

Solomon Vidal
Web Development II
23 March 2023

How Music Affects Us

Interview 1: Ernesto Escanilla

The very first interviewee, Ernesto Escanilla, is my grandfather. I decided to interview him first not only because of the difference in our age and gender but also because of our tastes in music. While it's expected for us to have different tastes in music because of the years in which we grew up, I'm interested in how certain music that my grandpa listens to affects him yet doesn't give me a similar reaction.

What is your favorite song to listen to?

"The Prayer" was my grandfather's answer. I asked him why and his answer was very simple "Kasi, maganda yung boses nila" which, translated from Tagalog to English, means "Because their voices are beautiful. The version my grandpa listens to is the one with Andrea Bocelli and Celine Dion so it's understandable why he describes their voices as beautiful. I inquired further on what about their voices he likes specifically to try and figure out how it affects how he feels.

What do you specifically like about their voices?

Delving into the tones of their voices, my grandpa responds "malinaw at malakas" which translates to "clear and strong". While my grandpa isn't one for the technical aspects of music, he is still able to describe the richness of Bocelli and Dion's voices. This hints that he's able to feel the music at a deeper level than just the "notes".

How do their voices make you feel?

After I asked this, my grandpa took a second to think and said "Mabuti, kasi gusto kong makinig sa boses na may talento" — translating to "Good, because I like listening to voices with talent". He then went on to describe singers from the Philippines because our country is known for always having karaoke at parties or even just as a way to unwind at home. He says that Filipino singers make him feel proud because they sing very well and can reach high notes (this also references that Filipino singers love belting and that having that ability means you're great at singing).

Do you get emotional listening to this kind of music?

“Hindi ako nakakaramdam ng malalim na emosyon, pero ang sarap pakinggan yung music na to. Gusto ko lang yung tunog” which translates to “I don’t feel deep emotions, but it feels really good to listen to this kind of music. I just like the sound.” he responds. I believe that while my grandpa is the type to listen to music often and even dances along to it, he doesn’t feel the same as I do when listening to music. It’s not the depth of feeling, but being able to have a lively atmosphere. While my grandpa can feel emotions from music, it’s purely for enjoyment and entertainment.

What places do you think of when listening to music?

“Na iisip ko yung noong bata pa ako... tumugtog ako ng gitara para sa lola mo...” — “I think about when I was younger... I used to play guitar for your grandma (referencing that he was trying to woo her with music)”. With the guitar playing, my grandpa said he would also sing to my grandma (even though he wasn’t the greatest singer in the neighborhood in his youth). He continued by telling me the story of his and my grandma’s younger years when their families wouldn’t let them be together and my grandma’s dad even hired someone to kill my grandpa. It’s a familiar story told every year. Still, it’s interesting to hear how music helps my grandpa reminisce past experiences that were crazy at the time and are now laughable stories today.

It’s safe to say that my grandpa remembers his hometown in the Philippines where he met my grandmother. I can also state that we have different places in our heads when listening to music. I think of other possible worlds and universes while my grandpa reminisces about his and my grandma’s lives on this planet, in the Philippines, in the city of Antipolo.

What do you think of modern music?

“Mukhang upbeat yung modernong musika na naririnig ko ngayon. Meron din hindi naaangkop na musika — kaya hindi ako madalas nakikinig sa modernong musika” — meaning: “The modern music I hear nowadays sounds upbeat. There are some inappropriate songs so I don’t listen to modern music very often”. After asking this question, we had a conversation about how music has often been inappropriate, but only recently has it been clearer because the lyrics are more direct.

After discussing modern music, we talked about different genres to which my grandfather stated “Hindi ko gusto yung mga metal na musika kasi sumisigaw lang sila” which can be interpreted as “I don’t like metal music because all they’re doing is screaming” and not, by his definition, singing. I compare my liking of metal music to his and realize that, because of how he grew up, my grandpa may still believe in metal stereotypes that imply metal is inherently diabolic while

also taking vocals at face value. I can appreciate the work that goes into metal vocals and will often listen to metal music; my grandpa, however, prefers music that's gentler to the ears.

The last genre I asked him about was rock and we were able to connect in our appreciation for the artists and songs associated with the genre. "Parang pang lalaki yung rock music" meaning "Rock music feels like it's for guys", my grandpa laughs, because he didn't know many women who enjoyed rock music. A small hometown, a country that loves belting, and having mostly Christian/ Catholic, traditional, values brew little fondness for any inappropriate-sounding music — especially, for women.

Overall, I can see that with the difference in music tastes, my grandpa and I also differ in how we feel about music and how we feel the music but it doesn't stop us from enjoying the same genres or the same songs in different ways.

Interview 2: Cecilia Vidal

The second interviewee, Cecilia Vidal, is my mother. I decided to interview her second because, chronologically, she is closer to me in age than my grandfather so I was interested in seeing how our tastes differ and if they're more similar because of our age and gender. Although I'm closer to my mother in age and gender, I want to delve deeper into the differences in our music preferences and how music affects not only us but things like faith.

What is your favorite song to listen to?

"Yung paborito kong song? I think yung Hillsong United song na "Oceans" (Cecilia Vidal) — translated as "My favorite song? I think the Hillsong United song is called "Oceans". As one of the many people in my family who expresses faith intensely, I wasn't surprised to hear that my mother's favorite song to listen to is a Christian song. What I find compelling about this specific song, however, is its situational significance within my and my mother's lives. In November of 2019, we were hit with a devastating loss in our family: My aunt, my mother's older sister, passed. Being the person in our family to bring us towards the Christian faith, she was always the person my mother's side looked up to. I decided to press on further by asking my mother exactly why she likes this song:

Why do you like this song, specifically?

"Gusto ko ang kantang ito dahil naaalala ko yung tita ninyo" — My mom expresses that she likes the song so much because "it remind me of your (mine and my sister's) aunt". She goes on to explain that it makes her feel closer to her sister not only because it was one of my aunt's favorite songs to listen to, but because it was the song that played constantly at my aunt's funeral

in the Philippines. It helps her to think about her sister and remember her values, her faith, and all of the different traits that she wishes to imbue in herself. “Na mimiss to yung tita mo so dapat kailangan kong alagaan ang mga pinsan mo” she adds; my mother explains that because she misses her sister, she believes she needs to care for my cousins. All of these memories and responsibilities make up the importance of this song to my mother.

What do you like about her voice?

While asking my mother about the band Hillsong United, she said “Maganda pa rin yung boses nang lead singer” — complimenting the singer of the band, Brooke Fraser. I asked her what she liked specifically and she said “makinis yung boses niya at mataas pati”. I understand that, like my grandpa, my mom also likes voices that are conventionally nice to the ears. My mom likes, and prefers to hear, voices that are smooth and high. In the Philippines, we value being a good singer, and being “good” means that you’re able to reach high notes so it comes as no surprise that my mom would choose Fraser’s voice as her favorite.

How does her voice make you feel?

“Good. Peeling kong mag karaoke pag katapos nito” — my mom laughs while she says Fraser’s voice makes her feel “Good” and that “She feels like doing karaoke after the interview is finished. My mom goes on further to say Fraser’s voice is “nagpapakalma” which means “calming”. It’s fascinating how complex our reactions are to music. While the song helps calm my mother down, it also gives her the energy to turn on our karaoke machine and sing for hours with the rest of the family.

Do you get emotional listening to this kind of music?

“Siempre, emosyonal ako kasi naaalala ko yung tita mo and ung circumstance nang kamatayan nya pati din si God at yung plan nya para sa buhay natin” (Cecilia Vidal). She explains that “of course” she gets emotional “because of the circumstances” of my aunt’s passing — moreover, she thinks thoroughly about God’s plan for her life, her family’s life, her friend’s life, etc.

What do you feel when listening to music?

“Depende sa music. Pag nag woworship, peeling kong mag praise and worship kay God. Pag Karaoke, peeling kong mag kanta at mag sayaw” (Cecilia Vidal). Similar to my grandpa, my mom says when she hears music she “feels like singing and dancing, but only specific songs. For Christian music, she feels like being more serious and focusing on praising and worshipping God. My mom feels with the filter of faith which is different from my way of listening to music.

I inquired about her feelings towards music and God more deeply and she said “Peeling ko mas malapit ako sa Diyos pag nakikinig ako ng worship music”; she feels closer to God through praise and worship. Because of the importance of God in her life, my mom’s feelings toward music are altered. While I would listen to music and pick apart the different parts that go into it that make it sound “good”, my mom has set criteria of “good” which is often affected by faith and tradition.

What do you think of modern music?

With this last question, I wanted to ask my mom about modern music because there are certain types of modern music that don’t fit her “good” criteria; I also wanted to see if there are types of modern music she does like. “Hindi ko gusto yung music na nagmumura at yung music na medjong malakas — you know yung mga metal, rock, rap, ganun” (Cecilia Vidal) she elaborates. My mom really dislikes music with swear words in it and anything that’s way too loud — so music like metal, rock, and rap isn’t what she’d choose to listen to.

I asked her what modern music she does like and she said “Yung trendy music sa TikTok na nakikita ko sa FaceBook”. My mom loves to dance, so the upbeat music trends on TikTok that she sees on FaceBook are some of the modern music that she does like. Cute and funny dance trends, especially those popular in Asia, are some of my mom’s favorites to dance to.

In all, I learned that my mom, like my grandpa, likes voices that are “good” in terms of our country’s criteria. She’s open to listening to modern music, dancing, and singing to it, but her favorite kind of music will always be worship music as it helps her feel closer to God as a woman of faith.

Interview 3: Krizelda Howell