

Music To Die For: How Genre Can Determine A Musician's Lifespan

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A musician's genre can determine when they'll meet their mortality.

Chris Cornell, Chester Bennington, Lil Peep, Avicii, XXXTentacion, Jimmy Wopo, Mac Miller, Keith Flint, and as of this week, Grammy-nominated rapper Nipsey Hussle.

These are the names of just some of the artists who have died well before their time as a result of suicide, drug overdoses or being murdered.

It's a long list in the space of two years.

READ MORE: [Rapper Nipsey Hussle Shot Dead In Los Angeles](#)



Fans grieve at the site of rapper and community activist Nipsey Hussle's murder. Image: Getty

However devastating it is, it's not abnormal or new to see a young musician's life suddenly cut short. Just look at Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Sid Vicious, The Notorious B.I.G., Tupac Shakur, Kurt Cobain and Amy Winehouse -- all artists who dominate various decades who each passed away prematurely.

Are troubled souls simply more likely to drift towards this career path? One academic sought to find out.



DJ and producer Tim Bergling -- known as Avicii -- took his own life in April 2018. Image: Getty.

Dr Dianna Kenny, Professor of Psychology and Music at the University of Sydney, studied this phenomenon using a sample size of 13,000 deceased artists.

Not only did the 2015 study show that popular musicians tend to die up to *25 years* younger than the average person and have higher rates of suicide, homicide and accidental deaths -- it also found that the *genre* of music an artist identifies with is a massive factor when it comes to how they could meet their demise.

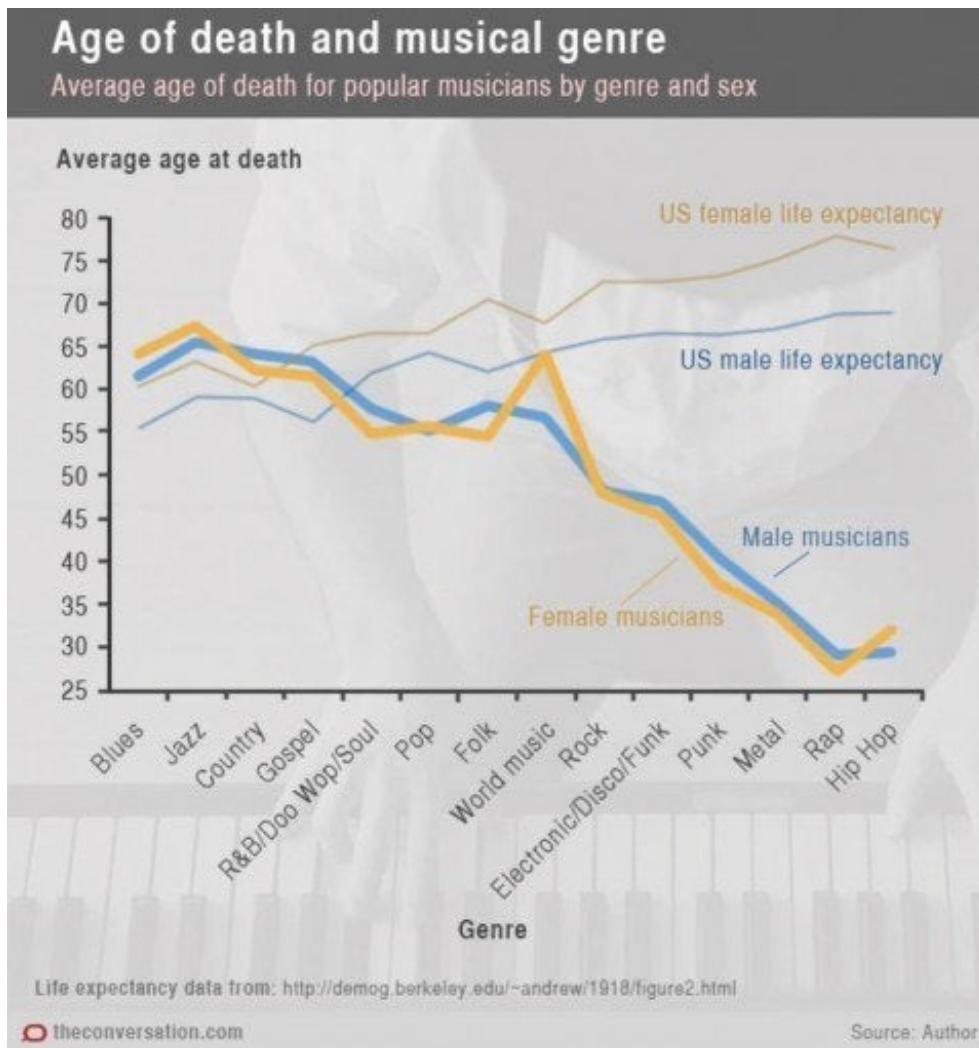


Image: Supplied

For example, while murder accounted for just six percent of all deaths across the entire sample, more than 50 percent of hip-hop and rap musicians in her sample had died as a result of murder.

“This could be due to these genres’ strong associations with drug-related crime and gang culture,” Kenny wrote.



Tupac Shakur was murdered in 1996. The killer has never been found. Image: Getty.

“People who go into rap music or hip hop or punk, they’re in a much more occupational hazard profession compared to war,” Kenny said.

“We don’t lose half our army in a battle.”

This glaring statistic hasn't gone unnoticed.

In the wake of the shooting death of Nipsey Hussle, the rap community has reached a breaking point, with fans and artists alike begging their peers to stop the violence and rightfully declaring that there had already been far too many senseless losses.

Broke me.... we really fighting for our lives against our own kind and really have to take risk and match the level of hatred that we are born in .. I’m tired 🙏🙏 prayers for my brother and his family

— Meek Mill (@MeekMill) [April 1, 2019](#)

Hearing the news about Nipsey Hussle brought me back to the moment I read the news about xxxtentacion. This shit has got to stop. These men need to stop being gunned down. What the fuck does anyone get out of killing innocent people???? Fucked up world man

— madisyn (@madyczarnecki) [April 1, 2019](#)

I feel like Nipsey was one of the few real ones left in hip hop. He used his platform to shift the culture and empower the urban community. Truly the last of a dying breed. This senseless violence has to stop. Was and will always be a fan. Bumping Victory Lap all year. 🙏🙏🙏

— Jordan Burroughs (@alliseeisgold) [April 1, 2019](#)

While the study seemed to indicate rap and hip-hop artists have the lowest risk of heart disease and cancer, Kenny says that this is a result of these artists "have not yet lived long enough to fall into the highest-risk ages for heart and liver-related illnesses.

Consequently, they had the lowest rates of death in these categories."

Cause of death by genre					
Various causes of death for musicians of different genres					
	Accidental	Suicide	Homicide	Heart-related	Cancer
% deaths per cause	19.5%	6.8%	6.0%	17.4%	23.4%
Blues	9.2%	2.0%	3.5%	28.0%	24.2%
Jazz	10.6%	2.7%	1.9%	20.7%	30.6%
Country	15.8%	4.7%	1.6%	23.5%	25.1%
Gospel	13.3%	0.9%	3.6%	18.5%	23.0%
R&B	11.5%	1.6%	5.0%	23.2%	26.8%
Pop	19.0%	6.4%	2.9%	16.4%	26.7%
Folk	15.9%	5.5%	4.4%	15.3%	32.3%
World music	12.7%	3.4%	9.6%	17.8%	19.9%
Rock	24.4%	7.2%	3.6%	15.4%	24.7%
Electronic	16.7%	5.0%	10.0%	15.0%	25.0%
Punk	30.0%	11.0%	8.2%	12.6%	18.3%
Metal	36.2%	19.3%	5.9%	11.0%	14.1%
Rap	15.9%	6.2%	51.0%	6.9%	7.6%
Hip Hop	18.3%	7.4%	51.5%	6.1%	6.1%

Red: significantly above the overall average rate for cause of death
 Blue: above the overall average rate for cause of death
 Green: significantly below the overall average rate for cause of death

Note: not all causes shown

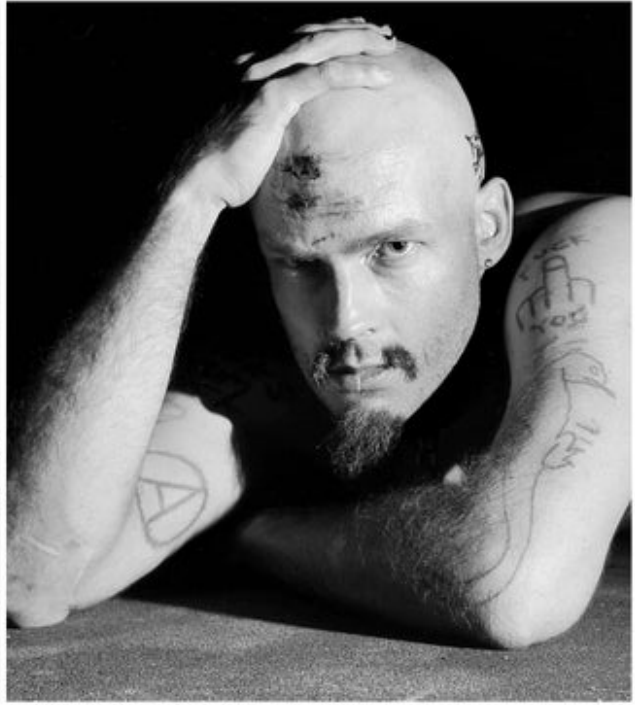
theconversation.com Source: Author

Image: Supplied

As for other genres, there were interesting patterns found among the causes of death for metal, rock and punk musicians.

Nineteen percent of deceased metal musicians took their own lives, as did 11 percent of deceased punks, which is huge when compared with the Gospel musicians who had the lowest suicide rate at just 0.9 percent.

“Perhaps protected by their religious beliefs,” Kenny explained.



Sid Vicious and GG Allin both died from heroin overdoses. Image: Getty

“I have long speculated that genres, like heavy metal, are manifestations of band members’ psychological states, which express their rage, impotence and despair, and provide a medium through which vulnerable musicians can project these feelings onto receptive audiences and detractors alike,” Kenny wrote in her book.



Kurt Cobain of Nirvana died by taking his own life in 1994. Image: Getty

She goes on to explain that there's a combination of factors generally present in the music industry, such as "the ubiquitous presence of alcohol and other substances of addiction, irregular hours, touring, high levels of stress, performance anxiety," Kenny said.

For those who experienced trauma throughout their lives, the glamourisation of the "sex, drugs, rock'n'roll" mentality can see young artists turn to promiscuity, dangerous behaviour and substance abuse to deal with their suffering.

Sadly, it looks like the old adage "live fast, die young" does ring true after all.

Image: Getty