

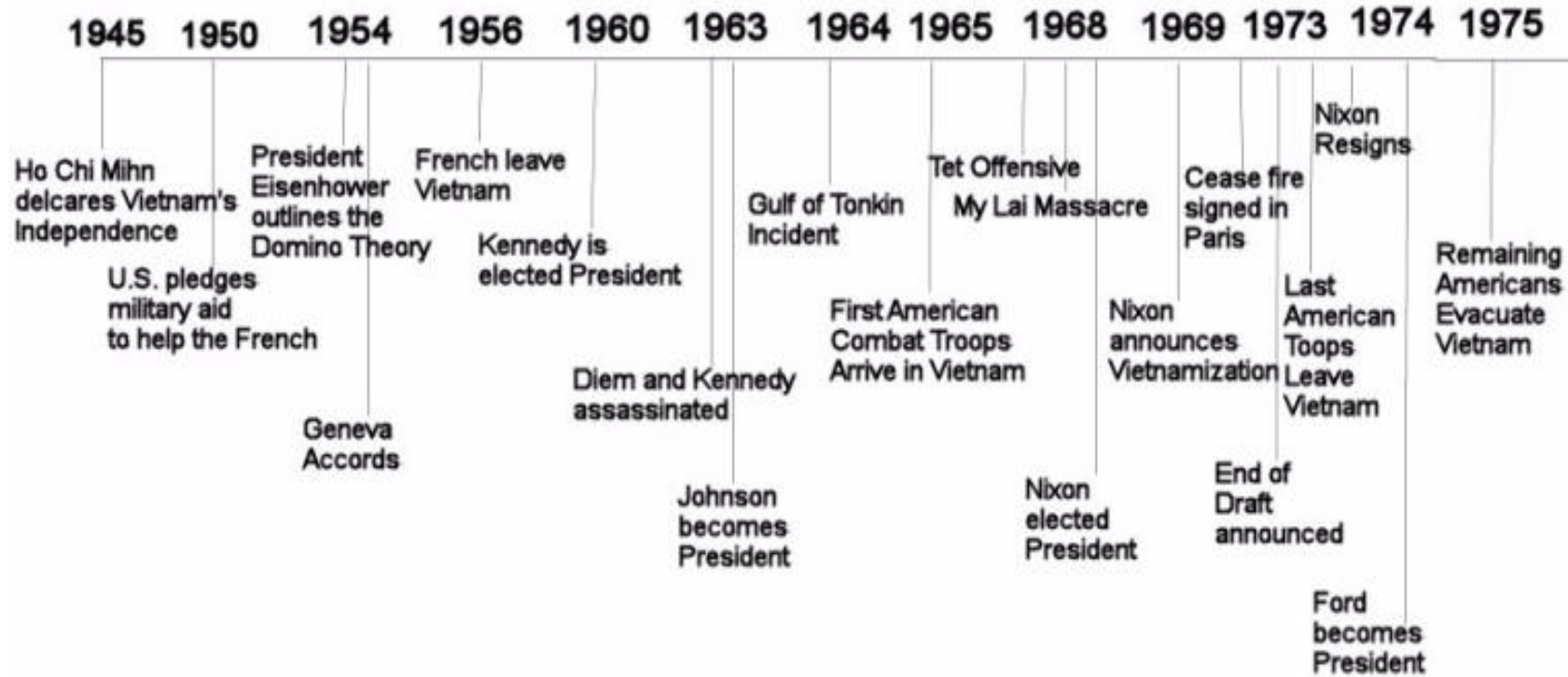
The Music of the Vietnam War

A Soundtrack for a Generation

Douglas A. Jackson, Associate Professor of Music , Elizabeth City State University - Presenter

Museum of The Albemarle – Lunch and Learn Series 1/22/20

Timeline



Message and Protest Music

- Musicologist and historians have a number of opinions on the “ most significant” recordings during the Vietnam era.
- Blowing In the Wind – Bob Dylan
- A Change is Gonna Come – Sam Cooke
- Fortunate Son – Creedence Clearwater Revival
- What Are We Fighting For – Phil Ochs
- Eve of Destruction – Barry McGuire
- Lyndon Told The Nation – Tom Paxton
- Bring ‘em Home – Pete Seeger
- Backlash Blues – Nina Simone
- Saigon Bride - Joan Baez
- Feel Like I’m Fixin’ to Die – Country Joe and the Fish
- War – Edwin Starr
- What Going On – Marvin Gaye
- Give Peace A Chance – John Lennon

Saigon Bride by Joan Chandos Baez, an American singer, songwriter, musician and activist. Her contemporary folk music often includes songs of protest or social justice. Baez has performed publicly for over 60 years, releasing over 30 albums. Fluent in Spanish and English, she has also recorded songs in at least six other languages.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GuiMTdKijnA>



Images: A former Ambassador remarked “
Vietnam is a country not a war”



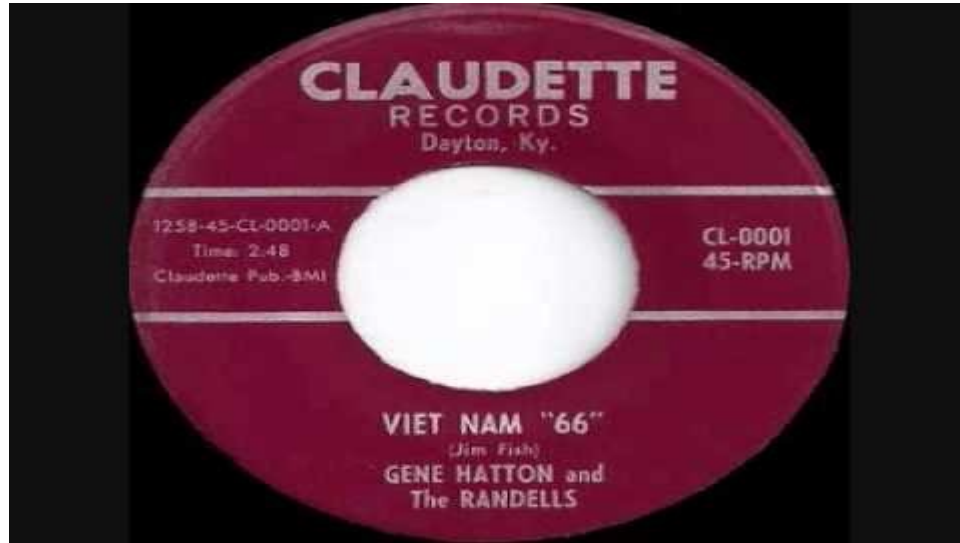
Why did the U.S. enter this conflict?

- Proxy War: Vietnam was a proxy war for the Soviet Union because they supplied N. Vietnam but did not participate in the fighting
- Containment: US foreign policy during the Cold War was to contain the spread of communism using economic, diplomatic and military means.
- Truman Doctrine: President Harry Truman pledged to “support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation By outside pressures” referring indirectly to communism.
- The Gulf of Tonkin incident - a 1964 occurrence with questionable intelligence and actions.

Related Information

- According to the U.S. DOD – between 1965 and 1972 111 Billion dollars were spent on the war in Viet Nam
- Between 1953 – 1975 the U.S. provided 285 Billion in economic aid to the SE Asia region of Saigon
- During the Viet Nam “era “ Sam Ervin, Everett Jordan and Jesse Helms represented North Carolina in the United States Senate
- The average age of the soldiers was between 19 - 21 years old
- 1968 was the deadliest year for American Troops in Vietnam further turning Americans against the war.
- The Vietnamese were ready to die to defend their homeland, this made them an extremely difficult opponent to defeat

Viet Nam 66



Vietnam 66

- The song "Viet Nam 66" by Gene Hatton and The Randells, released in Dayton, Kentucky, took the letter format, between a soldier and his family in the US.
- It drew attention to the plight of the soldier in Vietnam, especially focusing on his young age. At one point the soldier, sitting in a foxhole, reflected on the trivial and now seemingly unimportant arguments he used to have with his brother back home.
- The track started with a soldier receiving a letter from his mother. Then the soldier wrote a letter to his mother (spoken-word section). At the end, the listener heard a gunshot sound-effect, suggesting that the soldier had been killed in action (K.I.A.) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfQoQWxx7QM>

War and Music

- Many of the ancient artifacts depict musical instruments used by soldiers in battles
- The Romans provided the first known printed explanation for having military music... “ To fire up attacking troops and to uphold their spirits while they endure privations and fatigue”
- King Charles II used drums to keep block movements of the British Militia
- As far back as 1633 , in the colony of Virginia, drummers performed for marching militia
- In early American conflicts, song were song by troops to help keep spirits high, like “ Yankee Doodle” and Battle Hymn of the Republic

War and Music con't

- Vietnam was the first war in which technology made music widely accessible everywhere except the front lines
- In Vietnam soldiers had access to transistor radios and tape decks
- In addition to records bought at the PX, Meredith H. Lair writes that by 1969 more than one-third of American Troops listened to the radio more than five hours a day.
- In 1969 , Servicemen bought nearly 500,000 radios, 178,000 reel-to-reel decks and 220,000 cassette recorders

Memories of Home

- Many of the popular music titles of the time served as memories of what they left behind, for example
- Goodnight Sweetheart by the Spaniels
- Goodnight, sweetheart, well it's time to go
Goodnight, sweetheart, well it's time to go
I hate to leave you, but I really must say
Goodnight, sweetheart, goodnight
- My Girl by the Temptations
- I've got sunshine on a cloudy day
When it's cold outside I've got the month of May
Well I guess you'd say
What can make me feel this way?
My girl (my girl, my girl)
Talkin' 'bout my girl (my girl)

Lyndon Told The Nation by Tom Paxton: Thomas Richard Paxton is an American folk singer-songwriter who has had a music career spanning more than fifty years. In 2009, Paxton received a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. He is noteworthy as a music educator as well as an advocate for folk singers to combine traditional songs with new compositions.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NczfHFX5vCc>



Memorable Lyrics

- The Letter by the Box Tops
- Gimme a ticket for an aeroplane
Ain't got time to take a fast train
Lonely days are gone, I'm a-goin' home
My baby, just a wrote me a letter
- We Gotta Get Outta This Place by The Animals
- We gotta get out of this place
If it's the last thing we ever do
We gotta get out of this place
'Cause girl, there's a better life for me and you

Hello Vietnam by the Lonesome Valley Singers

A1	Hello Vietnam
A2	Jungle War
A3	Tell The Folks I Miss 'Em
A4	I'm Just A Lonesome Soldier
A5	It's All Worth Fighting For
B1	Don't Worry Just Pray
B2	It's Got To Be Done
B3	What We're Fighting For
B4	Why Doesn't Someone Write To Me
B5	Goodbye Curly Head

Jungle War by The Lonesome Valley Singers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XC1f46MErQ>



Feel Like I'm Fixin To Die by Country Joe and The Fish - was one of the signature moments at Woodstock.

With the memorable chorus of:

“and it's 1,2,3 what are we fighting for? Don't 'ask me, I don't give a damn, next stop is Vietnam”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3W7-ngmO_p8

