

# Pop music heritage contributes to the formation of identity

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The musical rebels of the past are today's museum pieces. Pop music is increasingly penetrating heritage institutions such as museums and archives. That is apparent from the PhD research of Arno van der Hoeven. On Thursday 27 November 2014 he defended his thesis entitled 'Popular Music Memories. Places and practices of popular music heritage, memory and cultural identity' at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. In his research, Van der Hoeven also shows that pop music heritage contributes to the formation of people's identity.

For his thesis, Van der Hoeven investigated the strong relationship between pop [music](#) and memory. Pop songs often elicit emotions from the past. Many people connect music with specific memories from their lives. It is therefore increasingly more common for [heritage](#) institutions to exhibit music culture or to store it for future generations. Pop music has therefore become cultural heritage. Examples of this are the David Bowie exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the overview exhibition of the Hague pop band Golden Earring in the Hague Historical Museum, and various Dutch pop archives.

## Recording music culture

Van der Hoeven studied phenomena such as nostalgia, music exhibitions and dance parties for older music fans. He interviewed heritage professionals, DJs, fans and music collectors, for example. When doing this he concentrated not only on the established cultural institutions, but

also investigated the many heritage projects that have been set up by music lovers. In various Dutch places and regions there are initiatives to record the local music culture in books and archives.

Van der Hoeven explains the emergence of such projects against the background of developments which ensure an increasing diversity of heritage activities. Internet has made it far easier for local communities and fans to present their music culture. In addition, heritage museums are focusing more on modern culture and the everyday life of local communities. For them, pop music is an attractive way of connecting with a new public.

## **Identity**

In his research, Van der Hoeven shows that pop music heritage contributes to the formation of identity. For many people music is a golden thread through their lives. The music that they listened to during their youth continues to have a significant meaning later in their lives. Music heritage is also connected with the identity of places and regions. An example of this is 'beat town' The Hague and the palingpop ('eel pop') from fishing town Volendam. Van der Hoeven concludes that pop music is no longer just for young people. With a history that goes back more than 50 years, pop music is a cultural form that connects several generations.

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