
Item 2

Pop music at core of youth culture

Parents of young people who can't tell heavy metal from pop rock may have a tough time discussing the meaning of life with their children, say two authors of a new book on youth and music. That's because music is central to youth culture. At a young person's party, the key question is not what you do but what music you listen to.

On average young people listen to music and watch music videos for four to five hours a day, which is more time than they spend with their friends outside of school or watching television. "Music matters to young people and they cannot be understood without a serious consideration of how it fits into their lives," the authors say.

"Music alters and intensifies their moods, provides much of their slang and dominates their conversations. Music styles define the crowds and groups they are part of. Music personalities provide models for how they act and dress."

Many scholars have viewed television as the central media influence on young people, but these authors stress that young people devote more time and intensity to music.

Young people use music most to control moods and emotions. "Music can make a good mood better and allow us to 'work through' a bad one", they say.

When young people tell their parents that the "sound" of music matters more to them than the lyrics, there is considerable evidence to support them. For many young people, "music is often a background activity rather than an upfront one. It can serve as a backdrop to other activities: reading, studying, talking, housework, driving," the authors say.

However, they also point out that young people use music to gain information about the adult world, or to withdraw from social contact. They use a Walkman as a barrier (not unlike an adult hiding behind a newspaper at the breakfast table), to ease friendships and social settings, or to help them create a personal identity.

A review of a book called 'It's Not Only Rock & Roll'.