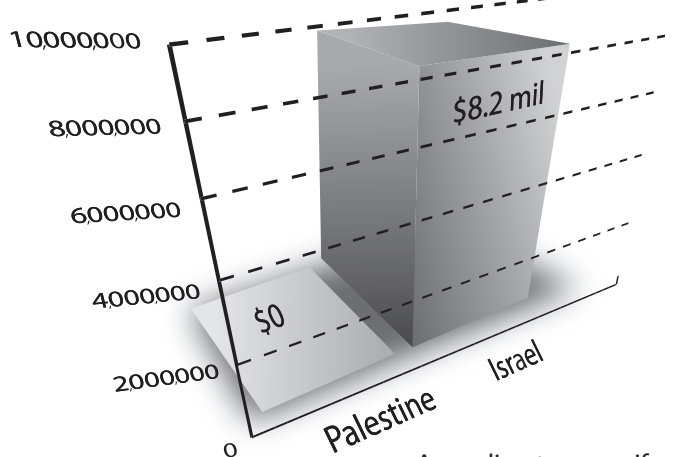
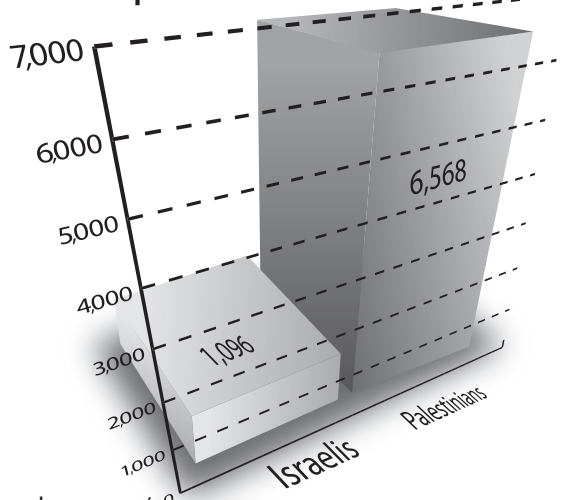


Daily U.S. Military Aid to Israel and the Palestinians Fiscal Year 2011



According to: www.ifamericansknew.org/

Israelis and Palestinians Killed Sept. 29, 2000 - Present



U.S. popular music lacks creativity



Garrett Kelsey

Music is the auditory manifestation of art. The purest form of expression that I feel has ever been achieved. When I lie down in the shade and listen to a song on my phone, it's like I melt away into another world. There is no experience like it and no experience that could ever be comparable.

Yet, in current American society, music has been falling to pieces. Our most famous artists are practically singing the same songs. I can barely tell the difference between Katy Perry's "Firework" and Lady Gaga's hit, "Telephone," which I just recently learned are sung by different artists. To me, it takes either an indie band or a foreign one to really stir things up and remind me that I am still receptive to modern music.

When I was growing up, my family listened to country music. Later in my life, I discovered Johnny Cash, and I couldn't believe country had devolved into what it is today. The problem with modern country music is that it has the depth and complexity of dead fish. Honestly, with songs like "Water" by Brad Paisley, it wouldn't surprise me if the next big country hit actually was about a dead fish.

There is an old argument that says country is just fun, not everything needs to be taken so seriously. That is true, but if your whole genre is based on these goofy songs, then when it's time to be taken seriously, you're out of luck.

It's even worse when a country singer tries to be serious and ends up playing some awful, plastic representation of human relationships like the Taylor Swift song "Love Story," which takes a liberal interpretation of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. By liberal, mind you, I mean in the sense that a chicken could be considered a velociraptor.

Pop and rap music are just as much to blame for this as well. Can anyone really say Selena Gomez is a better pop musician than Michael Jackson? Is it even possible to compare the boy-band pop of One Direction to the Beatles? Anyone remember Aaron Carter? He was the Justin Beiber of ten years ago, and has completely dropped off the entertainment radar. That is the nature of pop, I suppose. Pop music always struggles with the fact that there is no real set definition for what it is. Pop music can be great, but without soul or creative quality, it quickly falls by the wayside.

Rap, in particular, has worsened. Rap was once a way for minorities to express a positive message, according to a 1996 New York Times column. Rap used to express love and personal exploration. It used to preach about avoiding drugs and condemned violence. This stuff is still out there, but listening to what I hear on radios, most of it is too vulgar to repeat here. Rap with a positive message has become the exception, rather than the rule.

If you were to search through my phone right now you would find primarily symphonic rock music, which is my favorite. To show that music is having trouble, I'll use an example from that genre. Nightwish is a Finnish/Swedish band that has made great contributions to the budding genre of symphonic metal. Nightwish has become popular throughout both Europe and the United States. This inspires copycats. Many other bands try to mimic the Nightwish style but they always fall flat. Why? Because they have no soul. Lady Gaga might be nice to listen to but if she's just Madonna 2.0, then who really cares?

To summarize, think of it like this: If Tupac is the greatest rapper of all time, does it not make Lil' Wayne, who attempts to emulate him, a lesser artist? I think it does. That, my friends, is a darn shame.

Garrett Kelsey is a sophomore linguistics major from O'Fallon, Mo.

U.S. policy worsens conflict



Robert Overmann

Let's pretend Chinese president Hu Jintao announced yesterday that the United States Capitol is now Los Angeles, California. The White House, the U.S. Capitol and the Supreme Court Building must all be torn down and moved across the country. No ifs, ands or buts.

If that were true, Americans would throw a nationwide tantrum, basically amounting to the grade-school standby of "You can't tell me what to do!" So why is it the Democratic Party faced a firestorm of criticism for omitting "Jerusalem is and will remain the capital of Israel" during their 2012 official party platform, according to a Sept. 5 CNN article.

This phrase was part of the party's 2008 platform, but was left out for the 2012 edition. It is exactly this type of forceful meddling in Israeli-Palestinian affairs that inflames the already brutal conflict engulfing the region. The United States is intensifying an already bitter conflict by reaffirming the assignment of

what possibly is the most hotly contested city in the history of the world to Israel.

Let's not kid ourselves — the United States removing itself from the conflict isn't going to solve the centuries-old conflict regarding Gaza and the West Bank. Israel and Palestine are to blame for gross human rights violations and terrorism against one another. Gaza courts have been known to torture and arrest Israelis arbitrarily and deny arrestees the ability to consult a lawyer, according to Human Rights Watch's website. The Israeli military has been known to indiscriminately shoot Palestinian civilians, attack Palestinian ambulances and order the razing of Palestinian houses, also according to hrw.org.

The first and most important step the United States can take is to recognize and condemn terrorist acts by Israel and Palestine. Our nation is firmly pro-Israel, and thus Israeli terrorist acts often go without United States recognition. Throughout the U.S., Palestine is widely seen as the "bad guy" in the conflict. Just as the war between Israel and Palestine comes down to religious differences, U.S. foreign policy might as well.

Regardless of whether U.S. world policy actually is anti-Islam, it is certainly perceived as such across most of the Middle East. 97 percent of Palestinians residing in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are Muslim, according to the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs. 76 percent of Israelis, in contrast, are Jewish and only 16.9 percent are Muslim, according to the CIA World Factbook. Whether or not

U.S. foreign policy in this matter hinges on the fact that Israel is predominantly Jewish and Palestine is predominantly Muslim, one can understand why it is perceived to be so.

Just as we all learned during kindergarten, fairness is the best policy. Playing favorites does nothing but incite bitterness, which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is already overflowing with. Bitterness in war results in savage attacks, evidenced by the copious acts of terrorism conducted by both sides. Universal condemnation of terrorism and human rights violations is the fairest way for the United States to involve itself in the conflict.

Perceived U.S. anti-Islam policy is a self-fulfilling prophecy. If the rest of the world perceives the U.S. as anti-Islam, there is going to be a segment of the U.S. population that fills this role. And this segment is growing quite rapidly in the U.S. — crimes against Muslims rose 50 percent during 2010, according to a Sept. 5 CNN article. U.S. foreign policy, if it isn't already anti-Islam, will be soon.

Let's stop pretending that we're fair, unbiased arbitrators in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The United States' involvement is only making matters worse. Let's stop choosing favorites, stop ignoring human rights abuses, and start labeling terrorism for what it is, regardless of the perpetrator.

Robert Overmann is a junior English major from Cape Girardeau, Mo.

How do you think modern mainstream music compares to that of the past?

"I think it depends on the genre and personally, for me, I still prefer music of the past. I'm a huge fan of Led Zeppelin and ACDC."

Shawnah Stephens
Junior



"I'd feel like an old man if I said all music today is garbage, though, 80 percent of the music I listen to is from the past."

Max McDermott
Sophomore



"As a country music listener, I don't listen to a lot of mainstream music. I don't think any music from now or the past is better or worse."

Marianne Emery
Senior



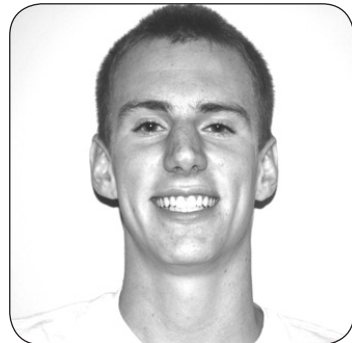
"Personally, I generally do not like current music. I find it very repetitive in a bad way."

Michael Kackley
Sophomore



AROUND THE QUAD

Entertainers should stay out of political arena



John Brooks

"Go ahead, make my day." Clint Eastwood's lines from the 1983 film Sudden Impact are well-known because Clint Eastwood truly made them sound intimidating. Even as Eastwood enters his golden years, he maintains his acting chops, making "Get off my lawn" sound just as intimidating during 2008's Gran Torino. There's no denying Eastwood's talent as an actor.

But when Eastwood spoke at last week's Republican National Convention, he overstepped his boundaries as an actor,

which was a mistake. Actors, singers and other entertainers are just that — entertainers. The publicity their popularity affords them does not mean their personal political views should be a part of the ongoing political debate.

Let's you think I am simply attacking Eastwood because he supported Republican policies, let me provide another example of a celebrity getting involved with politics. The singer Cher has more than 870,000 followers on the social networking site Twitter. She uses this massive following to consistently broadcast a message that is ardently anti-Romney and anti-Republican. The problem, of course, comes when you try to read her tweets. She's barely coherent.

When we listen to people speak, there's a certain amount of trust we invest in the speaker. We trust they have done enough research to accurately understand an issue. We trust they are committed to what they're speaking about. If Cher can't clearly communicate, how can anyone possibly believe she knows what she's talking about?

This example goes back to the larger issue of letting entertainers like Cher

and Eastwood play a role in the political arena. They might have many fans, but their political opinions should hold exactly as much weight as my opinion on where the next rover should land on Mars. I'm not qualified to offer an assessment on that topic, and neither are they.

People like President Obama and presidential candidate Romney become politicians for several reasons: they're wealthy, they can speak clearly and articulately, they can get along with and unite people beyond their differences. Say whatever you want to about the corrupt, partisan nature of politics, and I'll be inclined to agree. However, it's not an easy job. Not everyone can do it.

Just because you can act, sing or dance doesn't mean you can understand complex political issues. Politics tend to bring the most intelligent, clear communicating people to the forefront, and those are the people I want telling me why their vision of America is the one I should cast my vote for.

Actors should be a blank slate. They create things for our consumption and enjoyment. When they try to comment about issues that are contentiously debated,

they're presuming to have authority in this area, but really they don't. Furthermore, once I know an actor's political leanings, it's difficult for me to enjoy their work as much. I don't want my movies, music or art to be political. During this election year, I already see Facebook post after Facebook post constantly yelling about every issue out there.

Celebrities should reserve their fame for drawing attention to non-political issues around the world. If Cher wants to stumble through a comment about poverty, or sickness, or any number of human problems on Twitter, go for it. I draw objection to people like Eastwood and Cher making it seem like they know what they're talking about, because, in most cases, they don't, and not everyone realizes that. Entertainers need to stay out of politics because they aren't qualified in any way, and every time I hear one of them tell me how to vote, I think the same thing — "Why should I care?"

John Brooks is a sophomore English major from Columbia, Mo.