous performances, some of them were a reaction to other social problems of that time apart from the Vietnam War and some of them were aimed to become anti-war anthems right from the start, but all of them became beloved rock songs from the Vietnam War era. Those songs were the representatives of the American nation, during its most challenging times and became the most important factors to the revolutionary 1960s and 1970s. It is, nevertheless, debatable whether these songs helped to change the course of the War or influence the processes during these two decades. It is, though, safe to say that these songs were responsible for encouraging people and altering people's way of thinking.

Since then, many of those songs given in this thesis became revolution and peace anthems and inspired many artists to create protest songs even after the Vietnam War's end. Many of them are now dealing with the nation's dissatisfaction and the need to be heard, with most of them being inspired by the Vietnam War era songs, building on the foundation of the revolutionary 1960s and 1970s songs.

Rock music from the Vietnam War era is now considered as the most creative, innovative, influential, and also most beloved of American history. That is perhaps

because no other time in American history was so revolutionary, outspoken, and with such rapid development and transformation of the American nation and music.

Resumé

Cílem práce bylo zaměřit se na rockové písně ovlivněné válkou ve Vietnamu z období šedesátých a sedmdesátých let minulého století a analyzovat je. Válka ve Vietnamu byla velmi neoblíbená a odpor k ní se odrážel v mnoha rockových protestních písních z šedesátých let a první poloviny let sedmdesátých. Válka byla mimo jiné nenáviděná kvůli jejímu dlouhému trvání a branné povinnosti velmi mladých chlapců. Hlavní důvody neoblíbenosti, vytvoření opozice proti vládě a vzniku protiválečných hnutí byly však morální. A to zejména neoprávněné a mnoha lidmi nepochopené zasažení Spojených států amerických na území Vietnamu, které vedlo ke smrti miliónů vojáků i civilistů. Šedesátá a sedmdesátá léta zaznamenala vzestup rockové hudby nejen jako populárního žánru, ale i jako hlavního projevu opozice protiválečného hnutí. Americký národ se obracel k hudbě za účelem vyjádření svého postoje a stmelování se proti celkovému zřízení. Rockové písně, které byly vytvořeny v USA během války ve Vietnamu se staly písněmi symbolizujícími nespokojenost tehdejšího národa.

První dvě kapitoly této práce pojednávaly o historii války ve Vietnamu a odezvě národa, který se během této války vzbouřil proti vládě. Za počátky války ve Vietnamu se považují už čtyřicátá léta minulého století, kdy se po oslabení francouzského vlivu v koloniálním Vietnamu vytvořilo hnutí nazývané Viet kong pod velením Ho Chi Minha. Spojené státy americké do této války však poprvé zasáhly až v roce 1960 a to z důvodu obav tehdejšího amerického presidenta Kennedyho a strachu z nárůstu komunistického vlivu ve Vietnamu, který by se mohl rozšířit na celou Indočínu. Tyto obavy byly podepřeny probíhající studenou válkou a teorií dominového efektu, která říká, že pokud komunistickému režimu podlehne jen jedna země, další budou ihned následovat. V průběhu necelých dvou dekad posílaly Spojené státy americké své muže do války. Zprvu proto, aby podpořili francouzská vojska, poté na obranu a podporu jižního Vietnamu do bojů proti severnímu Vietnamu, podporovaného komunistickým Sovětským svazem. Válka ve Vietnamu si vyžádala miliony mrtvých civilistů i vojáků a vyvrcholila v roce 1975 ve sjednocení Vietnamu a odchodem poražených vojsk USA.

Období šedesátých a první poloviny sedmdesátých let se neslo v duchu velkých změn v politice, v populární hudbě, v kultuře všeobecně, odrážely se ve vztazích i celkově v životním stylu. Bylo to období mnoha významných socio-politických hnutí

jako jsou hnutí za občanská práva, undergroundové a alternativní hnutí a protiválečné hnutí. Protiválečné hnutí v Americe v šedesátých letech kopírovalo v mnoha aspektech hnutí za občanská práva. Konal se nespočet demonstrací a pochodů proti vládě a branné povinnosti a vznikaly i první protesty na kampusech univerzit. V tomto období se významně změnil postoj ke kultuře a zábavě a zvýšila se i důležitost médií. Právě média hrála důležitou roli v propagandě protiválečného hnutí, neboť poskytovala americkému národu každodenní informace přímo z války ve Vietnamu, ať už v podobě fotografií nebo záběrů přímo z míst postižených válkou. Díky tomu se právě této válce přezdívalo “televizní válka”, neboť to byla první válka přenášená na televizní obrazovky.

Během šedesátých let se uskutečňoval i nespočet pochodů a protestů, na nichž zazněly projevy známých osobností i umělců. Jedním z největších protiválečných pochodů byl pochod na Pentagon z roku 1967. Současně se v šedesátých letech v Americe utvořilo undergroundové a alternativní hnutí, které hlásalo nejen odpor vůči válce ve Vietnamu ale i proti zřízení a establishmentu, a naopak zdůrazňovalo lásku, mír a toleranci. Právě z těchto hnutí vzešly jedny z nejdůležitějších a nejvlivnějších protestních rockových písní mířící proti vládě a její intervenci ve Vietnamu. Hudba doprovázela každý aspekt všedního dne, ztělesňovala potřebu změny zřízení a zrcadlila celkovou národní nespokojenost.

V této první části práce jsem se také zabývala protestní hudbou v historii Spojených států amerických, jejím vznikem i příčinám vzniku. Už v první polovině dvacátého století vznikaly písně, které reagovaly na první světovou válku, velkou hospodářskou krizi i druhou světovou válku a později i na afroamerické hnutí za občanská práva. V souvislosti s těmito událostmi, vznikaly písně nejznámějších folkových, countryových a soulových zpěváků jako byli Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger anebo Billie Holiday. Práce analyzuje tyto písně, jejich historicko-kulturní význam a stejně tak i jejich vliv na pozdější tvorbu. Protestní písně šedesátých let pak reagovaly zejména na válku ve Vietnamu ale i na skutečnosti, které s sebou přinesly změny způsobené socio-politickými hnutími. Tato část práce poskytla analýzu folkových, countryových a soulových písní ovlivněných válkou ve Vietnamu. Mezi nejdůležitější umělce a zpěváky uvedené v této části práce patří Phil Ochs, Tom Paxton, Joan Baez, Edwin Starr a Marvin Gaye. Tyto osobnosti a jejich písně způsobily změnu ve vnímání populární hudby a kultury. Ovlivnily vývoj a tvorbu také písní rockových, které byly uvedeny v druhé části práce.

Druhá část práce se zaměřila na rockovou hudbu. Její vznik a historie v rámci USA byly představeny současně s nejnámějšími a pro tento žánr nejvýznamnějšími autory a hudebníky. Práce dále popsala rozdělení rockové hudby obou dekad války ve Vietnamu do několika podžánrů a představila a analyzovala nejdůležitější protiválečné rockové písně ovlivněné touto válkou.

Rocková hudba ve Spojených státech amerických má své kořeny ve čtyřicátých a padesátých letech dvacátého století a čerpá z žánrů jako je rock'n'roll, jazz nebo blues. Tento styl hudby byl zprvu považován za kontroverzní, avšak později se stal nejoblíbenějším a nejrozšířenějším hudebním žánrem, který pobuřoval starší generaci, nadchnul mladší generaci a současně přibližoval širší veřejnosti afroamerické hudební tendence. Za vstup rocku do populární kultury a jeho boom v Americe se považuje příchod britské kapely The Beatles, která pobláznila mladou generaci a otevřela dveře i dalším úspěšným britským kapelám jako The Rolling Stones, The Animals či The Kins. Práce se věnuje analýze vybraných písní těchto umělců – konkrétně “Gimme Shelter” od The Rolling Stones a “We Gotta Get Out of This Place” od The Animals. Píseň “Gimme Shelter” kritizuje násilí a hrůzy napáchané ve vietnamské válce, které byly každodenně prezentovány v televizi i v tisku, poukazuje na nízký věk chlapců narukovaných do války a upozorňuje na nezbytnost nastolení míru. Píseň “We Gotta Get Out of This Place” měla původně sloužit jako kritika britské společnosti z Newcastleu. Slova této písně však vystihovala pocity vojáků, kteří se toužili dostat z Vietnamu zpět domů za svými blízkými a stala se tak jejich hymnou naděje.

Dalším podžánrem rockové hudby vznikající v tomto období byl folk rock, který ve svých písních zrcadlil nespokojenost národa a podporoval jej v boji proti vládě i režimu. Mezi nejdůležitější představitele patřili Bob Dylan a Barry McGuire. McGuirova píseň “Eve of Destruction” pak nejlépe reprezentuje folkrockovou píseň bojující proti válce ve Vietnamu a kritizuje násilí i věk chlapců v branné povinnosti.

Nejrozšířenějším podžánrem konce šedesátých let, kdy byla na vrcholu i protiválečná hnutí v Americe, byl psychedelický rock. Ten se vyznačoval inovativními postupy jak po textové, tak i po hudební stránce. V tomto období vznikalo mnoho nových kapel a objevila se spousta dosud neznámých hudebníků. Řada z nich byla také součástí undergroundových a alternativních hnutí hippie. Mezi nejdůležitější počiny v rámci tohoto podžánru, které se zabývaly odbojem proti válce ve Vietnamu, se řadila například sanfranciská kapela Jefferson Airplane a jejich píseň “Volunteers” pojednávající o revoluci. Tato píseň opěvovala různorodost

protiválečných hnutí a zároveň upozorňovala na generační rozdíly v americké společnosti. The Doors, kapela známá především díky kontroverznímu zpěvákovi Jimu Morrisonovi pak vydala píseň “Unknown Soldier” kritizující média za to, že z násilí a smrti amerických vojáků ve Vietnamu udělala každodenní realitu, nad kterou už se nikdo nepodíval. Mezi další umělce tohoto podžánru patří Jimi Hendrix. Jeho výstižná a hlasitá píseň “Machine Gun” věnovaná americkým vojákům upozorňuje na nevyhnutelné důsledky války. Kapela Buffalo Springfield a jejich paranoiou oplétaná a realitou inspirovaná píseň “For What It’s Worth” pak reagovala na konflikt mezi policií a skupinami hippies v Kalifornii i na násilí, ke kterému docházelo. Kapela Creedence Clearwater Revival se pak od psychedelického rocku odvrátila a vrátila se k jednodušším kořenům brzkého rocku a folku. Jejich píseň “Fortunate Son” kritizuje brannou povinnost a privilegované členy bohaté třídy americké společnosti, kteří se díky svému postavení dokázali narukování vyhnout, a válkou ve Vietnamu tudíž nebyli natolik zasaženi.

Práce rovněž představila a rozebrala spontánní a živá vystoupení z festivalu Woodstock z roku 1969 kritizující válku ve Vietnamu jakožto jeden z největších projevů protiválečného hnutí. Umělci jako Richie Havens, Country Joe McDonald a Jimi Hendrix patřili mezi umělce s nejlepším a nejvýstižnějším projevem a vystoupením na tomto festivale.

První polovina sedmdesátých let pak zaznamenala odklon od psychedelického rocku a slábnutí protiválečných hnutí. Začátek sedmdesátých let však představoval vzestup mnoha sólových umělců i tvorbu nových podžánrů. Jedním z nejlepších sólových zpěváků této doby byl John Lennon, bývalý člen kapely The Beatles. Lennon se díky svým mírovým písním jako “Give Peace a Chance” anebo “Happy Xmas (War is Over)” zapsal do dějin jako nejúspěšnější mírový aktivista z dob války ve Vietnamu a jeho písně se staly symbolem míru a vzájemné tolerance. V neposlední řadě pak byla představena kapela Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, jejíž členové zprvu patřili do úspěšných kapel jako The Byrds, The Hollies a Buffalo Springfield. Ta pak dokázala se svou písní “Ohio” upozornit na stále trvající boj proti válce ve Vietnamu i na násilí, které s sebou přinesl jeden z nejnásilnějších protestů z roku 1970 odehrávající se na Univerzitě Kent, během něhož tragicky zemřeli čtyři studenti.

Všechny tyto písně povzbudily nejen americký národ ale i vojáky bojující ve Vietnamu, aby překonali těžké časy a vytvořili tak generaci schopnou vyjádřit svůj názor či nespokojenost. Staly se neoddělitelnou součástí éry vietnamské války

a některé z nich se zapsaly mezi protiválečné hymny a symboly míru po celém světě. Rocková hudba totiž odrážela různé problémy, kterým čelila americká společnost v době této války, jako jsou nespravedlivost loterie branné povinnosti, věk chlapců posílaných do Vietnamu, hrůza a brutalita války a důsledky, které s sebou válka ve Vietnamu přinesla. Tyto písně však vyjadřovaly i naději a upozorňovaly na důležitost míru a lásky. Některé z nich byly vytvořeny v rámci spontánního vystoupení, některé pouze reagovaly na skutečnosti a sociální problémy své doby a některé byly hned od začátku určené k tomu, aby se staly protiválečnými hymnami. Všechny se však staly neodmyslitelnou součástí této doby a zapsaly se na seznam nejvíce milovaných rockových písní všech dob. Tyto písně dokumentovaly americkou společnost v jejím nejnáročnějším období a staly se nejvlivnějším faktorem, který přispěl k revoluci šedesátých a sedmdesátých let. Zda byly tyto písně zodpovědné za pozměnění průběhu války ve Vietnamu nebo dokonce napomohly k jejímu konci, však není úplně jasné. Zřejmé však je, že tyto písně dokázaly pozvednout americký národ v době, kdy čelil velké zkoušce a pomohly ji tak snáze překonat.

Rockové písně z období války ve Vietnamu jsou nyní považovány za jedny z nejkreativnějších, nejnovativnějších, nejvlivnějších a nejoblíbenějších písní všech dob. Je to možná i proto, že žádné jiné období v historii USA nebylo tak revoluční a výbušné a americký národ ani hudba nikdy nezaznamenaly tak rychlý vývoj a přeměnu.

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Abstract

Author: Bc. Tereza Babralová
Department: Department of English and American Studies
Title of the thesis: Representations of the Vietnam War in Rock Music
Supervisor: Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D.
Number of pages: 96
Year of presentation: 2020
Key words: Vietnam War, anti-war movement, rock music, protest song

The thesis focuses on the reflections of the Vietnam War in rock music. The thesis provides an overview of the history of the Vietnam War and a look at anti-war and protest songs. The second part of the thesis is focused on the classification and analysis of selected anti-war rock songs.

Anotace

Autor: Bc. Tereza Babralová

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název práce: Odraz Války ve Vietnamu v rockové hudbě

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D.

Počet stran: 96

Rok obhajoby: 2020

Klíčová slova: Válka ve Vietnamu, protiválečná hnutí, rocková hudba, protestní písně

Diplomová práce se bude zabývat odrazem Války ve Vietnamu v rockové hudbě. Práce popíše historii Války ve Vietnamu a historii protiválečných a protestních písní. V druhé části se zaměří na rozdělení a rozbor vybraných rockových písní protiválečných autorů.