

Pop music

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Pop music — a term originally deriving from an abbreviation of the word "popular" — is a genre of popular music with roots in 1950s rock and roll music.^[1] The terms "popular music" and "pop music" are often used interchangeably, even though the former encompasses any commercial music which has achieved mass popularity — and can include virtually any style or genre of the recorded music era.^[1]

As a specific genre, pop music is nevertheless quite eclectic, often borrowing elements from other styles including urban, dance, rock, Latin and country;^[1] nonetheless, there are core elements which define pop. Such include generally short-to-medium length songs, written in a basic format (often the verse-chorus structure), as well as the common employment of repeated choruses, melodic tunes, and catchy hooks.^[1]

So-called "pure pop" music, such as power pop, features all these elements, using electric guitars, drums and bass for instrumentation.^[1] Such music generally sacrifices artistic depth to straightforward pleasurability.^[1] Pop music is generally thought of as a genre which is commercially recorded and desires to have a mass audience appeal.^[1]

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Definitions

David Hatch and Stephen Millward define pop music as "a body of music which is distinguishable from popular, jazz, and folk musics".^[2] According to Pete Seeger, pop music is "professional music which draws upon both folk music and fine arts music".^[3] Although pop music is often seen as oriented towards the singles charts it is not the sum of all chart music, which has always contained songs from a variety of sources, including

Pop music

Stylistic origins	Traditional pop, rock and roll, folk, classical, popular music
Cultural origins	1950s, United States

Subgenres

Baroque pop • Bubblegum pop • Christian pop • Dance-pop • Europop • Operatic pop • Power pop • Soundtrack • Sophisti-pop • Synthpop • Space age pop • Sunshine pop • Traditional pop • Teen pop

Fusion genres

Bubblegum pop • Country pop • Disco • Dream pop • Indie pop • Jangle pop • New wave • Noise pop • Pop punk • Pop rock • Psychedelic pop • Smooth jazz • Urban pop • Wonky pop

Regional scenes

China • India • Indonesia • Italy • Japan • Korea • Latin countries • Malaysia • Pakistan • Philippines • Taiwan • Turkey • United States • United Kingdom • Sweden

Other topics

Rock music

classical, jazz, rock, and novelty songs, while pop music as a genre is usually seen as existing and developing separately.^[4] Thus "pop music" may be used to describe a distinct genre, aimed at a youth market, often characterized as a softer alternative to rock and roll.^[5]

Etymology

The term "pop song" is first recorded as being used in 1926, in the sense of a piece of music "having popular appeal".^[6] Hatch and Millward indicate that many events in the history of recording in the 1920s can be seen as the birth of the modern pop music industry, including in country, blues and hillbilly music.^[7]

According to *Grove Music Online*, the term "pop music" "originated in Britain in the mid-1950s as a description for rock and roll and the new youth music styles that it influenced ...".^[8] *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* states that while pop's "earlier meaning meant concerts appealing to a wide audience ..."; since the late 1950s, however, pop has had the special meaning of non-classical mus[ic], usually in the form of songs, performed by such artists as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, ABBA, etc.^[9] *Grove Music Online* also states that "... in the early 1960s [the term] 'pop music' competed terminologically with Beat music [in England], while in the USA its coverage overlapped (as it still does) with that of 'rock and roll'.^[8] From about 1967 the term was increasingly used in opposition to the term rock music, a division that gave generic significance to both terms.^[10] Whereas rock aspired to authenticity and an expansion of the possibilities of popular music,^[10] pop was more commercial, ephemeral and accessible.^[11] According to Simon Frith pop music is produced "as a matter of enterprise not art", is "designed to appeal to everyone" and "doesn't come from any particular place or mark off any particular taste". It is "not driven by any significant ambition except profit and commercial reward ... and, in musical terms, it is essentially conservative". It is, "provided from on high (by record companies, radio programmers and concert promoters) rather than being made from below ... Pop is not a do-it-yourself music but is professionally produced and packaged".^[12]



The Oxford Dictionary of Music states that the term "pop" refers to music performed by such artists as the Rolling Stones (pictured here in a 2006 performance)

Influences and development



According to several sources, MTV helped give rise to pop stars such as Michael Jackson and Madonna; and Jackson and Madonna helped make MTV.^{[13][14][15][16]}

Throughout its development, pop music has absorbed influences from most other genres of popular music. Early pop music drew on the sentimental ballad for its form, gained its use of vocal harmonies from gospel and soul music, instrumentation from jazz, country, and rock music, orchestration from classical music, tempo from dance music, backing from electronic music, rhythmic elements from hip-hop music, and has recently appropriated spoken passages from rap.^[5]

It has also made use of technological innovation. In the 1940s improved microphone design allowed a more intimate singing style^[17] and ten or twenty years later inexpensive and more durable 45 r.p.m. records for singles "revolutionized the manner in

which pop has been disseminated" and helped to move pop music to 'a record/radio/film star system'.^[17] Another technological change was the widespread availability of television in the 1950s; with televised performances, "pop stars had to have a visual presence".^[17] In the 1960s, the introduction of inexpensive, portable transistor radios meant that teenagers could listen to music outside of the home.^[17] Multi-track recording (from the 1960s); and digital sampling (from the 1980s) have also been utilized as methods for the creation and elaboration of pop music.^[5] By the early 1980s, the promotion of pop music had been greatly affected by the rise of Music Television channels like MTV, which "favoured those artists such as Michael Jackson and Madonna who had a strong visual appeal".^[17]

Pop music has been dominated by the American and (from the mid-1960s) British music industries, whose influence has made pop music something of an international monoculture, but most regions and countries have their own form of pop music, sometimes producing local versions of wider trends, and lending them local characteristics.^[18] Some of these trends (for example Europop) have had a significant impact of the development of the genre.^[5]

According to *Grove Music Online*, "Western-derived pop styles, whether coexisting with or marginalizing distinctively local genres, have spread throughout the world and have come to constitute stylistic common denominators in global commercial music cultures".^[19] Some non-Western countries, such as Japan, have developed a thriving pop music industry, most of which is devoted to Western-style pop, has for several years produced a greater quantity of music of everywhere except the USA.^[19] The spread of Western-style pop music has been interpreted variously as representing processes of Americanization, homogenization, modernization, creative appropriation, cultural imperialism, and/or a more general process of globalization.^[19]

Characteristics

Musicologists often identify the following characteristics as typical of the pop music genre:

- an aim of appealing to a general audience, rather than to a particular sub-culture or ideology^[5]
- an emphasis on craftsmanship rather than formal "artistic" qualities^[5]
- an emphasis on recording, production, and technology, over live performance^[11]
- a tendency to reflect existing trends rather than progressive developments^[11]
- much pop music is intended to encourage dancing, or it uses dance-oriented beats or rhythms^[11]

Katy Perry - "Part of Me" (2012)



"Part of Me" by Katy Perry is a dance-pop song that draws influences from pop rock, house, synthpop, and disco,^[20] epitomizing the wide-range of influences present in pop music. Presenting catchy lyrics, manufactured beats, and lavish production, songs like "Part of Me" have a wide appeal.

[citation needed]

Problems playing this file? See media help.

The main medium of pop music is the song, often between two and a half and three and a half minutes in length, generally marked by a consistent and noticeable rhythmic element, a mainstream style and a simple traditional structure.^[21] Common variants include the verse-chorus form and the thirty-two-bar form, with a focus on melodies and catchy hooks, and a chorus that contrasts melodically, rhythmically and harmonically with the verse.^[22] The beat and the melodies tend to be simple, with limited harmonic accompaniment.^[23] The lyrics of modern pop songs typically focus on simple themes – often love and romantic relationships – although there are notable exceptions.^[5]

Harmony in pop music is often "that of classical European tonality, only more simple-minded."^[24] Clichés include the barbershop harmony (i.e. moving from a secondary dominant harmony to a dominant harmony, and then to the tonic) and blues scale-influenced harmony.^[25] There was a lessening of the influence of traditional views of the circle of fifths between the mid-1950s and the late 70's, including less predominance for the dominant function.^[26]

Decline

Some music critics,^[27] social commentators,^{[28][29]} and music industry insiders^[30] give indication that modern pop music is declining in quality. This decline can be seen in the waning music sales,^[31] public opinion polls,^[32] time studies^[33] and declining concert attendance.^[34] Furthermore, research shows that pop songs are becoming more homogeneous—that is they are tending to sound the same—and "that the number of chords and different melodies has gone down", as musicians have become less adventuresome in their songwriting. Specifically, since 1955, "[m]usicians today seem to be less adventurous in moving from one chord or note to another, instead following the paths well-trod by their predecessors and contemporaries."^[35]

See also

- Honorific nicknames in popular music
- Origins of rock and roll
- Popular music pedagogy

Notes

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External links

- The pop genre (<http://www.allmusic.com/explore/style/d283>) on Allmusic
- The Consumption of Music and the Expression of Values: A Social Economic Explanation for the Advent of Pop Music (http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0254/is_4_58/ai_58496771), Wilfred Dolsma, *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, October 1999

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