

# Chronicles of Diversity

*Your leadership weekly*



*Color your wilderness*

## *The Order of Wilderness Stuff Trekkers International, Tracking your Devil Music*

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“Why does the devil have all the good music?”

Or put into the context of another well known musical phrase, “If it weren’t for bad music, I’d have no music at all.”

As we near the zenith of the most musical season of the year, and the angels are all busy elsewhere, this week we shall fearlessly tread our trekking into the world of music.

The devil didn’t always have all the good music. Much of the music composed in the first couple of centuries following the Reformation, transformed the art and also the culture of those times. Classical music and other mediums of art led the way for societal reforms. Even in our present age we can still see the results of these gifted artists, transforming the artisans of culture into a society based on individual worth.

This neglected, but world changing linkage is briefly outlined in Francis Schaeffer’s book and video series, “How We Should Then Live.” Somewhat in that context, the devil has all the good music, because our culture worships the material pleasures of evil worldliness. Music and the other arts, cinema, literature, lead or follow worldly trends, somewhat dependent upon the giftedness, or lack thereof of the “artist.”

In the genre of Christian legalism it is easy to equate the creative gifts with the works of the devil, but this anathema gives the devil more power than he has. Satan only uses God given gifts to

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distract distorted minds from the truth of God's glory and His sovereignty. Nothing happens in this world that God has not allowed for His ultimate glory. Our short sighted pontificate statements altering not God's reality, but only our sinful, works oriented ego.

The classical age is passed. As we look at modern music, let us not lose sight of the fact that God created music not only for His glory, but for our edification. Just because we perceive that all good music as bad, does not change God's power to operate through this gift, for His glory. Music (all music) like no other art form has the power to tame the savage beast.

As we analyze music, the first things that must go are the connotations "good" and "bad." Especially in our slang when "bad" really means "good," Our desire to make everything relative to me and my feelings, shows that the absolutes of good and bad really don't cut it.

So here is the skinny, our typical good and bad ideas in parenthesis. There is moral (good) and immoral (bad) music. Music can not be neutral. Within each of those categories there is gifted (good), mediocre, and awful (bad). Most mediocre and awful music isn't worth listening too.

This puts us into a dilemma, because there is very little modern moral music that is gifted. So this leads us back to one of our original assumptions: If it weren't for bad (awful) music, I would have no music at all. Therefore, follows our first assumption, to have good (gifted) music I must listen to the devil's music, because any gifted, moral music is tucked between the cuts of immoral, gifted music, along with mediocre cuts of both moralities on our CD's and radio stations.

Even more disturbing is that there are some great moral lessons in songs that our classification system would call immoral. I suppose you have to say, paraphrasing an evangelistic slogan, "I love what the song has to say, I don't love the lifestyle it represents."

The song that keeps running through my mind that fits this scenario is "Friends in Low Places" made popular by Garth Brooks and written by Dewayne Blackwell and Bud Lee. Over my life I have known a number of superficial snobs. They are in reality just legalistic saints dressed in materialistic garb. I admit, it brings me pleasure to see them fall from phony grace. The thing I have learned however, is it is much more fun to wait and see how the Lord brings about this fall and not do it in my own cunning.

I know a lot more people who have used whiskey to drown and the beer to chase the blues away. There is something genuine in saying, but more in singing, that "I have the blues." Music, many times reinforced by some other crutch, helps to chase the blues away. It might also be said that without the music, only the crutch and the blues remain. Therein lies true sadness.

We all know Frank Sinatra's well known theme "I did it my way," written by Paul Anka. There are two ways to look at this: 1. This is the way I want to live my life. 2. Anyone who would think this is a way to live their life is one sick, expletive deleted. If you really want to feel the expletive deleted, just do a general internet search for the song title without the lyrics.

The point of both of these examples is there is a power in the music, well beyond the words. The words added to music has the power to change lives for the good, for the bad, or for the ugly. Is the risk of being changed to the bad or ugly, worth the risk of listening to music at all? Or being sinners saved by God's grace alone, can we listen to all types of music and be able to discern the bad and ugly as praise for God's mercy and grace? Before we answer these questions, let's briefly look at the Contemporary Christian Music scene.

Blame it all on my roots, I showed up in boots, and ruined your Christmas music affair. Riding back from Sammish Island last week, I had to listen to Spirit 105.3, "Your Real Meaning of Christmas Music Station."

Praise the Lord, I got to hear "Frosty the Snowman." I haven't listened to the whole recording of Frosty since I was a kid. It seems as only yesterday, because I remembered all the lyrics to the verses, I just had some problem remembering the order of the verses. But hey, when I was a kid, it still really snowed at every Christmas. That was a long time ago.

Now Frosty is a harmless children's Christmas song, except for the magic that changed him from a snowman into a person. It was good white magic, just like the purity of snow. Not that bad black magic beat and words of rap or contemporary rock. I can't tell the difference in these types of sorcery,

I know that is my fault finding spirit, the same problem I have with church harvest parties on Halloween. A little gluttony, a little Christmas commercialism, it's just the spirit of each season.

Following Frosty was a modern rendition of I think it was "Joy to the World." I have to admit I lost the song when I got involved in the bad (remember like awful) presentation. This contemporary corruption of the Christmas classic featured a full orchestra, real or canned I could not tell. The lead singer had a range of about three notes, not three octaves. His harmony was flat, it had to be harmony, no one would seriously think he just couldn't sing. Then again, his annunciation made our friend Garth sound like a classical tenor.

Luckily I wasn't driving, the whole experience might have made me get off the freeway and find a place to drown my sorrows and chase the blues away. I've got a Friend in High Places, and in my melancholy, how any of this, in any way relates to the real meaning of Christmas music is beyond my giftedness. Thankfully, after this Joy song was over, they announced how they turn down over \$500,000 a year in unsuitable advertising. They then began a series of commercials they did find suitable for my holy consumer ears. The station was changed, since we were almost home.

There is another popular song from a bygone era that seems to fit with this message "American Pie" by Don McLean. About the time that song was popular when we began to see the real death of music. Music didn't die in a day in the literal sense, but it does die in an age, and in a venue in which the artists write and sing music only to make a profit. It also dies in the same respect when anyone with a guitar, a few chords, limited talent, with no formal training, or unwilling to pay any dues, can be like famous, but sorry, Frank Sinatra and do it his way.

I have to confess, I don't listen to as much music as I would like. Because so much of it is dead. I also don't like dead churches. What I mean by both of those statements is music is dead and also the church because too often they are commercial enterprises. This is where it all comes full circle. The only salvation for the church and for music comes from God alone. God gifts certain people with the gift of music. If the church is unwilling or unable to use these gifted people they will find an audience, playing in a venue that we perceive that the devil holds all the tools, (but none of the gifts.)

Gifted music, either moral or immoral, portrays true life. Sad to say with so little gifted music in the church, the only source of music is from a worldly venue. Idolatry, whether that be a plastic Jesus, a plastic church, or plastic music, stems from complacency with plastic lives.

Mediocre and awful music exists because it was first allowed in the church. The ten commandments were once the basis for law and gospel preaching. Take out the law and you are left with a plastic gospel, plastic music, plastic people, and a plastic world. Only when the church ceases to proclaim a gospel of consumer kitsch, will we see change flow from the preaching of God's word. That is the power of God's word, and God's music.

So in this age, as Schaeffer pointed out, we should live by educating people on the attributes of gifted music. It might also be required, but I think it is obvious, education into the differences between moral and immoral behavior is appropriate. It is only into the vacuum of an empty and undisciplined mind and life can the chaos of Satan's scheme find a foothold. The problem with our age is that in many ways the lives of the parents are more empty and undisciplined than their children. Therefore, perhaps our hope in the future lies not with adults but with their children. Who being raised in a world of no discipline, understand that the good life is measured not in the abundance of plastic kitsch, but in personal holiness as a gift from God.

Riding back to our camp in the school bus from one of our outreaches on the Missions trip to Minnesota last summer, right around midnight, I was treated to the best experience I have ever had in a foretaste of the music of heaven, genuine worship. Now I was the oldest on the bus by only a spiritual few years. Except for me and Bill, the bus driver, we were the only people who were part of the establishment adults. What I don't understand is how the transition took place from the following song, into that taste of eternity. It must have been some type of God thing.

God is not going to allow music to do anything but to enrich the lives of His kids. No matter what their age. In music I believe you have the opportunity to experience life, many times without having to know the effects of whiskey, beer, drugs, or a broken life. Bad stuff happens in the world to God's people, but it doesn't come through music, it comes from other sources.

Music just isn't in the words, or in the tune, beat, or the rhythm. Music alone has the ability to transcend creation, for it truly is the essence of creation. That is why we perceive the devil has all the good music. He can use it to his advantage in the lives of his children. But all music to God's kids is a training ground for eternal life, there is nothing to fear, and the foretaste of eternity to gain. For once you have experienced the real transcendent music of the power God's Holy Spirit, the counterfeit worldly imitations can be discerned as cheap commercial fakes.

*Obladi oblada life goes on bra  
Lala how the life goes on  
Obladi Oblada life goes on bra  
Lala how the life goes on.*

*Desmond has a barrow in the market place  
Molly is the singer in a band  
Desmond says to Molly - girl I like your face  
And Molly says this as she takes him by the hand.*

*Obladi oblada life goes on bra  
Lala how the life goes on  
Obladi Oblada life goes on bra  
Lala how the life goes on.*

Case in point, I never liked Beatles music, growing up it was too worldly for my taste. Consequently, these young people knew Beatles songs better than I did. This both is a commentary on how degenerate society has become and how awful their music has gotten. By God's grace alone, these young people can change the world, by the music of the Joy of the Lord. One song at a time, Obladi Oblada life goes on bra, Lala how the life goes on.

Late that July night on a yellow school bus outside Bemidji Minnesota, I had a foretaste of that musical change, and I desire more. If you had been there you would too.