

## THE DAY THE MUSIC DIED

*With February 3, 2009 marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the plane crash in Iowa that killed Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and “The Big Bopper” on February 3, 1959 – the day that became known as “The Day the Music Died” – **Social Researcher Jeff Gilling from McCrindle Research** reflects upon the generational differences in our attitudes towards music as well as some of our music consumption habits.*

### BYE BYE, MISS AMERICAN PIE

Across all generations, 88% of people surveyed recognised the phrase “the day the music died” from somewhere. Of these who knew the phrase, **93% were able to correctly identify the song** which it emanated from – Don McLean’s ‘American Pie’. Tellingly, those generations who were in their youth at the time of the plane crash and/or at the time of the song’s initial release (i.e. Baby Boomers and Generation X), were more knowledgeable on these matters. Just 77% of Gen-Y’s identified the lyrics “the day the music died”.

- ♫ Whilst 91% of Baby Boomers and 92% of Gen-X’ers surveyed recognised the phrase The Day The Music Died, only 77% of Gen-Ys surveyed recognised the phrase.

### SHARING THE LOVE

**Over 3 in 4** parents (with children of high school age or older) revealed that they share some of their musical tastes with their children, often resulting in practices such as borrowing CDs and the like. This was consistent with our other findings whereby the majority of respondents stated that they had grown up listening to music **as a family** both at home (60%) and in the family car (51%).

63% of Baby Boomer parents surveyed reported they enjoyed listening to the music of their children’s generation, and most children enjoyed listening to the music of their parents’ generation (83%). Surprisingly though, it was the Baby Boomers who were the most disparaging regarding the music of their parents generation, while Gen-Y respondents (born between 1980 – 1995) expressed a real liking to the music of the 1950’s, 1960’s and 1970’s.

Generation Y, those born between 1980 and 1995 are largely the children of the Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964.

- ♪ 83% of Gen-Y's surveyed say they really enjoy listening to music of their parents generation
- ♪ Surprisingly, a high 62% of Baby Boomers surveyed say they really enjoy listening to the music of their children's generation.

**Quotes:**

**"The traditional generation gap is narrowing from both ends of the demographic spectrum."**

**"There are many areas of today's society where we are seeing evidence of the disappearing generation gap. Where there was once a chasm between the parents and children's generations on all manner of subjects, from clothing and hairstyles to activities and expectations, the generation gap has narrowed considerably."**

**"This is a trend driven in large part by the Baby Boomers and their quest to remain youthful. This is the generation that decided they would take 100 years to turn 50, and whether it be in their shopping habits – many Baby Boomer mothers are shopping for the same jeans as their Gen-Y daughters, - their social networking habits, - sending Facebook friend requests to their children's friends, or their music habits – listening to the music of their children's generation, there is a desire amongst Baby Boomers to remain young, cool, hip and contemporary, or at least to be perceived that way."**

**"Partly the trend is driven by the Gen-Y children themselves. As they update their music devices, they're passing on to their parents their old iPods and MP3 players, pre-loaded with a large selection of music from modern bands."**

**- Jeff Gilling, Director of Research at McCrindle Research**

These are some of the reasons given

- ♪ "Not only do the lyrics have a lot more meaning to them but the songs most people can actually relate to and understand. The songs in my parents'

generations were about issues and how people feel instead of a way to make a video clip that involved hot girls dancing half naked around you.”

- ♪ “Good music is good music regardless of age. Of course what makes it good to me is subjective. Music from the 60's has more 'soul' that is, more of the performers talent is evident rather than the techno-wizardry of today's acts and post processing to 'clean up' the sound. Today's music doesn't sound as real. The bands of today that I do like have some similarity to those of old”
  
- ♪ “I grew up with listening to lots of Records. If I had a choice of the era I was born it would have been in the 50's. I just love all that kind of music. I listen to 101.7 WS FM. Which has all the old Songs and some new' ones but most of it is in the 50's and sixties. I went to see Johnny O'Keefe when I was five in Port Macquarie. I have also seen Shout, Buddy Holly the musicals. I was in the car driving with a friend and she said to me how do you know all these songs and the artists. I told her that I had my father to thank for that because he was all into the music. I also like new songs. But WS FM 101.7 has everything.”
  
- ♪ “songs have better melodies and lyrics than music currently around. Songs were simpler and they represented much better the mood and feeling of people and society at the time”
  
- ♪ “because it takes me back to a great time in my life when as a child everything was carefree, fun and without any of the hassles one faces as we grow up into adults”
  
- ♪ “They seemed to have a lot more talent back then - they relied on talent rather than just a fancy video clip!”
  
- ♪ “A lot of the music of my parents' generation is more cleverly written than a lot of the music in the charts today and it's also almost always original. There are too many covers these days and much less melodic music and well thought out music.”
  
- ♪ “Good tunes, lyrics that one could hear and sing along with and non-headache inducing!”
  
- ♪ “the music always told a story and there was no need for vulgar language or virtually naked women in clips to sell it”

- ♪ “Because you can understand the words, the songs don't go on and on, they don't repeat the chorus 100 times during the song, most of them have a catchy beat, its easy listening, they are just classics.”
  
- ♪ “Because they are classics. It defined their generation and made a significant impact on my life while growing up. When you recall memories of your childhood it is almost like they are the soundtrack to your life.”
  
- ♪ “the music from the sixties and the eighties was the best of all time - dance music with rhythm and beat but also easy enjoyable listening”
  
- ♪ “Well, my parents played they're music often when I was younger and growing up, it was all I knew. So now that I'm older now, I know and definitely enjoy all of the songs that they do.”
  
- ♪ “I feel like music today is a unpleasant regurgitation of what my parents used to listen to. When I put on the record or any tapes, cds they had - I can tell and feel that its original and cool. Today's music sort of rips that off - I'm talking about rap, hip hop and the crappy pop music. I'm leaving out indie music - because at least there is something interesting and original left in that.”
  
- ♪ “Because they were very true stories that happened in their childhood..It's one easy song to remember it's one about the deaths of Buddy holly & Ritchie Valens & the big bopper in a plane crash in 1959..One everyone should know. U can understand & actually understand what they were feeling at the time. I love this type of music it had meaning to it..”
  
- ♪ “The songs actually have storylines, instead of doof doof doof through most of the music.”

### **Why else are Baby Boomers listening to more music of their children's generation?**

One reason is because of the second-hand iPod's they inherit from their tech-savvy Gen-Y children who regularly update their technology devices.

- ♪ Only one in ten (13%) of those aged over 40 know how to replace inherited songs with their old favourites according to a recent survey of 1000 people by digital music service eMusic.

#### **Quotes:**

**"Having grown up with vinyl and seen the launch of innovations such as the Sony Walkman, Discman, mini-discs players, and now digital MP3 tracks, the majority of parents are confused and have to rely on their children to download music for them."**

**"Gen-Y's are digital natives. For them technology is a given. It's the air they breathe. For the Baby Boomers and many Gen X'ers, the digital immigrants, and digital adapters, the new technology formats present something of a barrier to entry."**

**"This is another very good example where sociologically, we are seeing for the first time the older members of society learning from the young. The trend of this role reversal, that has only emerged in recent decades has gained pace with an ever increasing array of new technology."**

**"As the pace of technology increases, and as the length of time between new models being introduced to the market decreases, there is increasing confusion amongst the older generations, as to how to use much of the technology. They have become reliant on the digital natives."**

- Jeff Gilling

### **What is the most downloaded song from iTunes?**

Given the affinity of Gen-Y to their iPod's and mp3's one might expect the most downloaded song in iTunes history to be a contemporary track, something from recent times.

What is the most downloaded catalogue track in iTunes history? Well, it turns out that the most downloaded catalogue track in iTunes history is actually "Don't Stop Believing" by Journey. In fact, it's the first catalogue song to ever reach 2 Million in digital sales.

Originally released in 1981, the song topped the Billboard charts at #8. The song, however, has made a modern day comeback and has become something of a pop culture phenomenon after being featured in films and on popular TV shows such as *Laguna Beach*, *Scrubs*, *South Park*, *Shrek*, *The Wedding Singer*, *Family Guy*, and more famously on *The Sopranos*.

#### **Quote:**

**"It is testament to the ability of popular culture - film and television - to influence the likes of a generation that a song, 27 years after its original release in 1981 can become the most popular song downloaded on a format predominantly used by the next generation but one."**

**- Jeff Gilling**

## LISTEN UP!

If you thought that MP3s had completely replaced CDs by now, then you thought wrong! Our survey results showed that CDs topped the list as the most common format by which survey respondent's listen to music – this was consistent across all generations. Similarly, listening to the radio in the car and listening to MP3s (and other computer file formats) were consistently the second- and third-most common way survey respondents consume music respectively. However, the proportions associated with both using the car radio and MP3s significantly decreased with age.

And vinyl is making a comeback....!

**“Video may well have killed the radio star, but iPods and mp3 players are not killing the vinyl record – In 2008 twice the number of vinyl records were sold than in 2007.”**

## THE TIMES ARE A-CHANGIN’

- ♪ 7 in 10 agreed that today's music won't be remembered in decades to come.
- ♪ 58% agreed that today's artists won't be remembered in decades to come. However, those who disagree most commonly cited Coldplay and P!nk as those whose music we will continue to celebrate.
- ♪ Among the music genres that survey respondents anticipated will wane in popularity significantly over the next half-century, the top responses were hip-hop/rap (79%), dance/techno (73%) and heavy metal (67%).
- ♪ Meanwhile rock (83%), country (65%), blues (65%) and jazz (63%) were all seen as continuously enduring genres of music.

### Quote:

**“We are going to see an increasing demand for the music from the 50's 60's 70's. As the Baby Boomers begin their slow march into retirement, they are returning to the music of the times of their formative life experiences, the music that defined their youth. We'll see more films, more musical productions and stage shows with the soundtrack to their lives. Recently Mamma Mia was a hit on the big screen, and Buddy The Musical begins its three city tour at Sydney's Star City tonight. We'll likely see more ageing rockers come out of retirement for final farewell concert tours.”**

- Jeff Gilling

## ROLLING LIKE THUNDER, UNDER THE COVERS

- ♪ When asked how they felt about musicians re-recording the cover songs of earlier artists, nearly 1 in 5 people surveyed responded "It's lazy. You should never mess with the original recording."

### Baby Boomers:

When asked how they felt about a music being re-mixed or a cover version being done by another artist, nearly one in five (19%) of Baby Boomers surveyed thought it's lazy – that you should never mess with the original, - musicians should perform their own music or not perform at all".

### In their own words:

- ♪ "I am usually disappointed with any version of an original. When you love an original, nothing can top that. However, there are circumstances when I can tolerate a remake, perhaps when the original artist has died or perhaps a talent or entertainment show. I can respect the artist, if it honours the original and is well done. But my favourite usually remains... the original."
- ♪ "Not many covers are better than the original. Most covers slaughter the original and make me cringe."

### Generation-X:

13% of Gen-Xers surveyed thought the same.

- ♪ "Most re-mixes are crap. Occasionally one will work, but not often"

### Generation-Y:

18% of Gen-Y's surveyed thought the same

- ♪ "ok as long as it showcases their actual talent.. not just chiming in on a song which once had high record sales"

**In a December 2008 web survey Madonna's 2000 version of Don McLean's 1971 classic American Pie was selected as the worst cover version of all time.**



**What are the 10 most covered songs of all time?**

1. Yesterday (The Beatles)
2. Eleanor Rigby (The Beatles)
3. Cry Me a River (Julie London)
4. And I Love Her (The Beatles)
5. (I Can't Get No) Satisfaction
6. Imagine (John Lennon)
7. Summertime (Abbie Mitchell)
8. Blackbird (The Beatles)
9. Over the Rainbow (Judy Garland)
10. The Look of Love (Dusty Springfield)

**Source:** *Survey sent to more than 1600 people on McCrindle Research online research panel*

For comment, interview or further analysis, please contact:

**Jeff Gilling:** M: +61 41 22 66 530 E: [jeff@mccrindle.co.nz](mailto:jeff@mccrindle.co.nz)

**Mark McCrindle:** M: +61 411 5000 90 E: [mark@mccrindle.co.nz](mailto:mark@mccrindle.co.nz)

or telephone: +61 2 8824 3422 [www.mccrindle.co.nz](http://www.mccrindle.co.nz)

[www.mccrindleresearch.com](http://www.mccrindleresearch.com)