



# GLAM: THE RETURN OF THE TEENAGER

## OVERVIEW

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How was Glam Rock part of a new teenage culture in the 1970s?

### OVERVIEW

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, popular music culture had grown up and grown serious.

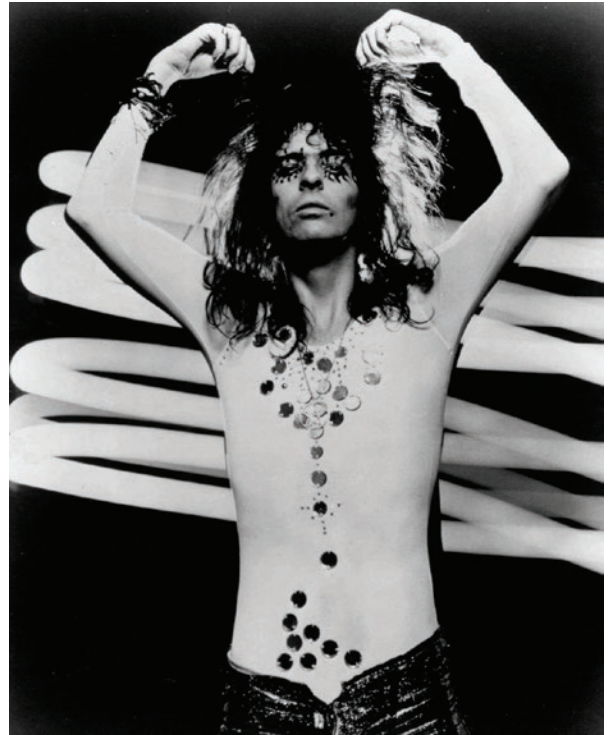
Songs from the period, whether James Taylor's "Fire and Rain," Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven," or the Eagles' "Desperado," showed artists turning inward and emphasizing musical virtuosity. Singer-songwriters performed to seated houses, but even Rock and Roll audiences had become more passive than participatory. It was a culture that embraced denim, facial hair, and hippie-ish attire—the trappings of a "laid-back" sensibility—as symbols of their time.

A somber mood hung over not just the music but the country. In May 1970, the Ohio National Guard fired upon unarmed Kent State University students protesting U.S. Military operations in Cambodia, killing four and wounding nine. Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young would respond to the incident in their song "Ohio," recorded and released less than three weeks after the shooting. Later that year, trials began for American soldiers implicated in the My Lai massacre in South Vietnam. And in 1972, the Watergate scandal broke, ultimately bringing down President Nixon and further shaking the public's trust in government.

With the spirit of the 1960s still in the air, the focus remained on a population that came of age in that era. But a new generation of teenagers, too young to have marched on Washington or been eligible for the draft were left in the shadows, without a clear identity. Who were among the next generation of teenagers? And what was their music?

With television's *All in the Family* and George Lucas's film *American Graffiti* major success stories, it seemed that the baby boomers were all that one heard about, talked about, or watched on the screen. The teenager of the early 1970s was all but invisible.

"Glam" became the buzzword for a new teen-focused music that cut through the seriousness



## OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

and signaled a return to rudimentary Rock and Roll, awash in flamboyant fashions and theatrical posturing. Glam records were sometimes “bubblegum”—unpretentious, adolescent, and fun—but at other times they were groundbreaking artistic works. Its representatives were David Bowie, Alice Cooper, Roxy Music, Slade, Sweet, and others. David Bowie drew on his training in theater and mime to create his Ziggy Stardust persona, an androgynous alien-like humanoid who sang about space exploration and Pop superstardom. Alice Cooper combined horror movie spectacle with Rock and Roll anthems of teen angst, including “I’m Eighteen” and “School’s Out.” Teenagers of the early 1970s reveled in the made-to-shock styles and recordings of their new heroes. The hippie met his match.

Through an examination of musical performances, film trailers, television interviews, and archival photographs, students will investigate the cultural landscape of the early 1970s to better understand the rise of Glam and what the music offered teenage audiences who came of age after the radical social movements of the 1960s.

## OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

### 1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- How Glam Rock countered the “seriousness” of late 1960s and early 1970s music with short, highly-melodic Pop songs without an overt political message
- Cultural and socio-economic events of the early 1970s, including the release of American Graffiti, the Watergate scandal, and the end of the U.S. military draft
- How David Bowie, Alice Cooper, and Sweet combined Rock and Roll with elements of live theater to increase their appeal to teenage audiences
- The fashions of Glam Rock, including make-up and androgynous clothing, and how these styles provided adolescents with unique opportunities to experiment with identity and gender roles

### 2. BE ABLE TO (SKILLS):

- Extrapolate arguments about music by assessing sound, mood, tone, instrumentation, and performance style
- Make connections between artistic movements and the social and economic conditions from which they emerge
- Common Core: Students will evaluate the speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence, both in interviews with David Bowie and Alice Cooper and in written commentary by various musical performers and journalists (CCLS Speaking and Listening 3)

## ACTIVITIES

### MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY:

**Distribute Handout 1: Sounds of the Early Seventies. Students will use this worksheet to take notes on the musical performances presented in the following clips.**

**Show clip of the Eagles performing “Desperado” (1973). Allow a few minutes for students to record observations on their worksheets.**

**Show clip of Sweet performing “Ballroom Blitz” (1973). Allow a few minutes for students to complete their worksheets. Explain that both of these songs were released in 1973. Discuss as a class:**

- How are these two performances different from one another?
- Between the Eagles and Sweet, which of these two bands do you think is trying to make “serious” music for adults? Which band do you think has a stronger appeal to teenagers looking to have fun? Explain your answers.

## PROCEDURE:

1. Display photos of David Bowie (1973), the New York Dolls (1973) and Slade (1974). Explain that these performers were associated with a subgenre of Rock and Roll known as Glam (alternately referred to as Glitter Rock), a style of music and performance that occurred in the United States and Great Britain in the early 1970s.



As a class, make a list on the board of observations as to how these performers are dressed. Possible answers may include: Make-up or face paint, long hair, high-heeled shoes, form-fitting materials, not casual, and ambiguous gender.

- What are some professional or artistic reasons why performers might dress this way?
  - What reactions might a teenager receive for dressing this way in public?
2. Show clip of interview with David Bowie (1973).
    - How does Bowie's description of himself as someone who "collects personalities" help explain his physical appearance?
    - Why might a teenager want to emulate Bowie's fashion choices or adopt his "hodgepodge philosophy"?
  3. Distribute Handout 2 – Timeline of the Early 1970s. Ask students to complete an engaged reading of the timeline on their own. They should underline any historical events that might have had a particular significance for someone in junior high or

high school during these years.

- Which events on the timeline do you recognize?
  - Which events do you think had a greater meaning for people who had actively participated in the cultural and political events of the 1960s? Why?
  - Do you see any events that seem to relate directly to teenagers? If you were a teenager at this time, do you think you would have felt a part of the culture or outside of it? Explain.
3. Once they have done this, ask the class to define what they think "theatrical" means in relation to musical performance.
  4. Show trailer for *American Graffiti* (1973). Explain that this film was one of the highest grossing movies of 1973.
    - How is early Rock and Roll music from the late 1950s and early 1960s used in *American Graffiti*? Why do you think the filmmaker selected this particular music for the soundtrack?
    - The tagline of *American Graffiti* asks, "Where were you in '62?" If you are 16 when this film is released in 1973, how old were you in 1962? Do you think this film would have resonated with you? Why or why not?
  5. Distribute Handout 3 – Alice Cooper. As a class, read short biography, then show clip of Alice Cooper performing "I'm Eighteen" (1971).
    - How does Alice Cooper seem to challenge the "seriousness" of the early 1970s? Is the band's performance intended to be funny, serious, or somewhere in between?
    - Is the host's warning valid about how Alice Cooper's performance could be construed as "offensive" to certain audiences? Why or why not?
    - Based on both lyrics and music, what might a teenager find relatable in this song?
    - "I'm Eighteen" reached number 21 on the Billboard Hot 100. Based on the events on the timeline of the early 1970s, why do you think this song was so successful?

## SUMMARY ACTIVITY:

Show ABC News interview with Alice Cooper (1973). Ask students: what point is Alice making with his story about the 14-year-old boy and his father? What about the idea of creating one's own identity—such as the “image” of Alice Cooper—might appeal to a teenager in the early 1970s?

Students will write a paragraph responding to the following prompt: How did the music and fashions of Glam allow teenagers in the 1970s the opportunity to form their own Rock and Roll counterculture separate from the counterculture of the 1960s? Use examples from the timeline on Handout 2 or any other materials from the lesson as evidence.

## EXTENSION:

Distribute Handout 4: Glam Essay Prompts. Write a response essay focusing on two of the following three criticisms of Glam Rock. Your essay should summarize your chosen quotes and examine any ideas that you agree with as well as any ideas you disagree with. Use supporting examples from the materials viewed in class. Note to teachers: The quotes below include some phrases and fashion references that are not commonly heard in contemporary conversation. You may wish to read through with your students for clarification.

### Criticism 1

*“[David Bowie is] a genuine married man dressing up as a woman. The impact is not on people like myself or those in my age group but on youngsters who will be tomorrow’s people. What will those ten- and eleven-year-olds think of someone who’s a man dressing up as a woman at a Pop show? He upsets me as a man.”*

- British Pop singer Cliff Richard, 1973  
Quoted in Glam Rock chapter essay by Barney Hoskyns

### Criticism 2

*“What gets everybody uptight with Alice Cooper is the sacrifice he makes of shame. Confessing fantasies most people would sooner die than reveal, he becomes the scapegoat for everybody’s guilts and repressions. People project on him, revile him, ridicule him and some would doubtless like to kill him. At the same time, he knocks out the young boys with the daring of his act and the rebelliousness of his image. After all, the ultimate rebellion of our time is the simple refusal to be a man.”*

- Albert Goldman, LIFE Magazine, July 30, 1971

## EXTENSION: (CONTINUED)

### Criticism 3

*“Go to any concert, and you’ll be amazed at the sudden change in American youth, who are now as far from last year’s organic coveralls and bushy hanks of hair as they are from the madras shirts and slacks of 1963; teenagers of both sexes are piling on clots of make-up and swaddling themselves in flashily indeterminate glad rags...they’re working very hard at it nonetheless, and embracing as well a whole new set of pop idols consonant with this all-out sprint toward chic degeneracy: the actually rather tame showman Alice Cooper, David Bowie, the fey mime with a brilliant publicity machine, and rafts of kohl-eyed stragglers mincing in their wake. Somehow, though, it all comes off as synthetic and as ultimately emotionless as the audience’s gingerly experimentation with their own sexual identities.”*

- Lester Bangs, Stereo Review, July 1973  
Rock’s Back Pages

## STANDARDS

### NEW JERSEY STATE LEARNING STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: READING

NJSLSA.R1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences and relevant connections from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

NJSLSA.R7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

### NEW JERSEY STATE LEARNING STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: SPEAKING AND LISTENING

NJSLSA.SL2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

NJS:SA.SL3: Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

### SOCIAL STUDIES – NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS)

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change

Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

## NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

### *Core Music Standard: Responding*

**Analyze:** Analyze how the structure and context of varied musical works inform the response.

**Interpret:** Support interpretations of musical works that reflect creators' and/or performers' expressive intent.

**Evaluate:** Support evaluations of musical works and performances based on analysis, interpretation, and established criteria.

### *Core Music Standard: Connecting*

**Connecting 11:** Relate musical ideas and works to varied contexts and daily life to deepen understanding.

## RESOURCES

### VIDEO RESOURCES

- Sweet – Ballroom Blitz (1973)
- Alice Cooper – I'm Eighteen (1971)
- Alice Cooper – Theater On Stage (1973)
- The Eagles – Desperado (1973)
- David Bowie – Personal Philosophy (1973)
- American Graffiti – Trailer (1973)

### FEATURED PEOPLE

- David Bowie
- Slade
- Sweet

### HANDOUTS

- Handout 1: Sounds of the Early Seventies
- Handout 2: Timeline of the Early Seventies
- Handout 3: Alice Cooper
- Handout 4: Glam Essay Prompts