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Gospel with a Groove: A Historical Perspective on the Marketing Strategies of Contemporary Christian Music in Relation to its Evangelistic Purpose with Recommendations for Future Outreach

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GOSPEL WITH A GROOVE:
A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE MARKETING STRATEGIES OF
CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MUSIC IN RELATION TO ITS EVANGELISTIC
PURPOSE WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE OUTREACH

by

Autumn Elizabeth Gillen

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Abstract

Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) is an effective tool for the evangelism of Christianity. With its origins dating back to the late 1960s, CCM resembles musical styles of popular-secular culture while retaining fundamental Christian values in lyrical content. This historical perspective of CCM marketing strategies, CCM music television, CCM and secular music, arts worlds within CCM, and the science of storytelling in CCM aims to provide readers with the context and understanding of the significant role that CCM plays in modern-day evangelism. This thesis will present CCM as an integrational religious style of music, meaning that it targets both Christian and non-Christian audiences. The writer has included specific case studies that provide evidence for CCM as an integrational art world. Finally, the paper will expound on the dilemma of evangelical American churches to accomplish cultural relevance without compromising religious worship tradition. The writer encourages the reader to entertain the idea of combining tradition and contemporary musical styles to evangelize and minister to more audiences. It is the hope of the writer that through this thesis, the reader will experience a greater appreciation for contemporary Christian music styles.

Keywords: contemporary Christian music, art worlds, marketing, music Industry, evangelistic strategies

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THE GOSPEL WITH A GROOVE:
A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF CHRISTIAN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC MARKETING
STRATEGIES AND THEIR EVANGELISTIC PURPOSE

The modern Contemporary Christian Music Industry (CCM) mirrors the evangelistic strategy that the Apostle Paul urged the church of Corinth to utilize in the New Testament of the Bible. In 1 Corinthians 9:22, Apostle Paul addresses the church of Corinth:

To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you (KJV).

The apostle is offering his reasoning for accepting specific traditions and characteristics of a foreign culture so that he could create the opportunity of evangelizing to its people. Paul is not encouraging the church members to act outside of Yahweh's commandments, but is instead encouraging them to act within the commandments and to find ways to lawfully evangelize to people of other cultural traditions.

CCM functions as the vehicle to carry the gospel from the saved to the unsaved while satisfying the demand for the commodity of music. The industry was birthed in the 1970s and was an outcome of the Jesus People Movement. The Jesus People Movement was a, "revitalization movement" that served as a counterculture movement against traditional church protocol and structure (Smith, 2003, p. 34). The Jesus People Movement was a synthesis of orthodox Christian values with postmodern actualities that gave birth to new denominations and actions. Many young hippies began converting to Christianity and joining Pentecostal-style churches. They adopted the traditional religious music styles and fused them with the new

modern music styles. The movement's earliest recognized birth was in the 1960's at Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, California. Calvary Chapel, a 3,000-member non-denominational church, was a part of a new church movement spreading across Southern California that welcomed the hippie culture into their congregation. Calvary Chapel's lead pastor Chuck Smith is acknowledged in historians as the leading figure of the Jesus Movement, a movement that thrived in southern California from 1960 to 1975. His strong desire to evangelize and witness to the young and vibrant hippie culture helped attract younger people to join his congregation. Smith preached to the youth of his congregation and delivered a faithfully conservative theological message (Vega, 2014, p.11). Belief in the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, was crucified and raised to life three days later, and that salvation comes from believing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior were beliefs held and taught at Calvary Chapel (Smith, 2003, pp. 572-575). Smith's message that one need only to confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and savior and convert to Christianity to be saved drew the attention of outside groups that had been formerly shunned by churches for their lifestyles and attires. This message accentuated that, "one did not have to leave behind one's identity" to be saved; therefore, encouraging young Christians to continue in their hippie fashion (Vega, 2014, p. 11). Thus, the youth of Calvary Chapel congregation continued dressing in their hippie attire and began fusing hippie culture with Christian truths. They began writing faith-based lyrics to popular songs and composing music in the style of popular secular music. This music was recognized by historians as the earliest form of CCM, born out of Southern California. This new music sounded like popular secular music, but instead of focusing on topics like sex, drugs, or alcohol, it's lyrics focused on Christian truths. For example, the 1969 Larry Norman

borrowed the instrumental style of folk balls to compose “I Wish We’d All Been Ready,” a song that focused on the Christian belief of the rapture that will occur when the Christian Messiah returns to the earth. Likewise, in 1975 while Marvin Gaye was singing about desiring the love of a woman that did not love him in his Rhythm and Blues song “I Want You,” Andrae Crouch was using the same style to sing about how Jesus loved him and rescued him from his sin in “Can’t Nobody Do Me Like Jesus.”

Another monumental feat for the CCM industry was the creation of Christian record labels. One of the first self-identifying Christian record labels was Word Records which was founded in 1951 by Jarrell McCracken, Henry SoRelle, and Ten Snider. The label’s mission was to work and develop artists who were performing the new “Jesus rock” (Romanowski, 1990, p.109). Today, the record group has signed several popular Christian music artists including Francesca Battistelli, Big Daddy Weave, Group 1 Crew, Family Force 5, Needtobreathe, and Sidewalk Prophets. In California, Chuck Smith decided to fully invest in the growing number of Christian musicians and artists that were a part of the Calvary Chapel, so in 1971 he founded Maranatha! Music as a nonprofit ministry of the church. The record label signed artists such as Daniel Amos, Chuck Girard, Children of the Day, and Mustard Seed Faith. Over the course of the next 20 years, new Christian record labels were created and acquired by many *secular* record labels. Universal Music Group, for example, owns Capitol Music Group which encompasses several record labels under its umbrella including the Capitol Christian Music Group. This music group owns Sparrow Records and ForeFront Records, both major Christian record labels. Additionally, in 1974 ABC bought ownership of Word Records, and in 1992, EMI acquired Sparrow Music (Brown, 1984, p.114). The sales for CCM totaled to \$720 million in 2011, with

Christian radio enjoyed by 5.5 percent of total radio audiences (Morgan, 2012, p.433). These numbers continue to grow with each passing year, and CCM has become a forceful genre of the music industry. Christians provide a niche market for the music industry, and the Christian market has the potential for growth as more and more people convert to Christianity. America is home to 80 million white evangelical Christians, which provides an excellent window of opportunity to the CCM industry (Lindenbaum, 2009, p.1). Another important characteristic of the Christian market is its reliability. People who convert to Christianity are tend to be Christians for the rest of their lives. This means that marketers and artists can rely on the same audience for an extended period of time. Many genres are associated with seasons of life and attitudes that change with age. CCM, however, produces music that is inspired by the timeless truths of Christianity.

CCM allowed for Christians for attend and participate in music festivals without having to forsake their beliefs. The late 60s & early 70s was the era of Woodstock festivals and hippie culture, and just as the popular-secular culture was celebrating Woodstock, Christians were celebrating their own culture with “music, testimonies, and speakers” (Reid, 2004, p.58). The first of these festivals was the Faith Festival in Evansville, Indiana in March of 1970. Thousands of Christians attended and listened to “Pat Boone and several folk-rock Christians groups” share the message of hope and salvation (Drum, 1987, pg. 48). Rock artists such as Danny Taylor, Larry Norman and Crimson Bridge were featured artists in the festival. The festival was so successful that the following year, it was repeated. This time there were 15,000 people in attendance and CBS television featured coverage of the event. These festivals offered the exciting outdoor festival environment without the drugs, nudity, violence, and other misconduct.

A good insight into these CCM festivals is a 2003 documentary filmed by Vickie Hunter and Heather Whinna in which viewers were given differing viewpoints on the good and bad of CCM. Major portions of the documentary were filmed at the Cornerstone Christian music festival in Busnell, Illinois. Today, these Christian music festivals continue. The 2017 Atlanta Fest, for example, is a “life changing 3-day event” for Christians to listen to the top Christian bands, hear from Christian speakers, and camp with family and friends (Atlantafest Promotions, 2017).

During the 1980s, Christian artists such as Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, and the Imperials were introduced into the industry. It was Amy Grant, however, who proved to be the one of the most efficacious of Christian artists. Just a “fresh-faced teenager” from Nashville, Tennessee, Amy Grant went on to become the “first artist in Christian music to have a platinum record” (Management, 2015, para.1). Her successful transition into the secular music industry from the Christian industry gave hope that the industry could expand its market. This transition from an exclusively Christian audience to a secular audience was evident in Grant’s lyrics which became progressively more ambiguous and vague. The success became more apparent when Grant released her 1991 *Heart In Motion* album. On the album, Grant featured her song “Baby Baby” which became an instant hit on the Billboard Hot 100 for a few weeks. This feat allowed her to become the first CCM artist to produce a #1 single in the United States and to receive international fame on the charts.

By the 1990’s, the CCM Industry was booming, producing albums that were very popular among Christians and non-Christian listeners. The popular grunge rock/ hip-hop group called dc Talk released their 1995 *Jesus Freak* album. The album served as a catapult for the group, helping them attain a new secular audience. The switching of labels from Forefront Records (a

Christian record label) to Virgin Records (a popular-secular record label) symbolized the groups focus on reaching a mainstream audience instead of focusing-in on their Christian audience.

In modern times, the CCM industry is still profitable and has a niche market. Even with the birth of digital music, internet downloading/streaming, and piracy, the CCM industry has adapted and remained true to its target audience - Christians. Christian radio stations such as K-Love broadcast a variety of Christian music and shows on traditional FM radio and through their online streaming service. As a whole, the global music industry has experienced lost profit from pirated music websites with the digitalization of music. After all, why would a consumer buy a \$12.99 album when they can download it for free from a pirated music site? Thus, the industry can no longer rely on physical album sales but must depend on merchandise, concerts, and tours. In 2013 the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) valued the global record industry at approximately \$15 billion with 45% of that revenue coming from a digital platform and only 39% from physical record sales. Even though the industry has lost profit, the sales of digital music have been growing in the past years and the record industry has had to evolve and adjust with the times. CCM record labels and artists have recognized this change in demand and have changed their techniques to appear more relevant. Many CCM artists, for example, create and manage their own social media platforms. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and YouTube allow CCM artists and labels to communicate their goals, advertise their concerts/tours, and sell their music and merchandise. CCM is also widely available on iTunes, Spotify, Pandora and other popular music streaming sites, making it accessible to anyone with a Wi-Fi connection.

Even with its popularity among evangelicals, this new religious song form was met with opposition when it was first arising because of its similarity to rock 'n roll and other secular music styles. Many church critics felt that because of the sexuality and rebellious nature of rock'n roll, Christians should not mimic its style or culture. Rock 'n roll hits such as Steppenwolf's "Born To Be Wild" became an "anthem for defiant individualism" (Inglis, 2003, p.13), and Elvis Presley's gyrating pelvis dance moves forever stamped rock 'n roll as a sexual and rebellious cultural movement in opposition to Biblical principles of obedience to authority and sexual purity. Many critics used John 15:19 (KJV) as a qualifier for their arguments:

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

Christians against CCM argued that because the Bible teaches that Christians should seek to resemble *God's* character, they should separate themselves from the culture of rock 'n roll and other popular-secular music styles. Despite the disparagement from critics, young hippie church goers continued to write and perform relevant-style church music that included Christian lyrics about grace, truth, and salvation. One of the first CCM pioneer artist was Larry Norman. Norman was the Bob Dylan figure for the CCM industry, combining political and social commentary with rock music, Norman was on the "cutting edge" (Pulliam, 2008, para. 4). His best-selling album, *Only Visiting This Planet*, proved to be ground breaking in the world of Christian music and was voted "Number 1 Christian recording of all time by CCM magazine" (Romanowski, 1990, p. 119). The album featured the song "Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music?," a song that challenged the traditional Christian perspective on Christian art and music and made Christians question their fear of rock 'n roll. In this song, Norman sings:

I know what's right, I know what's wrong/I don't confuse it

All I'm really trying to say/Is why should the devil have all the good music? /And I feel
good every day/Because Jesus is the rock and He rolled my blues away

In this passage, Norman explains that he understands the moral right and wrong, and that by playing “good music,” he is not mixing the good with the bad (Larrynormanlyrics.com, 2013, para. 2). There were several rumors and controversies regarding Norman and his reliability as a Christian musician, and for several years his controversial records were banned from many Christian book stores. In a 1980 interview, Norman was asked if he was “anti-church,” in response he said:

“...I have to tolerate the rumors and outright attacks by my Christian brothers and sister, who simply don't understand that I am fighting on another part of the battlefield but I am fighting with them...using a different sort of weapon than the one they fight best with”
(Norman, 1980, p.30).

Even in modern times there exists an “uncomfortable tension that comes from blending art, faith, and commerce” (Hurst, 2006, para. 2). From this tension, the debate over evangelism versus commerce arises. One side argues that Christian musicians who profit from concerts, albums, merchandise, and airplay distort and manipulate the message of the gospel. While the opposing side explains that by commercializing and rebranding Christianity, believers can reach more people with message of the gospel. In this thesis, the writer will argue the latter.

It is important to analyze the evangelistic characteristics of CCM because the message of CCM is critical – it is a matter of life or death. Christianity claims its teachings are objectively true. Because of these claims to truth, there is only one way for a person to attain salvation –

“declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead” (Rom. 10:9 New International Version). Per Craig, the New Testament is straight-forward about salvation.

“The universality of sin and uniqueness of Christ's atoning death entail that there is no salvation apart from Christ. As the apostles proclaimed, ‘There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved’ (Acts 4.12).”

Ultimately, if a person refuses to believe in the truth of the Christian Gospel, they are refusing to accept the truth of their sinful state and refuse the gift of salvation. It is then reasonable to argue that the message of CCM is something that should be treasured and sanctified, not neglected and decrepit. Likewise, music is utilized by the Christian religion to “bring people closer to the perceived presence of the Divine” (Vega, 2012, p. 366). The unexplainable power of music combined with the irreplaceable truth of the gospel is a powerful combination that is fit for analyzation.

Definition of Terms

CCM music is as a form of Integrational Contemporary Religious Music because it is designed to grasp a Christian and non-Christian audience. Christian music can be defined as music that is, “composed by a Christian, performed by Christians, consumed by Christians and for Christian purposes in the biblical sense of it” (Adedeji, 2006, p.233). Christian purposes include evangelizing the message of the gospel to non-believers. Three major elements are considered essential for a piece of music to be considered “Christian.” The composer or writer of the music must be a Christian either “in the sense of Christianity as a religion or in the real

(biblical) sense of it.” The music should have a gospel-related message to communicate. Common themes include, “praise/worship, invitation, faith, exhortation, Holy Spirit, baptism, spiritual warfare, eschatology, prayer and prophecy.” The important aspect of this includes lyrics that are “biblically sound” or void of all false theology that contradicts Biblical principles. Lastly, the music must possess, “biblical aims and objectives.” While a CCM artist may wield the objective of earning a steady income and selling a specific amount of records, the ultimate goal of the Christian musician is to “evangelize, to give praise to God, to admonish/exhort, to reprove, to lift spirit up and to comfort” (Adedeji, 2006, p.234). To continue, the term “contemporary” refers to music with a style that “closely reflects the style of music available in the mainstream music market.” Drum defines contemporary music as music “of greatest sales popularity and with a definite youth orientation” (Drum, 1987, p. 5). CCM is a facet of Contemporary Religious Music. The two categories of CRM include “Communal Contemporary Religious Music” and “Integrational Contemporary Religious Music.” Communal CRM features “music created by members of a religious community. . . intended for consumption within their community.” While integrational CRM features “music produced by the religious people that reaches audiences within their religious community and in the wider secular culture.” Finally, the word “success” is defined by the “sale of physical records,” as well as the “sale of digital music.” It is also necessary to define the difference between gospel music and sacred music. Gospel music is music that is created by Christians for use within the worship service and outside of the service. Sacred music is music that is composed specifically for worship services and not outside of it. The Gospel Music Association (GMA) is the official umbrella for all CCM in today’s music industry. Every year the association hosts the Dove Awards where they award

artists, bands, and producers for categories from worship album of the year to CCM rap/hip hop album of the year. The mission of GMA, displayed promptly on their website, is to “expose, promote and celebrate the gospel through music,” and to serve as a "vehicle for those that are proclaiming the powerful message of the Gospel" (Gospel Music Association, 2015, para. 3). Because it is composed by Christians and intended for use outside of the church worship service. Lastly, evangelism is defined as, “the spreading of the Christian gospel by public preaching or personal witness” (Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2016). The term is derived from the Greek “euangelion” which means “good news” (Risi, 2007, p. 56).

The terms conservative and liberal are used in the discussion between CCM and secular music to differentiate between two schools of thought regarding contemporary and traditional worship service styles for Christianity. The term conservative is appropriate for traditional Christian structure and style. Traditional hymnals fall into this category because they are traditions that the American church has practiced for the past 200 years or more. The term liberal, however, is purposed to define the school of thought in Christianity that believes the traditional can be modified and combined with secular styles. New contemporary services are liberal because they are open-minded to new traditions and styles. The writer is not using these terms to identify the political views of Christians who belong to these school of thoughts. With the writer's definition, there could be Christian leaders who subscribe to the conservative perspective on Christian musical style but who also identify as registered Democrats, and vice versa.

Literature Review

To understand how the CCM industry uses marketing strategies to evangelize, it is important to analyze peer-reviewed literature. In reviewing the literature, I hope to discover the answers to my research questions: Is CCM integrational or communal? What marketing strategies are currently being used by the industry? This review will analyze literature focusing on the subtopics of CCM marketing strategies, CCM music television, CCM and secular music, art worlds within CCM, and the science of storytelling in CCM.

CCM Marketing Strategies

CCM marketing strategies run almost parallel to popular-secular music marketing strategies because the goals of profit and the goals of evangelism can be compared as equivalents (Romanowski, 1990, p.21). Success in the popular-secular music industry is measured by the total number of record sales, airplay, and concert tickets sold; similarly, success in the CCM industry is measured by the total number of souls saved and ministered to (which is typically measured in record sales, airplay, and concert tickets sold). While the two industries are identical in their measuring standards, they are different in that the goal of CCM is to minister the gospel while the goal of popular-secular music is to profit.

As for the target of these marketing strategies, both the early developmental state and the current state of the CCM industry target teen audiences and young adults (Parascandalo, 2013, p. 206). By targeting these audiences, CCM appeals to a future generation of Christians and increases the likelihood that Christianity will continue to be present in secular society. This idea is common in marketing strategies due to the study of identity formation. Identity formation occurs in adolescence and allows the adolescent to understand their individual role in society

through association with an ideology and culture. Erikson wrote that identity formation provides direction and purpose to an adolescent's life, as they grow and learn how their personality, skills, and knowledge will transfer over to adulthood (Erikson, 1968, p. 22). An adolescent, who is developing from child to adult, is receptive to new ideas and easily persuaded because of inexperience and naivety. By exploring new ideologies and cultures, the adolescent is determining their identity. These young listeners of CCM will one day grown up to become the future leaders of and contributors to society, and they will be responsible for maintaining societal structure. When young Christians listen to CCM, they refine their Christian worldview, the lens through which they see the world, which guarantees transference of Christian tradition from the past generation to the future generation (Parascandalo, 2013, p. 206). The young adolescent Christian is forming their identity in Christian ideology.

In 2012, Brown published a research paper that listed different marketing strategies used by the CCM industry to market to Christians and non-Christians audiences. The research defines Christian retail and entertainment as, "one that produces goods and services for the purpose of entertaining Christians, ministering to other Christians, and reaching non-evangelicals through its products" (Brown, 2012, p. 114). Brown interviewed 57 individuals who had experience working in CCM industry within the United States. Of the total, 17 were creators of Christian popular art, 21 were producers, 11 worked in retail, and the remaining 8 were miscellaneous informants who "did not fit neatly into the previous categories (e.g., presidents of trade organizations, marketing groups, and literary agents)". The interviewees were asked open-ended questions that covered topics like their "job, faith, [and] view of [the] general market companies versus companies in the Christian industry" (Brown, 2012, p. 120). The interviewees shared

their opinions on the tension of art, faith, and commerce, and the impact that it has on their industry. In total, Brown's research identified two major tactics used by CCM industry members to remove tension between Christian and non-Christian audiences: The Proactive Tactic and the Passive Tactic.

Proactive tactics.

Proactive tactics rely upon active decision making. The Proactive tactic can be subdivided into three smaller tactics: purposeful refrain, universal themes, and variety of projects. Proactive tactics are significant because they allow marketers to take an aggressive and assertive role towards spreading their evangelistic message. By using Proactive tactics, the CCM industry can control where and how its message gets amplified and shared in both popular culture and Christian culture. The industry can choose whether to refrain from stating a direct message or they can take a strong stance on broadcasting a message. Every strategy used in this tactic is intentional and planned.

Purposeful refrain.

The first Proactive sub-tactic is a purposeful refrain from using "evangelical language." This tactic is considered effective at reaching audiences who are not familiar with "Christianeese," the jargon commonly used and understood by Christians that might be confusing to other people. Groups of people in subcultures that share similar traits often develop jargon to communicate more effectively and efficiently with each other. This jargon will seem confusing to outsiders of the group because they are not familiar with the group's form of communication. For example, the basketball slang term "hoops" may seem strange to outsiders who do not associate the word with the game of basketball. Likewise, a Christian's use of the

term "hedge of protection" will seem widely abstract to a non-believer who does not associate the term with Biblical scripture. CCM songs that use this strategy are determined to communicate a clear message to non-believers and believers without the use of Christian jargon. Christian writers may even write songs with unconventional Christian lyrics and themes in order to distance their music from traditional Christian music and expand their listening market to non-believers.

Universal themes.

The second sub-tactic is concentration on themes that are universal to Christian audiences and non-Christian audiences. The idea behind this tactic is that non-Christian audiences will be able to identify with lyrics that feature common human values. Instead of focusing on what the differences are between Christians and non-Christians, the creator focuses on the similarities in order to attract more listeners. A CCM song about a father's love for his child would fall into this sub-tactic because those are universal themes common to both Christians and non-Christians. NewSong is a CCM band that wrote and performed *The Christmas Shoes* which focuses on a little boy who wants to buy his dying mother shoes for Christmas as a sign of love and affection. This theme of gift giving and love between a mother and her son is a common theme in various cultures and many people are able to identify and relate with the emotions and events in the CCM music.

Variety of projects.

The final sub-tactic is when the CCM artist works on a variety of project that allows them to reach Christian and non-Christian markets. For example, a CCM artist might release an album featuring classic sacred hymnal music but then also release an album featuring inspirational

music with no sacred references. Neither project is given more precedence than the other, but the artist is creating a variety of materials in order to expand their target market. By diversifying their projects, they are creating a variety of opportunity for their music to be shared. In this sub-tactic another significant factor is timing. Projects that are released on a timely and consistent basis may be more marketable, whereas a project that takes several years to complete may lose its relevance with its target market. In the music industry, where new styles of music come and go every couple of years, timeliness is essential in order for a proactive tactic to be effective.

Passive tactics.

Passive tactics rely upon intangible actions. CCM artists that use these tactics do not intend to market one strong message to their market audience. Instead through indirect actions, they create an environment for listeners to become exposed to Christianity. Another name for these tactics could be reactive marketing strategies because they focus on the response to the aftermath of action rather than anticipating the response. CCM artists who utilize these tactics must accept the wave of ridicule from critics, the poor response from Christian markets, and the additional consequences of their musical efforts. The Passive tactics are categorized into four sub-tactics: self-expression, justification, and alleviation of responsibility.

Self-expression.

The first Passive sub-tactic is full self-expression. When a Christian creator focuses on fully expressing themselves through their media, they are free to express more than one message to their audience. Christian artists who implement this tactic refuse to create music with an explicit Christian message just so they can be marketable to one target audience. They desire for their creations to be labeled sincere and genuine and are not targeting one specific niche

market. The inspiration for composing music provides the direction, target, and overall message that they are transmitting to their audience.

Justification.

The second sub-tactic is justification. This occurs when the Christian creator self-assures themselves that they are justified in disseminating their responsibility to create religious media in order to reach a non-Christian audience. This feeling of justification is birthed from criticism that the CCM artist is imitating popular-secular music for the purpose of making greater profit and earning greater fame. By softening the message of the gospel, these artists are targeting a non-Christian audience and hoping to draw them into Christianity. The creator instead assures them self that their music is meant to be a true and honest reflection of their creativity and convictions.

Alleviation of responsibility.

The tactic of alleviating responsibility is used when the creator trusts on the Holy Spirit's guidance to direct them. The CCM artist or band may not plan to lead an altar call at the end of their concert, but they will if they feel like the Holy Spirit is guiding them to. In this tactic, there is not urgency for the creator to evangelize, but if they feel led to do so, they will. The artist views their main responsibility as creating great music that glorifies God. When people experience a spiritual moment during listening to the artist's music, it is an addition positive consequence of the artist's actions.

Belief in constraining environment.

The fourth and final sub-tactic is the inaction of targeting non-Christians due to the belief that the marketing environment is constraining. A CCM record label may expect their CCM artist to produce a Christian-targeted album or sound because there is no expectation for the artist

to target a secular audience. In this tactic, stress can become an influential force on the creativity of the artist because if they fail to perform and produce in a pleasing manner to their target market than they may lose their record deal. The artist may even feel trapped within the world of CCM because they *too* believe that they could never be successful with a secular audience.

Z Music Television

Another marketing strategy used by the CCM industry was television. In *Saving Souls and Selling CDs: The Mainstreaming of Christian music videos*, Gow focuses on the 1993 Christian music cable television program Z Music Television. The program was similar to MTV, BET, VH1, and CMT in that it presented viewers with a nonstop blend of music videos, advertisements, promotions, and artist features but different in that it presented CCM music videos that did not include explicit material. The video broadcasted on the channel were productions made by a Christian worldview (Gow, 1998, p. 183). Gow identifies three marketing strategies used by Z Music Television in their music video content. The first strategy is “Unequivocally Religious,” meaning that both the visual and lyrical composition of the music video feature explicit Christian language and themes. The second strategy is “Moderately Religious.” In this strategy, the lyrical composition of the music includes explicit Christian theme and language; however, the visual of the video does not include any, “religious qualities”. This strategy is designed to expand out from the Christian market to appeal to non-religious viewers as well. The third strategy is “Ambiguously Religious” which is aimed to appeal to both Christian and non-Christian audiences. Music videos that fight into this category will feature Christian values but not state them explicitly, and will not feature Christian lyrics or icons. Gow published a second article on the topic of the Christian Music Video program in 1999, a year

later, which further studied the marketing strategies used by the CCM platform. In this research paper, Gow analyzed 296 music videos that were aired on Z Music Television. His methodology included an analyzation of videos aired during the 24 hours of July 1, 1998. Using four 6-hour tapes to record the program, Gow found 52 percent of the program to feature moderately



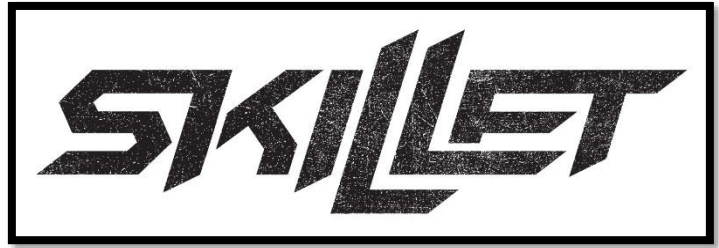
Z Music Television's Generation 01 show was targeted for 15 to 25 year olds (Gow, 1998).

religious videos, 31 percent featuring ambiguous religious videos, and 17 percent featuring unequivocally religious music videos (Appendix 1). Gow suggest that these results indicate that producers of Z Music Television made “conscious decisions” in choosing the types of religious video content to be aired on the channel.

Gow also observed that Christian lyrics are commonplace on the channel; however, visual with Christian words and icons are much less apparent. This is due to the fact, Gow argues, that Z Music Television producers do not want to present material that is easily consumed by Christians and non-Christians, and by presenting too many videos featuring Christian lyrics and images, the non-believing audience may avoid or become confused from the material (Gow, 1999, p.21).

Branding

Another effective marketing strategy used by CCM is branding. Branding in the music industry involves the artist or band being recognized by their



Skillet Logo (Word Entertainment LLC, 2017)

name, logo, slogan, or style. The popular CCM band Skillet is recognized by their iconic logo

which represents the hard-core, punk attitude of the band. And in 1995, the CCM grunge rock/rap group DC Talk released their 1995 *Jesus Freak* album cover. The album art features the band's name in lowercase letters imprinted above the band's logo. Fans and listeners associate the logo printed on the album cover with the band and ultimately the message that the album represents. In her 2008 book, Einstein, argues that in order for



Jesus Freak album cover by DC Talk (Spirit of Rock, 2017).

the Christian faith to contend in the music industry they must develop their own brand. Brands are categorized as any ideas and images that are immediately associated with a specific person or institution (Einstein, 2008, p. 1). Einstein believes that in order for religion to be able to endure cultural evolution it must undergo new marketing strategies.

“Many people no longer practice their faith within the confines of a church or synagogue, but instead get their spiritual fulfillment through interacting with religious products and

events, such as books, movies, and rock concerts. For many, these things are religious, and thus



religious *is* a product, which like any other product needs to be marketed in order for it to survive” (Einstein, 2008, p. 60).

This strategy of branding is used recurrently in the modern-day American evangelical church. It is habitual for churches to advertise and employ the work of renowned Christian speakers or pastors as well as musicians when

promoting an event or attempting to attract more persons to their congregation. If, for example, a

The Hillsong logo is associated with Hillsong Church in Sydney, Australia (Cooke, 2016)

concert decided to host a rock concert with a popular Christian band, they

would produce flyers and posters with the band’s logo and name as well as

the church’s logo. This exposure allows for a greater association between the Christian musician and the Christian community and church. While Einstein published a well-researched analysis on the topic of faith branding, her conclusions were not met without criticism. Palmer reasons that Einstein’s argument was weak in two areas: Einstein refers exclusively to evangelical Christianity but fails to include Judaism, Catholic, and other liberal faith traditions, and marketing strategies used by Christian marketers usually complement and enhance the traditional practices rather than substitute for them (Palmer, 2010, p. 248).

CCM and Secular Music

One of the biggest grievances from critics opposing CCM music is that it is too mimicry and imitative of secular culture. In John 17: 14 (KJV), Jesus prayed to the Father God saying: “I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” One group of critics of CCM believe that the Bible’s

commandment for Christians to live as set apart from the world is made relevant today in the relationship between Christians and popular culture. It is the fear that Christian music encourages a drifting of the modern-day Christian from worship and tradition to entertainment and secularization (Colson & Morse, 2006, para. 2). These critics believe that CCM distorts the message of the gospel and is encouraging Christians and churches to conform to the unholy behavior celebrated in popular culture. It is the idea that the dance music played in the clubs should not be played in the church. Even if the lyrics are void of inappropriate vocabulary, by resembling the style of the music, CCM is indirectly giving its seal of approval to popular-secular music. Critics argue that the opportunity of evangelism can be given through different methods other than CCM, and that the negative effects on Christian character outweigh the positive effects of evangelism. Another group of critics argue that stylistically, CCM is poorly composed and performed, with the genre often labeled cheesy and cliché. In this thesis, the writer will argue that CCM is more than just a mirror of popular-secular music; it is a Christian perspective on the musical styles of popular culture.

In 2012, Vega published an article that studied the reasons why American evangelical churches decide to employ popular-secular music in their worship service. Vega defined popular-secular music as music that is composed with the intention of being enjoyed by the popular culture and that fails to feature spiritual themes. Vega interviewed and observed eight churches in the Washington area for her analysis. Her interviews were conducted with either volunteer or staffed music leaders at the church. Vega focused her analysis on evangelical churches because historically evangelicals have used various styles of evangelism to spread the gospel without conforming to the carnal nature of popular culture. Evangelicals tend to be more

supple and unresolved in regard to popular culture when compared to other American Protestant sects (Vega, 2012, p. 3). Vega identified four common positions among church worship leaders concerning their perspectives of popular-secular musical styles being used for worship services. In total, Vega found that all eight evangelical churches used popular-secular music for the purpose of aiding that Sunday's message (Vega, 2012, p. 7).

Conservative perspective.

The first position from church leaders was that they use it but they do not find it useful. This perspective is the strongest conservative stance of all the perspectives and entails that the church leaders view secular music as a conceivable tool but ultimately void of all spiritual worth (Vega, 2012, p. 7). For these churches, the music of a worship service is designed to communicate doctrinal Christian truths and draw believers into communion with God. By including popular-secular musical styles in their worship services, the congregation will become too distracted and will not receive the gospel's message clearly. Additionally, church leadership under this perspective refrain from using multimedia and other contemporary forms of technology to aid in their worship services because they believe that these things will take away from the tradition and sacredness of the service.

Moderately conservative perspective.

The second position was the view that popular music unites the congregation. Church leadership that adopts this viewpoint chooses to use popular-secular musical styles to purposely magnetize non-Christians to the message of Christianity. In this perspective, three assumptions are made. It is assumed that popular-secular music is a common dialect to people, that there exists a uniform popular secular style of music, and that the worship service is purposed as a tool for evangelism.

The target audience for these churches are often times new believers to the faith of Christianity but also include Christians who have practiced the faith for many years. In this perspective, theological beliefs are not changed or modified in order to adapt new musical styles, but instead the new musical styles are changed and modified in order to adapt to the theological beliefs of the church. These churches may choose to utilize multimedia and contemporary technology in order to enhance the storytelling of the message to the congregation.

Moderately liberal perspective.

The third perspective among evangelical church leaders is that because popular-secular unites us, we should use create discussion through it. This perspective is birthed from the idea that God is able to speak to his people through any means, even secular ones, and that the church is meant to be relevant. Popular-secular music can be an evangelistic tool as well as a spiritual help for Christians. In this perspective, there is no limit or expectations for what the Holy Spirit can use to reach a believer's or non-believer's soul. This perspective does not claim that CCM or traditional worship music are the only means through which music can minister the gospel.

Liberal perspective.

The fourth and final perspective is a fusion of the second and third perspectives and does not discriminate between popular-secular music and sacred music. This perspective is the strongest liberal stance of the previously mentioned perspectives because it allows for music in the worship service that showcases human doubt and other uncommon emotions found in the traditional worship service. Church leaders that adopt this perspective during worship services view the human experience to be an all-encompassing occurrence that is documented and theorized differently by each individual. Thus, popular-secular music provides a branch of

emotion that sacred music fails to document and account for. Churches under this perspective use popular-secular music to articulate the intricacy of their life experiences.

Art Worlds Within CCM

Contemporary Christian Music is music, and since music is an art form, we can categorize CCM into different art categories. Tolstoy defines art as individual activity that transmits feelings and emotions from the creator to the listener, causing the listener to experience through sight and sound the same feelings and emotions that inspired the creator to create the activity (Camp, 2006, para.4). If emotion and feeling fail to infect the listener, then the creator has failed to create art. There exist three perquisites that every potential art form must meet. The art must possess an individual message, it must transmit the message clearly to the listener, and the feeling and emotion in the art must be sincerely experienced by the creator and the listener (Camp, 2006, para. 30). Without the presence of these three elements, there is no art. If, however, the creator creates a message that is clearly transmittable and sincere, than there exists art. With this definition of art, it is important that we distinguish between differences in the art styles of different CCM artists because each artist will express their message in a different method and with different emotions and feelings. The application of art worlds is a helpful tool to categorize these styles of CCM art. Art worlds are simply sets of connections between one or more peoples and the style of art which they produce together (Becker, 1928, p. 1). Through art worlds we are able to analyze and understand how the artist is choosing to communicate their message. For CCM, there are three art worlds that exist: Separational, Integrational, and Transformational.

Separational CCM

The first art world of CCM is Separational CCM. In this art world, great emphasis is placed on the ministry and effectiveness of the music. The purpose of art in this art world is to transmit the message of the gospel to listeners and the emotion and feeling that come from believing Christianity. A CCM artist in this art world will view their music as the most effective tool for ministering the message of the gospel to people. Additionally, the idea of resembling the commercial system of the music industry is unappetizing to these artists who may even view the resemblance as a threat to the message of their music. While the artist may profit off their art, the artist does not want monetary value to be their main inspiration and perceived goal. An example of this perspective includes the worship band All Songs and Daughters. The group's mission is that through their music listeners will connect with God and with each other therefore removing the goal of achieving commercial success (Be Music & Entertainment, 2016, para. 24). The artists do not have the goal of achieving a level of commercial status within the CCM industry, instead their goal of success is to minister the message of the gospel to their listeners.

Integrational CCM

Integrational CCM combines music as a ministry tool as well as an entertainment medium. The purpose of this art world is providing the message of the gospel as well as entertaining and amusing listeners. In this art world, commercial success be reflection of spiritual success. The best well-known example for this perspective is Amy Grant. Grant has won six Grammy Awards and several Gospel Music Association Dove Awards in her 40-year music career. During the early years of her career, all of Grant's songs included Christian

phrases and themes. As her career and popularity grew, however, so did her music. Eventually, Grant did a crossover to secular popular music where she achieved 10 Top 40 pop singles and 17 hits on the Top 40 Adult Contemporary charts (Amy Grant, 2015). Grant was able to maintain a majority of her Christian fan base, but her music and lyrics became more and more ambiguous in relation to Christianity. In this case, Grant was producing music with a Christian message as well as providing entertainment to her listeners.

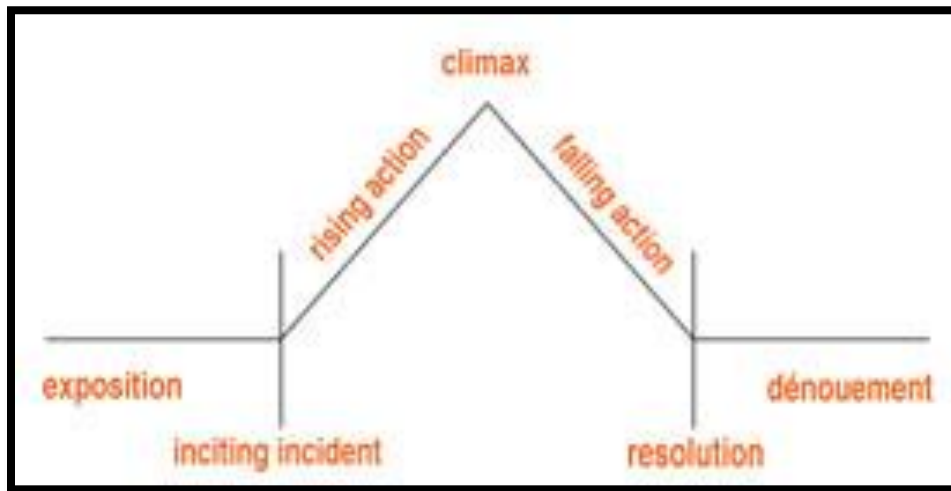
Transformational CCM

For the final perspective, Transformational CCM the artist seeks to express themselves in a purely artistic manner. The purpose of this art form is to allow emotion and feeling to define the music style. A CCM artist in this category may not use common CCM music styles and methods to express their message, but instead they will create music that best reflects the emotion and feeling that they experience. The artist is a Christian, but instead of directly transmitting the message of the gospel through their art, they transmit the feeling and emotion of the human experience from a Christian worldview. These CCM artists tend to have smaller audiences because of the exclusiveness of their music (Howard & Streck, 1999, p. 192). The artist, for example, may choose to write from a more personal viewpoint instead of writing their lyrics to be applicable to more people. In this sense, the music is clearly transmitted to only a limited amount of listeners but may transmit ineffectively to a larger audience of listeners. Jon Foreman of the popular CCM band Switchfoot can be categorized into this art world because of his artistic approach to writing music and performance. Foreman himself believes that the role of music in Christian faith is to serve as a, "safe place to question the polarities of the human experience: birth and death, doubt and faith, control and chaos, love and fear" (Foreman, 2016,

question 3). Foreman does not view the message of the gospel as the main message from his music. Instead, he invites listeners to experience the feelings and emotions associated with questioning their beliefs. Howard and Streck argue that the commercialization of CCM transforms the Christian musical art form into a monetary commodity and that true artistic expression in CCM gives way to the practicality of commercialization. Critics of Howard and Streck agree that their research is well-organized and thoroughly documented and that their research allows readers to develop a grasp on the art worlds of CCM (Prévos, 2003, p. 565). It is, however, noted that their interpretations of CCM art worlds “wooden and formulaic” making the findings of their research seem of little value (Balmer, 2000, p. 945). Katz critiqued the analyzation that Howard and Streck made in their evaluation of CCM art worlds by claiming that they neglected to establish the role of CCM throughout the different backgrounds of history and society (Katz, 2000, p. 342). Katz believes that Howard and Streck could better emphasize the sociological relationship between CCM, the church, and historical society. Tsitsos, however, combats this opinion by claiming that Howard and Streck provide timely input to the study of sociology as it relates to religion and culture (Tsitsos, 2000, p. 390). Finally, Howard and Streck’s claim that CCM is less aesthetically pleasing than secular popular music is a subjective evaluation without any true qualifiers. In reality, Christian punk bands (i.e. Frodus, 400 Years, etc.) have gained mainstream attention and success. This newly gained attention either means that there is an overall decline in the quality of punk music or that the Christian punk bands are growing in their musical facilities. Considering the subjectiveness of art, to argue that secular-popular music is more aesthetically pleasing than CCM is an opinion of art form.

The Science of Storytelling in CCM

The element of storytelling is perhaps the most significant element to successfully marketing CCM for evangelistic purposes. Every CCM song exhibits a certain degree of storytelling, an effective tool for communication. The art of storytelling extends back in history to ancient civilization. Before writing was developed, oral storytelling helped cultures pass on valuable details about history and ideology. It was not until the 19th century that the German novelist Gustav Freytag invented the concept of the dramatic arc in storytelling. Freytag's original dramatic arc featured an exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and dénouement. Today, this model has been adapted to a pyramid structure with two details added



(Ohio University, 2016)

for greater comprehension. Exposition is the background information needed for the story to have context for the reader. After the exposition, there

exists an inciting incident, an event that signifies the beginning of tension within the story. The rising action is soon to follow and consists of portions of the story that add to the weight of tension. The tension reaches its highest peak when the story reaches the climax. Following the climax, falling action slowly resolves the tension and signifies an ending to the story.

Immediately following the falling action, resolution occurs within the story. Resolution signifies the solution being found to end the tension of the story. Dénouement is a French term for death. This stage signifies the literal death of the story where the reader's curiosity about how the tension will resolved is answered (Ohio University, 2016).

In order to fully understand the powerful relationship between CCM and storytelling, we must understand how the brain reacts to storytelling. Neurobiology has produced research that shows that three chemical hormones are released into the endocrine system, glands of the human body that produce hormones, during the storytelling experience: dopamine, cortisol, and oxytocin (Medina, 2014, p. 216). Dopamine is produced by the amygdala in the brain and activates the pleasure centers of the brain and normalizes our emotional responses, cortisol is produced by the adrenal gland in response to fear and stress, and oxytocin produces a bonding effect. High levels of oxytocin in the blood stream are strongly correlated with high levels of prosocial behaviors in mammals (Zak, 2015, para. 6). When a person experiences the elements of storytelling, all three hormones are released into endocrine stems and increases the person's ability to remember details and emotions of the story in later reflection. Zak and his research colleagues composed two versions of a short movie featuring a father and his two-year-old son. The son was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer and receiving chemotherapy treatment, and in the movie the father struggles to experience joy from playing with his son alongside the reality of death looming over his mind. The first version of the movie featured the man speaking and explaining his inner brawl of emotions with his son playing in the background of the camera shot. The second version of the movie featured the man walking with his son at the zoo. This version does not include feature the father talking about the son's illness, but the son is still bald

in the footage. The second version was created to lack the dramatic arc of a typical story.

Before and after requiring participants to watch one of the versions of the movie, Zak and his team acquired blood from the participants in order to test the participants' levels of hormones in their blood streams. The results showed that participants who watched the first version of the movie, the dramatic arc story, produced more oxytocin and cortisol in their blood streams and described feeling empathy for the father; however, the participants who watched the second version of the movie, void of the dramatic arc, did not have elevated levels of oxytocin and cortisol in their blood streams and did not describe feeling empathy for the father (Zak, 2015, para. 11). At the end of the study, Zak gave participants the option of donating to a charity, it was observed that participants that contained higher amounts of oxytocin in their blood stream after watching the movie were more apt to give money to charity (Monarth, 2014, pp. 3-4).

Storytelling allows listeners to ignite their imaginations and to feel empathy with the characters of the stories. Information may be useful in urging people to change their mind, but in order to motivate people to act on that information, the dramatic arc must be present (Monarth, 2014, p. 6). In CCM, presence of Freytag's dramatic arc in the lyrical content can elicit a biological reaction in the listener causing them to empathize with the storyteller, the artist. This effect increases the interest of the listener and will allow them to recall the details of the story in better detail at a later time. When CCM adopts popular-secular musical styles, they are enhancing the storytelling aspect of the music and are making the message more transferable to listeners.

Best Practices

Audience Transference & CCM Radio

In a case study analysis of CCM radio, Abelman explored the three main factors that are believed to impact audience transference: CCM-formatted radio station's listenership, salient station attributes, and promotional strategies. Abelman used a cluster analysis to identify the three factors. The research was aimed at discovering in what way the distinct station factors and promotional material impacted audience transference (how well a radio station conveys a message to its audience) during frequency shifts for the stations. The study found that CCM radio stations were successful in audience transference due because of their effective and efficient promotion and programming methods. The CCM radio stations used marketing strategies such as advertising through TV ads, billboards, and the Internet while using third-party endorsements from popular Christian singers to promote their stations (Abelman, 2006, p. 219). CCM music radio stations have effectively utilized modern promotional and programming techniques to spread their message. As *Christian* radio stations, they are effectively fulfilling the great commission given by Jesus in Matthew 28 by spreading the message of the gospel. The longer the listener listens to a CCM radio station, the more they are exposed to Christian truths and the more opportunity they get to comprehend Christianity.

New Christian Charts

In 2003, Business Wire reported that Billboard.com, one of the most highly regarded publications for the global music industry included two new charts to its weekly menu. The charts were measured by airplay from national Christian radio stations (Editors Entertainment, 2003, para. 3). The first chart was Hot Christian Singles & Tracks and the second was Hot

Christian Adult Contemporary. The two new charts were based upon audience appreciation and were in accordance with Nielsen Broadcast Data Systems (BDS) and the Christian Music Trade Association (CMTA). The new additions are expected to alleviate Christian music influence in the global music industry. CMTA director Gabriel Aviles believes that this addition to the charts is “another indicator of Christian music’s growing importance as a major force within the music industry and in society as a whole.” It should be noted that while this recognition of CCM music from Billboard does not guarantee a positive evangelism goal met, it does shed light on an achievement that will further spread the message of CCM to a wider secular audience.

The Solid Grounds Coffeehouse

The Solid Grounds Coffeehouse, a ministry of the Sacramento Faith Ministries. SFM is a ministry known for its use of “popular music styles in worship services and outreach programs” and has hosted “popular music converts” since it was established in 1974 (Lindenbaum, 2009, p.222). The Solid Grounds Coffeehouse is a not-for-profit venue that hosts Christian-influenced music events such as First Friday. These events are designed to reach young people who are exploring different religions and worldviews. All performers of First Friday are confirmed Christian who practice the spiritual disciplines of the faith. These performers adopt different tactics of making their faith known during performances. The lead singer will pray in-between sets, members share their personal testimony with fans after the show, or the lyrics of the songs performed include Christian truths and references. It is common for popular CCM songs to include “personal testimony, accounts of God as an active agent in one’s life, and evangelical catch terms such as ‘truth,’ ‘grace,’ and ‘salvation’” (Lindenbaum, 2009, p.51). On an average

night, the crowd at First Friday can range from 30 to 150. At the end of every event, the high school youth pastor of the church steps up to the pulpit to preach for a few minutes, guaranteeing that the audience is exposed to the gospel during each meeting (Lindenbaum, 2009, p. 219). The Solid Grounds Coffeehouse is a key example of the unique evangelism ability of CCM. The music performed at First Friday events is meant to appeal, inspire, and motivate young Christians and non-Christians to learn more about Christianity and to pursue a relationship with God. These events challenge the belief that Christians are confined to the boundaries of pews and stained glass windows. By attending a First Friday, listeners have an opportunity to hear and experience Christian rock music and art.

Hillsong United

Hillsong United is a group of touring musicians from Sydney, Australia's Hillsong church. Hillsong church is a mega church with over 25,000 in attendance each week through four campus locations and 12 extension services (Riches, 2012, p.21). Modern-day mega churches are well-known for having progressed ahead of traditional marketing strategies to more cohesive marketing strategies. Hillsong United has toured the globe promoting the brand of Hillsong church with the goal of promoting the gospel of Christ. By transmitting their message through various media platforms to a greater worldwide, multinational audiences, the mega church is able to establish its corporate identity through its music. Branding and brand recognition allows the mega church to have greater marketability and to establish itself as a reliable source for Christians. Hillsong United songs are translated into different languages, used in worship services by different denominations, and even used for entertainment purposes. In total, Hillsong has sold over 11 million albums and achieved more than 50 gold and platinum awards. The

brand has become a belief statement for many Christians. If a church or Christian joins the Hillsong Network of family churches, they are choosing to associate with the Hillsong brand, giving approval for the theological beliefs, and reaping from the marketing advantages of the brand.

Hillsong family churches.

One of the most significant steps for Hillsong's marketability was the creation of Hillsong Family Churches in which the music of Hillsong United is amplified even more. The Hillsong Family Church Network is based off Psalm 133:1 and is a global network of "like-spirited, forward thinking, kingdom-building" church congregations with the goal of encouraging and accounting (Hillsong Church, 2016). When Hillsong United releases a new album, they can rely on the word-of-mouth marketing from Hillsong family churches, who will share the album with members of their community. Family churches possess their own social media platforms, website, and worship services which multiple marketing efforts of Hillsong by twofold. Hillsong United may release a picture of their album for their album, and that photo may be retweeted or reposted by other family churches or congregation members. This type of word-of-mouth social media marketing proves to be efficient and effective for Hillsong. The Australian brand has even stretched out as far as Lakeland, Florida. Grace City Church (GCC), located in Lakeland, is a Hillsong Family church. The Hillsong brand is a powerful marketing advantage for the church because their GCC brand can now be associated with the worldwide brand of Hillsong. The church's name now appears on the list of other family churches on the official Hillsong Family website, and the church is accessible to a worldwide audience. By becoming a Hillsong family

church, GCC can rely on Hillsong for “wisdom...encouragement, spiritual accountability, and support” (Gard, 2016).

Seth & Nirva

Seth & Nirva, a CCM husband-and-wife artist duo from Lakeland, Florida released their first EP *I Need You* in 2013 and a full-length studio album in 2016 entitled *Never Alone*. Both Seth and Nirva have had previous experience signing background vocals for CCM artists such as TobyMac, Kirk Franklin, Chris Tomlin, and CeCe Winans (Seth and Nirva, 2016). Last December the author of this thesis sat down with Seth & Nirva and interviewed them on their personal goals as CCM artists and their overall analysis of the industry. The duo’s goals are to “[help] our brothers and sisters recover their courage . . . develop their character, grow in their understanding of the biblical worldview, and connect with God on a daily basis through study and worship.” Nirva explained the type of listeners for CCM radio.

“We’ve done a couple of radio tours these past couple months and learned the majority of listeners are mothers with kids. Living in their own world, trying to do life, trying to maintain, trying to be on top of cooking, cleaning, kids, and the hustle of life, and church, and drama.

Nirva emphasizes that the only “moment of peace” that these listeners experience is when they are in their car listening to Christian radio as they drive their kids to soccer practice or run errands. They “turn on the radio and what’s playing can either lift [their] spirits or take [them] somewhere [they] need to go. Likewise, Seth went on to explain that another goal of the group’s music is to “challenge mindsets and ideas.” Seth expanded this idea within the context of the

duo's latest single *Brother*. The song "raise[s] questions and make people dig a little deeper into why they are thinking what they think and who they want to be as persons." The song was created to be a response to the present-day "chaos, racial tension, angst and anger surrounding from the police shootings, assassinations of officers, terrorist attacks, refugee crises and mean spirited politics" (CCM Magazine Staff, 2016). The chorus of the song rings:

When I look into the face off my enemy, I see my/Brother, I see
my brother/Forgiveness is the garment of our courage/The power
to make the peace we long to know..."

Seth & Nirva believe that the Bible charges Christians to view other people as "made in God's image" and to be "bridge builders and reconciler" as well as "truth tellers and prophets." The interview was conducted in the green room of Spirit FM radio broadcasting studios, a popular Christian-radio station in Tampa, FL. The interview lasted about a maximum of 10 minutes and featured open-ended questions such as "What do you believe is the goal of CCM", "What is the goal for your music", "What do you believe are the strengths and weaknesses of the industry?" The audio of the interview was recorded on a cellular phone and the dialogue was transferred onto paper by the author after a later close listening.

As I Lay Dying

During the 1980s, heavy metal became a major genre in popular culture and Christian heavy metal music was given the opportunity to expand the audience of its evangelistic message. Many CCM heavy metal bands, for example, produced and promoted songs that featured Christian perspectives on societal issues. Barren Cross' "Killers of the Unborn," Hellfire's

“Abolish Legal Murder,” and Holy Danger’s “Don’t Slaughter Your Daughter” all served as strong Christian responses to the issue of abortion in American society (Luhr, 2005, p.116-117).

Adolphson did a fantasy theme analysis on four albums written and produced by the Christian heavy metal band As I Lay Dying. While all five of the band members are Christian in As I Lay Dying, the band itself is not marketed as a Christian band. In this respect, the band could be classified into the art world of Transformational CCM because they are seeking to express themselves in a purely artistic manner. The band produces music not intended for worship services but intended for listeners to think critically about the Christian worldview and to ask questions about popular culture. Adolphson’s analysis focused on the lyrical content of the 46 songs from the band’s four albums and observed the use of direct and indirect Christian themes. Fantasy theme was defined as a statement that “interprets events in the past, envisions events in the future, or depicts events that are removed in time and/or space from the actual activities of the group” (Adolphson, 2009, p.35). Three fantasy themes were observed from the sample of As I Lay Dying songs: a denial of material temptations, innate sinful nature of humans, and commitment to the Christian God.

Denial of material temptations.

The theme of denying material temptations to focus on the true purpose of life was prevalent in 14 of the 46 song samples, amounting to 30 percent of the overall discography (See Table 2 of Appendix A). The theme is birthed from the Christian worldview that material possessions will someday fade and that the soul is more valuable than wealth. This message is clearly stated in “Undefined” with the lyrics: “...this world means nothing/Everything we hold will pass away/With a void of completion comfort will ever fade” (Lambesis, 2003d, track 5).

The Ecclesiastical worldview holds that material possessions will not satisfy the human spiritual need. Solomon proclaims "...all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:11, KJV).

Innate sinful nature of humans.

This theme accounts for 17 of the 46 songs analyzed, or 37 percent of the discography. The purpose of this theme is to demonstrate the inborn sinful nature of humans and their need for redemption. The song "Within Destruction" follows this idea that without salvation from God, there is no hope for humans to find redemption. "For without forgiveness my soul is lost/All that is hope within destruction comes from You" (Lambesis, 2007g, track 4). The "You" referenced to in the verses above can easily be understood to be the Christian God based upon the band member's personal worldviews. This theme is a reflection of Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..." (KJV). This theme can serve as an introduction to the non-believer to the reality of sin and the need for Christ.

Commitment to the Christian God.

The last theme contributes 34 songs, or 74% of the total discography, and focuses on the time and effort that a Christian must dedicate to following and communing with God. The band is not trying to sugar-coat the reality of living a Christian life. "Beneath the Encasing of Ashes" features lyrics that emphasizes the painful journey of pursuing a relationship with God: "Unable to hide I am drawn to the fire/It is this pain that brings me life" (Lambesis, 2006e, track 6). This theme is based on the biblical teaching: "Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our

God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day” (1 Kings 8:61, KJV).

There is also Biblical support found in the gospel of Matthew 4:13.

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that finds it” (KJV).

Hardship is a product of a Christian life. In an imperfect world, pursuing a perfect and righteous God is not easily accomplished. While Christians can rely upon their salvation through Jesus Christ, many will be persecuted for upholding Biblical teachings and will fight against the temptation to sin.

The Storytelling of Casting Crowns

Casting Crowns, a CCM band whose target audience is Christian, utilizes storytelling techniques that enhance the message of their music. Their most-popular songs such as “If We Are the Body” and “Who Am I” are exclusively written for a Christian audience, allowing the band’s music to be categorized into Separational CCM (Evans, 2005, p. 28). The band’s frontman, Mark Hall, writes the majority of the song’s lyrics and does so using Passive tactics. Hall and his bandmates do not write music with the goal of achieving wide-spread popularity among Christian listeners, but instead write music with the goal of fully expressing the message that they believe God speaks through them. To fully understand how storytelling is used in the band’s music, a comparison and analysis of lyrical content and music video content with Freytag’s dramatic arc is needed. An exemplary illustration of the band’s ability to communicate their message through storytelling is an analysis of Casting Crowns’ music video for “Does Anybody Hear Her.” The music video begins with scenes of the video’s main character, a young

woman, jogging. As she passes a church, the woman's face shows curiosity as she sees Christians smiling and talking with each other. During the first verse and chorus of the song, the listener is supplied with essential background information about the main character:

“She is running/A hundred miles an hour in the wrong direction/She is trying/But the canyon's ever widening/In the depths of her cold heart/So she sets out on another misadventure just to find/She's another two years older/And she's three more steps behind” (Hall, 2006).

This beginning verse can be categorized as the exposition of the story because of its informational purpose. The lyrics are meant to convey that the woman is searching for the truth of Christianity but has previously failed to find it. The inciting incident occurs during the second verse when the woman attends a nightclub with her friends and meets a man who persuades her to do something against her ethical beliefs – premarital sex: “Then in walks her prince charming/And he knows just what to say/Momentary lapses of reason/And she gives herself away” (Hall, 2006). The next scene features the woman the morning after, visibly remorseful over her actions from the night before. While stopped at a traffic light, she sees a group of joyful Christians walking across the street to the very same church from before. The rising action follows with the woman making numerous attempts to attend a church service but failing to do so because of pressure from “lofty glances from lofty people” (Hall, 2006). The woman ends her attempt at trying to attend the church's service because she feels ashamed and judged by the church-goers. The next scene takes place at the woman's place of work, a diner, in which she appears annoyed by the group of joyful Christians talking to each other. The climax of the song occurs when the group leaves and the woman breaks down into tears during her work shift after

seeing an evangelism card left with the bill and tip. The falling action is when one of the Christian women returns to retrieve her forgotten purse and sees the main character sitting down at the table, sobbing. The story reaches resolution when the Christian woman comforts the distressed main character. The dénouement is established in the ending of the song and music video with the lyrics: “He is running/A thousand miles an hour in the wrong direction” (Hall, 2006). In this moment of the song, the listener understands that the main character has finally found the truth of Christianity that she was searching for and now the attention is focused on another man searching for the same truth. By comparing Freytag’s dramatic arc with the lyrical content and music video content of Casting Crowns’ song, the audience experiences the neurological effects of storytelling. Because storytelling is an effective tool of communication, Casting Crowns is able to *effectively* communicate their message to Christians. Thus, Christians who listen to this song are more likely to remember the story’s details and to feel an emotional response to the message. The desired effect is that Christians will feel compassion for the main character and will purposely seek out non-believers who resemble the main character of the story in hopes that they can evangelize to such people.

Inconsistencies

While there have been many success stories of CCM having a positive and evangelizing effect on the general Christian and non-Christian population, there are several cases where CCM has been a roadblock for the faith. Instances of hypocritical behavior from CCM artists, bands, labels, and ministries have disturbed the quiet waters of Christian entertainment.

Micheal English

Michael English was a celebrated solo performer within the CCM industry whose career came to a drastic halt when it was discovered by the public that English and fellow CCM artist Marabeth Jordon were having an extra-marital affair with each other. While both artists were married to different people, Marabeth Jordon became pregnant with the child of English (Stiles, 2005). Earlier in the same year that news of the affair broke, English won six awards for different musical categories at the GMA's Dove Awards for CCM. The scandal, however, ruined the music careers of both English and Jordan, English was forced to return the six trophies he had received. His label, Warner Alliance, tore up his contract and ceased to sell or distribute his albums. English was never able to recover his career and gain his success back in the CCM industry (Newsweek Staff, 1994, para. 9).

Sandi Patty

The second case of inconsistency in the CCM industry includes the story of Sandi Patty. Sandi Patty became wildly popular in the 1980s and 90s as a CCM singer. Her career in the CCM industry and secular music industry took flight in 1986 when she performed *The Star-Spangled Banner* with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir at the national rededication of the statue of liberty. The stunning performance captivated viewers all over the country, and Patty soon started appearing on late night TV shows and traveling around the country performing gospel music. For the duration of her zenith of popularity, she won five Grammy's and 40 Dove awards from the Gospel Music Association. But Patty's musical success was soon to collapse. In the early 1990s, Patty confessed guilty to rumors about her extramarital affair with a man who was not her husband. The affair led to her divorce from John Helvering which left CCM fans shocked and

upset. Patty's career as a CCM artist appeared to be over. In 1995, Patty married Don Peslis, the man with whom she had the affair with. In a 2013 interview, Patty claimed she went through a repentance experience after the affair and reconciled her relationship with God. In past interviews, she has come clean about her wrongdoing, and attributes it to a lack of personal spirituality. "When you carry the name 'Christian artist', people have the right to expect certain things from you." Today, Patty still performs CCM music across the U.S. and attends the local church where her husband, Peslis, pastors.

For an unbeliever of Christianity, these inconsistencies between character and belief provide evidence for claims of hypocrisy among CCM musical artists and bands. Since CCM musical artists and bands are an indirect reflection of Christianity these inconsistencies can have a major influence on the nonbeliever's view of organized religion and Christianity specifically. It would be a logical fallacy to assume that because one Christian behaves badly that all Christians must behave the same way; however, while false, many people's perceptions are easily manipulated and many may be personally offended by bad behavior among Christians.

Selection Process

The academic sources listed in the literature review and best practices sections were journal articles from an online university database. The library of Southeastern University provided 12 general online databases for students to utilize. As a music business major at SEU, the writer of this thesis had full access to these databases. For research, the writer used Academic Search Complete, EBSCO, JSTOR, Gale Academic OneFile, and ProQuest. These databases provided access to full-text journal articles, periodicals, book reviews, and other reliable academic literacy. For research on the topic of CCM, keywords, "Contemporary," "Christian,"

and “Music” were used to search for articles featured in the databases with similar keywords. Once finding a relevant article, the author’s credibility was evaluated. Many articles included the university that the authors had studied or taught at and access to the publishing date of the article.

For sources that were analyzed and were not peer-reviewed journal articles, the writer used sources that were trusted and widely-respected sources of information.

ChristianityToday.com, for example, is considered a reliable news sources for many Christians and was used as a reference for description of CCM and secular music. Caution was taken to not fully rely significant information on these sources.

Conclusion

For the future of CCM Music, there is room for greater diversification of genre for CCM radio and TV. CCM radio stations are listener-supported, and most Christian listeners who listen to Christian radio do not respond well to airplay of different genres on CCM stations. CCM radio stations, for example, could feature more “holy hip-hop” on their broadcasting playlists to attract a younger generation of listeners (Lindenbaum, 2009, p. 210).

The major weaknesses of this research thesis include the writer's personal perception and bias as a Christian musician, the writer's limited access to literature, the writer's lack of self-designed research and measurable variables. The writer who is both a Christian *and* a musician, may have emphasized certain characteristics and neglected to mention others. Access was limited to the database of Southeastern University, that while being a wide selection of journal articles, periodicals, and other information sources, was limited. It is the writer's hope that through this literature review and analysis of past case studies that the reader understands the

impact of CCM on the world of evangelism. CCM is often criticized by believers and non-believers as “cheesy,” and sometimes a faux polished version of actual Christianity, but regardless of what it might be viewed as, there is evidence that CCM has a tremendous influence on popular culture and that if used effectively can reach thousands with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The neurological power of storytelling makes its art an essential tool for every message, and since CCM uses storytelling through popular-secular music styles to spread the message of the gospel, it is an effective tool for evangelism and it impacts listeners spiritually, intellectually, and biologically.

If Christianity is objectively true, then Christians everywhere have a momentous and fatefully crucial message of unconditional love. CCM Music not only provides a vehicle for Christians to spread the vital message of salvation but also encourages fellow believers to continue in their pursuit of God and evangelism. It is important that Christian musicians, record label executives, and consumers to understand the window of opportunity available for evangelism through CCM and to work toward making their work more efficient and effective at evangelism.

“For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required...” (Luke 12:48, KJV).

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Appendix A

Table 1:

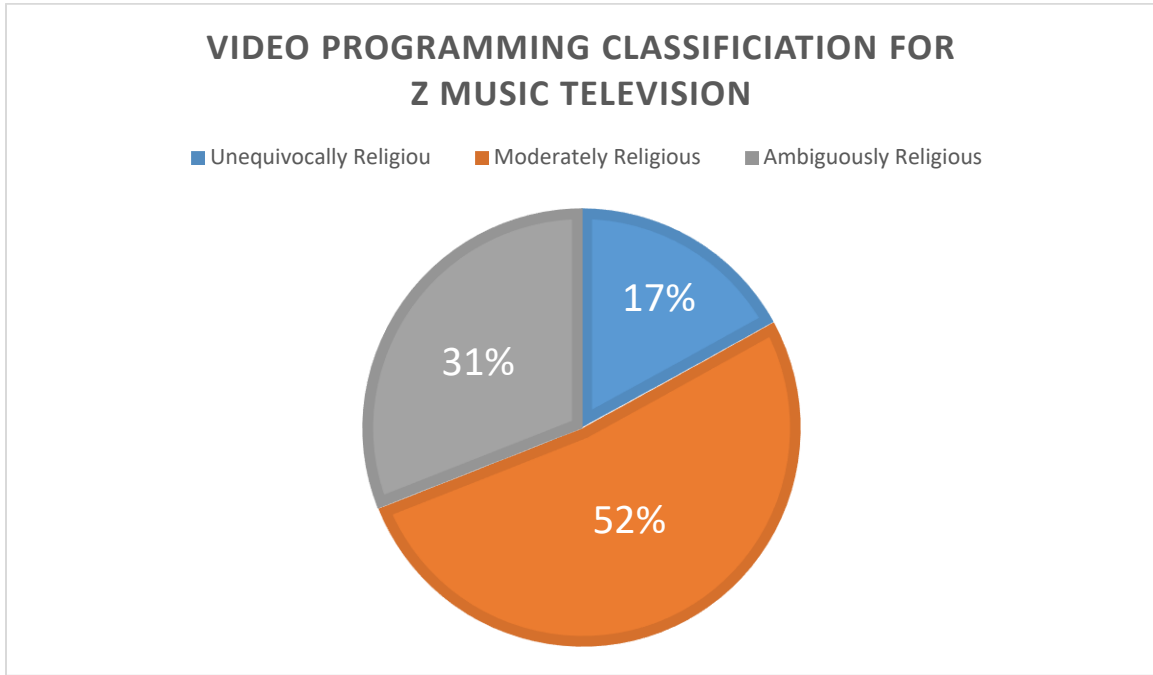


Table 2:

