

Rolling Stones best band ever?

COLLEGE PRESS EXCHANGE

A philosophy professor known in academic circles as a pioneer in quantitative aesthetic theory has developed his own mathematical formula for judging rock bands and their music.

And according to the calculations of Crispin Sartwell of Penn State University, the Rolling Stones are a better rock band than the Beatles.

The basic reason, says the 39-year-old professor, is that the Beatles departed from rock 'n' roll's African-American blues traditions in order to become avant-garde artists.

The very symbol of their downfall, he says, is the seminal "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," an album Sartwell describes as "truly bad."

"It has a very European tonality. It is Umpah-band stuff," the professor says.

By contrast, the Rolling Stones rarely presented themselves as anything but a straight blues band, Sartwell explains.

"Mick Jagger never mistook himself for Pavarotti or T.S. Eliot. Keith Richards never tried to do anything but make great little riffs," he said.

However irksome this may be to Beatle fans around the world, Sartwell says his conclusions are no simple matter of opinion. Rather they are distilled from an empirical analysis that turns on a pair of principles appropriately named, Sartwell's Laws.

Sartwell's First Law dictates that the quality of a rock band is inversely proportional to its pretentiousness, with pretentiousness expressed as a ratio of artistic ambition to artistic accomplishment. The higher the rating, the professor says, the worse the band.

In this manner, the Ramones, with a ratio of 1:8, come out better than The Talking Heads, with a 7:7 ratio. Nirvana, at 3:9, is just as good as Pearl Jam is bad, at 9:3.

Sartwell also offers a specific warning about the quality of early U2 and early Bruce Springsteen, saying both were in the habit of taking simple ditties and mounting them with "an elaborateness usually reserved for Wagnerian opera".

But, where the Beatles fell short was under Sartwell's Second Law. To wit, the quality of a rock song varies inversely as the square of its distance from the blues.

White pop music performers from Benny Goodman and Elvis Presley to the Stones and the Beatles have succeeded by taking African-American music and repackaging it for mass audiences, Sartwell says. And the closer

they have remained to the real thing, the better their music has been.

"Twist and Shout' and other early Beatles songs sound like they were recorded yesterday," he said. "But 'For the Benefit of Mr. Kite!' sounds like the relic of an extinct, incomprehensible culture."

The Rolling Stones do as well as the Ramones on the Sartwell system with a ratio of 1:8.

"That's about as good as it gets," the professor says.

On the other hand, the Beatles of the Sgt. Pepper era wind up with a rating of 8:2.

"In '64 or '65, the Beatles were one of the best R&B bands ever to play," he said. "The stuff was wonderful and I'd put it in the same category as the Stones. It was with 'Rubber Soul' that they really started to slip."

Student disputes sage burning in dormitory

COLLEGE PRESS EXCHANGE

When University of Pittsburgh student Fred Sinkevich burned sage in his dorm room during his freshman year, two resident advisors pounded on his door, demanding the history major put it out.

"They said it was a violation of dorm policy," Sinkevich said, who is part Lakota. "Smudging with sage and sweet grass is part of my heritage, and I do it as a spiritual ceremony."

Now a senior at the University of Pittsburgh, he is still battling university officials over his right to pray.

Last April, Robert Gallagher, interim vice chancellor for student affairs, reaffirmed the school policy on sage burning.

"The University cannot permit you to burn anything within your residence hall room even as a religious rite," he said, citing the student code of conduct.

Although the school bans the burning of incense, candles and "like materials" because of fire danger, Gallagher offered to find an alternative place for Sinkevich to pray.

"He preferred to do it in his room and we can understand that," Gallagher said. "We have a no smoking policy in the dorm rooms and we decided that it took priority."

Sinkevich is the president and founder of the University of Pittsburgh's Native American Student Association and has been working with school officials to create a Native American studies certificate.

"Basically, they were just wasting my time," he said of his talks with school officials. "In the places where there was privacy, burning sage would violate the smoking rules. It came down to them

telling me that I could burn sage in the chemistry lab under the hood."

Although Gallagher described the situation as "pretty much resolved," Sinkevich said he will continue to try to change university policy. A London lawyer has volunteered to help him fight the university.

According to Bob Perego and Keith Harper, attorneys for the Washington, D.C.-based Native American Rights Fund, although private schools can dictate students' religious practices, public institutions, such as Pittsburgh cannot.

"The chances of winning a case like this depend on whether or not the state has its own American Indian Religious Freedom Act in place," Perego said.

A ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court two months ago overturned the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, removing the obligation of the state to prove that its laws and policies were the least restrictive possible on the right to free exercise of religion.

"Based on that decision, the courts can hold that a neutral law, like one that bans smoking, doesn't impermissibly burden religious freedom," Perego said.

Sinkevich said that he is motivated by the same concern that led him to start the Native American Student Association.

"I'm not doing this for me, I'm doing it for the next American Indian students who come to the University of Pittsburgh," he said.

Colleges deal with beer

COLLEGE PRESS EXCHANGE

The most recent case of binge drinking that caused the death of a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has led a number of college administrators to review their policies on alcohol abuse.

In the South, both the University of Florida and the University of Miami send every incoming freshman through an alcohol abuse program.

Florida A&M doesn't allow the sale of alcohol on campus and holds an alcohol awareness program each year before spring break, while Florida St. University has banned fraternities from serving alcohol.

All four of those Florida schools also offer support programs for students with drinking problems.

At the University of North Carolina, where five students died in a fire at a fraternity house after a heavy night of drinking last year, the school's Executive Vice Chancellor Elson Floyd says changing the environment is key.

UNC went so far as to scheduling 8 a.m. classes to discourage Thursday night partying and has forbidden alcohol advertisements on its network sports broadcasts.

Miami is still investigating charges of minors being served alcohol and acting as bartenders at the Sigma Chi fraternity house.



(L-R): Poetic and Frukwan of the rap group Gravediggaz appeared on WUSC Monday to promote the release of their upcoming CD, *The Pick, the Sickle and the Shovel*. The Gravediggaz also feature RZA and Prince Paul, who were absent from the interview.

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