

Styles of Music

Rock

Rock is a form of popular music that originated from 'rock and roll' in the USA. It developed into music that was centred around an electric guitar, bass, drum and a singer. Lyrics often focus on romance and love but also address a wide variety of themes from social to political. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

- heavily-amplified guitar
- bass guitar
- drums
- keyboard sounds
- often male vocals (in the 1970s and 1980s) with backing vocals from other band members
- frequent solo guitar
- sometimes distortion of the sound
- a heavy backbeat

Hip Hop

Hip Hop culture developed in the Bronx, New York, at the end of the 1970s. It featured graffiti, dancing and party music played by DJs on mobile sound-systems. These ideas had started in Jamaica where MCs would talk over the music. DJs would play different styles of music such as Funk, Latin or Rock in the instrumental breaks between the MCs talking. People liked the breaks and DJs became skilled at repeating those tunes using two turntables. The Hip Hop style developed from these breaks and from MCs rapping (rapping is improvising spoken lyrics or poetry). People made up their own dance moves to this new style and it became known as breakdancing. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

- MCing or rapping
- DJing/scratching
- sampling
- sometimes beatboxing
- lots of songs are about partying
- some are about social turmoil
- drum and percussion backing loops
- some sampling of Funk tracks
- extended percussion breaks in the music would lead to mixing more tunes and adding scratching techniques
- use of decks
- breakdancing

South African

There have been many different styles of music within South Africa:

Afropop:

- Generally uses electric guitars that weave in and out of each other

- Some traditional instruments such as the penny whistle, keyboards, bass and drums
- Strong Dance or Swing beat

South African Jazz:

Uses a keyboard/piano, bass and drums with perhaps a saxophone and/or a trumpet. Lots of improvisation is included.

South African Freedom Songs:

Freedom Songs were songs that were often sung during Nelson Mandela's imprisonment and often during social gatherings.

- The words are about freeing Nelson Mandela and how unfair it was that he was in prison for trying to free the people of South Africa
- Strong Dance beat
- Use of electric guitars, keyboards, bass and drums. Can be sung unaccompanied i.e. a cappella

South African Choral music:

Traditional South African music generally uses voices only or voices and drums. It is sung in a language such as Zulu or Xhosa (there are 12 official languages). Singing will consist of call and response, call by one singer and response by lots.

Kwaito:

A strong dance Hip Hop beat, influenced by Hip Hop, Kwaito is the most up-to-date style of South African music.

- South African languages used
- Rapping
- Electronic beats
- Sax and trumpet horn section
- Use of electric guitars
- Lots of energy
- A strong and driving groove

Traditional South African music:

- The Click Song, for example, is sung in a South African language Xhosa, using lots of clicking sounds
- There are some drums and guitars accompanying the vocals, but many traditional songs are unaccompanied

Blues

Blues is a style of music originating in the deep south of America and is considered an ancestor of Jazz. The Blues was created by African-American communities at the end of the 19th century who had suffered through slavery. Spirituals and work songs were sung to make their ordeal more bearable. These sad songs were the beginnings of the Blues. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

- The Blues form can also be heard in Jazz and Rock 'n' Roll and is characterised by the use of a structure called the 12 Bar Blues. This is a set pattern of chords that repeats every 12 bars and is easily recognisable by listening
- sad and melancholic melody that evokes feelings of being downtrodden or 'blue'

- a rhythm section, voice, guitar and harmonica are often featured in these songs
- improvisation features in the Blues. Improvisation comes from the heart and expresses how you are feeling
- lyrics usually follow a pattern: the first and second lines are the same; the third line is different but rhymes with the first two

Bhangra

Bhangra is a popular style of Indian music. It combines traditional Punjabi and Indian music with Western Pop music. It developed in Britain in the 1980s from immigrants who had moved from Pakistan and India to the UK. Today Bhangra exists in different styles across the world and it also fuses its sounds with Hip Hop and R&B. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

- Many instruments are used to make the Bhangra sound: different types of drum including tabla and dohl, stringed instruments and keyboards. Drums are the most important instrument, making Bhangra's style beat-based
- lyrics can be sung in Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu or English
- lyrics can cover social issues or be about love, but they are always rooted in a rich culture
- Bhangra music makes you want to dance!

Funk

In the 1960s, an exciting performer called James Brown combined Gospel, Soul and Jazz into a new form of music called Funk. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

- focus is on a strong rhythmic groove rather than melody
- the strong beat is on 1 i.e. the first beat of the bar
- electric bass, drums and sometimes an organ drive the groove
- a powerful horn section that plays riffs
- electric guitar riffs
- the music is generally riff-based
- lots of space in the music as it is driven by rhythmic riffs and fewer changes in melody and chord structure
- sometimes there are no vocals
- the focus is on the rhythmic groove

Folk

Folk music can originate from any country in any part of the world. Folk music uses old tunes or songs that have been passed down through generations over time: they are not written down but passed down orally. Often we do not know who the composer is. Irish Traditional or Folk music, like any other Folk music, is used and kept vibrant when groups of people move to live in other countries. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

- traditional music that is sung or played, accompanied or unaccompanied
- if vocal, it often tells us a story. That story can be about a real life situation or a historical event

- people often sing songs to portray how they feel about what is going on around them; drinking songs, freedom songs, wedding songs, funeral songs – any type of celebration
- songs are sung in a local accent/language/dialect
- portable instruments are used: flutes, penny whistles, fiddles, pipes, mandolins, banjos, guitars, accordions and drums
- folk music can be instrumental (without voices)

Latin

Latin American music mixes influences from Spanish, African, Native Latin American and also Western sources. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

- percussion instruments including congas, claves, bongos and maracas are used
- every style of Latin music is based around a five-beat rhythm called clave
- it is Dance music with a Dance beat
- some of the popular Latin dance styles are Salsa, Samba, Bossa Nova, Mambo and Merengue
- latin music is up-tempo and energetic
- instrumentally there is usually a rhythm section (piano, bass guitar and drums). There is sometimes an electric guitar and often a horn section (sax, trumpet and trombone)

Gospel

Gospel music is religious/Christian music where people sing about God in many different styles eg Folk, Urban, Modern Worship, Blues and Country. Gospel music has a history that can be traced back to the 18th century. In the midst of difficult lives, slaves used songs to inspire inner strength and courage. They borrowed from Protestant hymns, reworked them, and then made up new melodies and harmonies. These songs became known as Negro spirituals, the first authentic American Sacred music. Gospel music is the original form of American Folk music. Blues and R&B are rooted in it. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

- often religious words or words/lyrics that make us think about friendship or helping each other.
- lyrics with meaning if the song is not religious
- strong vocals often with harmony lines
- choirs singing in a call and response style
- use of instruments is dependent on the style of the Gospel music. Could use piano, bass, drums and Hammond organ. There could be use of an electric guitar. Other instruments could be used such as strings.
- use of syncopated rhythms and an often faster tempo unlike traditional hymns that would be more stately
- the chorus will always be uplifting, it will be emotional
- some songs are not written as Gospel songs but are covered as one, the words/lyrics lending themselves to the Gospel style
- lyrics can have a non-religious meaning (secular)
- has musical crossover appeal to non-religious listeners

Urban Contemporary Gospel music:

- uses elements of Pop and Funk
- can be elements of Hip Hop, Pop, Funk and Jazz and rapping
- uses drums, electric guitar, bass and keyboards
- lyrics can have a non-religious meaning (secular)
- musical crossover appeal to non-religious listeners
- syncopated rhythms with a fast tempo unlike a traditional hymn that would be more stately
- the choir is singing in a call and response style
- the voices are weaving in and out of each other, often still a call and response style

Southern Gospel-style music:

- usually male leading vocals
- sometimes called “quartet music” for four people, originally four men used to sing in four parts. Now the singers are joined by instrumentalists
- origins are in the South Eastern states of America. It grew out of rural traditions from the “white” community and is therefore sometimes called “white” Gospel
- use of piano, guitar to accompany
- in more modern times, the use of one lead vocalist with backing vocals

Religious Choral Symphony:

- use of a symphony orchestra
- use of a choir with the orchestra
- the choir are singing religious words, in German, based on a hymn

Reggae

Reggae is a music genre that originated in Jamaica in the late 1960's. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

- bass guitar and drums are brought to the foreground of the music
- guitar and keyboards set back in the mix (usually the roles of these instruments are the other way around, the bass and drums set back in the mix)
- slowish tempo with a laid-back feel
- bass guitar plays melodic lines and is prominent in the song
- the drums and bass set up a particular groove avoiding the first beat of the bar
- bass guitar plays short line of melody or short phrases
- guitar mostly plays chords on the offbeat, beats 2 and 4
- keyboard and organ also play on the offbeat but add extra melodies too
- sometimes there is a horn section that would be made up of sax, trumpet and trombone
- often female backing vocals
- the lyrics often talk about Rastafarian beliefs

- the lyrics often have a political message

R&B

R&B is music that combines elements of Rhythm and Blues, Pop, Soul, Funk and Hip Hop. Although the abbreviation R&B originates from traditional Rhythm and Blues music, today the term R&B is most often used to describe a style of African-American music that developed after the demise of Disco in the 1980s. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

- polished production style, which never sounds gritty
- use of computer-originated sounds eg drum machines
- smooth vocal arrangements
- use of Hip Hop and Dance beats without the earthy street-vibe creating a smoother finish
- frequent use of melisma (vocal runs) in vocals, eg Stevie Wonder, Mariah Carey, Whitney Houston, Michael Jackson, Beyonce Knowles-Carter. This style of singing originated in the Gospel tradition.

Jazz (big band Swing)

Swing-style big bands were the most fashionable form of American Popular music from 1935–1946, a period known as the Swing Era.

Jazz music had always been a form of entertainment more for listening to than dancing. After the depression of the 1920s, people wanted to dance, so small Jazz bands took on more instrumentalists and became known as big bands or Swing bands. Big bands were able to perform in large ballroom spaces to huge audiences and Swing dancing became an extremely popular pastime. Bands of the Swing Era produced a much fuller sound than that produced by earlier Dixieland Jazz bands simply because they consisted of many more musicians.

Some of the most famous big band leaders were Count Basie, Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman. Within these big bands were many individual instrumentalists who became well known. Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins were two extremely talented saxophone players who became famous for their clever improvisations. At this time, singers started to become more important and Ella Fitzgerald was one who had a distinctive and beautiful voice. She was one of the first to improvise using her voice: in Jazz this is called scat singing.

Many of the songs written and played during the Swing Era were selections from The Great American Songbook – a list of the best, most important and most influential American Popular songs of the 20th century. The music of the Swing Era is often regarded as having a huge influence on Pop music.

The name 'swing' came from the phrase 'swing feel' where the off-beats (ie 1 2 3 4 - beats 2 and 4) are emphasised. If one musician tells another that they really 'swing' when they play Jazz, it means their playing has a strong rhythmic groove or drive.

Big band Swing has remained popular with musicians like Michael Bublé and Robbie Williams. Today, Swing style can be heard in small and large ensembles. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

Jazz Swing music:

- a big Jazz band
- sixteen or eighteen different instrumentalists including saxophones, trumpets, trombones, piano, bass, drums
- a singer
- a strong rhythm section – piano, bass and drums – that drives the band and embed the groove
- soloists who improvise

- syncopated melody lines
- walking bassline

Jazz Swing music today:

- a big or a small Jazz band (a small Jazz band will consist of far fewer brass or woodwind players)
- a singer (often but not always)
- a strong rhythm section – piano, bass and drums – that drives the band and embed the groove
- improvisation
- syncopated melody lines
- walking bassline

Early Music and Renaissance

The first fully-acknowledged era in Classical music was the Renaissance period, beginning circa 1400. There was all sorts of music before that, much of it laying the foundations for the composers who were to come. This all sits under the umbrella of what we refer to today as the Early period. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

- Almost everything composed during this period was for the human voice: partly because of the influence of the church, and also because a great many musical instruments had yet to be invented
- Instruments that were put to good use during the Early period included the recorder, the trumpet and the bagpipe. Towards the start of the Renaissance, early versions of keyboard instruments like the harpsichord began to appear
- Prominent composers during this time included Guido d'Arezzo (born c991), Hildegard of Bingen (born c1098) and Guillaume de Machaut (born c1300)
- The Renaissance followed on from the Middle Ages and was for musicians an era of discovery, innovation and exploration - the name means 'rebirth' and it covers music from 1400 to 1600. In the Middle Ages music was dominated by the Church. Most composition was for sacred use and based on the plain chant that had been part of worship since the earliest years of Christianity.
- Although most music remained religious during the Renaissance, the relaxation of the Church's political control over society meant that composers were allowed greater freedom to be influenced by art, classical mythology and even astronomy and mathematics
- The invention of the printing press meant that music could be published and distributed for the first time
- The Latin Mass is perhaps the most important type of music from the Renaissance, particularly that of Josquin des Prez
- In the early Renaissance, most composers came from Northern France or the Low Countries, where the support provided by the courts was particularly strong. Later on, focus went beyond the Alps

Baroque

The Baroque period refers to an era that started around 1600 and ended around 1750, and included composers like Bach, Vivaldi and Handel, who pioneered new styles like the concerto and the sonata. The Baroque period saw an explosion of new musical styles with the introduction of the concerto, the sonata and the opera. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

- The orchestra was born
- Opera became popular
- The rise of the concerto gave soloists the chance to show off in a big way
- The main progression that came as the Renaissance period turned into Baroque is the emergence of more modern harmony. By harmony, we mean the combination of more than one note at the same time, and Baroque composers like Bach, Handel and Vivaldi just made it that bit more accessible
- Monteverdi's Vespers is an example of what kind of harmony suddenly became popular. Bach is regarded as one of the greatest geniuses in the history of music. He demonstrated a standard approach to harmony that dominated music until the late 19th century
- Though many instrumental developments were made in the Baroque period, the main one was the harpsichord. You can hear its distinctive plucked sound all over pieces from the period. Good examples are in the music of J.S. Bach
- Religious music was a huge part of the Baroque period, but it took composers like Handel and Bach to make them into emotional, human experiences. These works include Bach's St Matthew Passion, Handel's Messiah and Zadok The Priest
- There are so many landmark pieces in the Baroque repertoire and Vivaldi's The Four Seasons is one. Not only is it a beautiful and evocative piece of music, but it's also a perfect representation of the increasing poetic power Baroque music was aiming for

Classical

The Classical period refers to an era that started around 1750 and includes composers like Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. Also active in this period were Rossini and Paganini.

'Classical music' is music that's distinct from Pop, Jazz, or Folk music. The Classical era in the history of music specifically refers to the period when composers such as Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven were active, championing the symphony, composing comic operas, and developing piano sonata. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

- This new musical style coincided with the Age of Enlightenment, a time of radical change in social values focused on human rights and freedom of religion. Its architectural style was reminiscent of ancient Rome and Greece - hence the term 'Classical'
- Orchestras went through great changes: harpsichord or organ were no longer their musical foundation and wind and brass instruments such as the horn, trumpet, clarinet, flute and oboe joined the strings to create a new, distinctive sound
- The orchestral set-up led to the era's most important type of music, the symphony. It developed rapidly at the beginning of the era, moving from a standard, strict three-movement format with a quick opening, a slow middle movement and a quick one to finish, to become an expansive fourmovement vehicle for orchestral expression

- Along with the orchestra came the string quartet, consisting of two violins, a viola and a cello. The works are themselves called 'string quartets' and follow a standard, four-movement format reminiscent of the symphony
- The piano was also introduced during this period. The most important solo pieces of the Classical era were sonatas, written for any solo instrument but most notably composed for the piano
- The Classical era was dominated by its two greatest composers, Haydn and Mozart, who worked in Vienna. Haydn composed fantastic choral, operatic, orchestral and instrumental music - but the symphonies were his greatest achievement
- In the last years of the 18th century came Beethoven, who started writing music in the style inherited from Mozart and Haydn. He eventually outgrew it, and split the Classical style apart at the seams, marking the dawn of the Romantic era in music

Indonesia – Gamelan

Gamelan music has been hugely influential since the remarkable ensembles were heard in Paris at the 1889 World Fair. Musicians who sought inspiration in gamelan music include Debussy (Pagodes), Satie (Gnossienne) and Takemitsu (For Away). Translated 'gamelan' means 'to hammer' and is found mainly in Bali and Java. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

- Gamelan music is played as a group
- is heard at celebrations and theatre performances
- is based on oral tradition where players memorise the music, musical notation is not used.

Nigeria – Drumming

Traditionally percussive instruments, in some African societies, are used for:

- ceremonies of all occasions
- religious rituals
- communication
- calling to arms in wars

Drum ensembles play complex rhythms that are rarely written down but instead passed between people through aural tradition. There is usually a leader who directs the drummers with musical cues and signals changes of tempo to dancers. Babatunde Olatunji was a major figure in early recorded African drumming. As well as introducing the sound of African drumming to many Americans, he directly influenced the musical landscape, as can be heard in tracks like Carlos Santana's Jingo.

Argentina – Tango

Fusing together the words 'liberty' and 'tango', Piazzolla breaks away from the classical tango style and moves into tango Nuevo in this piece. There are hundreds of recordings of Libertango in different instrumentations, and the original recording is still widely available. Music like this, which is written to be danced to, often has a strong rhythmic quality, offering an opportunity to start experimenting with music and movement. Some of its indicators are as follows:

- uses a 2/4 or 4/4 time signature

- has an angular, staccato rhythmic emphasis
- often features instruments like bandoneon (a cousin of the accordion), violin, and guitar

80's synth pop

Synth pop first became prominent in the 1970's and heavily features a synthesizer to create beats and rhythms. Smalltown Boy features one of the most recognisable synth riffs of the 1980s alongside lyrics which mark sweeping social changes. The legalisation of homosexuality in the late 1960s was followed only slowly by growing acceptance of LGBT+ people within society. Smalltown Boy charts the harsh experience of growing up gay in England in the 1980s but its commercial success points to the more hopeful times that were to follow.

Art Pop

A loosely defined style of pop music which emphasizes the manipulation of signs, style, and gesture over personal expression. Art pop artists may be inspired by postmodern approaches or art theories as well as other forms of art, such as fashion, fine art, cinema, and avant-garde literature e.g. Kate Bush, David Bowie, The Beatles (Sgt Pepper's). The chosen piece is an acoustic song about one of Bowie's early artist inspirations, the American pop artist Andy Warhol.

Pop

Pop music is associated with music that is more commercial and accessible. It is more conservative than other music genres such as folk, blues, country, and tradition. Many pop songs do not contain themes of resistance, opposition, or political themes, rather focusing more on love and relationships. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

- songs are often between 2 to 5 minutes in length
- verse and a chorus structure, the chorus serving as the hook through simple repetition both musically and lyrically.
- simple beat and the melodies, with limited harmonic accompaniment
- lyrics typically focus on simple themes – often love and romantic relationships – although there are notable exceptions.

Musicals

Within a musical, songs are used as tools to assist in telling the story from different points of view. Most musicals have dialogue but some are sung-through meaning there is little or no-dialogue, almost everything is sung. There are many different styles of musical theatre ranging from rock to opera. Depending on the style of musical depends on whether a band or orchestra is used.

Most musical theatre songs fit into these categories:

- action songs which move the plot forward
- character songs which enable a character to express their feelings

Within these two formats, different song types can be found, including:

- ballads which are usually slow, romantic and reflective
- comedy songs which are funny, so the lyrics are very important

- production numbers which involve the full company and are used to show major changes in location or plot, and often open and close acts
- rhythm songs which are driven by energetic rhythm patterns

Many show songs use 32 bar song form.

The chorus:

- sets the repeated refrain of the lyrics and often contains the title words
- usually returns several times, always with the same words
- is normally the 'catchiest' part of the song

The verse:

- usually has different words with each repetition.

Choral

Choral music is performed by a group of singers or a choir and usually consists of two or more autonomous vocal lines. If there is more than one voice to each vocal line or strand of melody the performance can be considered choral. Choral music is heavily associated with and has a long history in European church music.

Choral, chorale, choir, and chorus are common terms used in choral music and are used interchangeably when a collection of singers, for example, is referred to as a choir.

Choir – Group of singers in a chorus

Chorale – A hymn sung by the choir and congregation often in unison.

Chorus – A group singing in unison.

Duet – A piece of music written for two vocalists or instrumentalists.

Minimalism

Minimalism is a style of music which originated on the West coast of America in the 1960s.

Minimalist music often features:

- layers of **ostinato**
- constantly repeated patterns that are subjected to gradual changes
- layered textures
- interlocking repeated phrases and rhythms
- **diatonic** harmony

The combined effect can be almost hypnotic.

Diatonic means using notes which belong to the key rather than chromatic notes, which are outside the key e.g. you're playing in the key of C major and you're using C major scale notes, then you would say that the notes you're using are diatonic.

Ostinato is a short repeated pattern.

90's Indie

Indie music was originally the term used to describe independent record labels and was used interchangeably with the term 'alternative' music. However, it soon became associated with the music artists produced and was the product of certain developments in guitar based rock and pop.

Indie music used to be characterised as 'having more grit and less of an eye towards commercial success' with its roots often tracing back to the punk era of the late 1970s.

However, in the 1990's many bands originally deemed as 'alternative', such as Blur, Oasis, Green Day and Pearl Jam, broke into the mainstream achieving commercial and chart success. This resulted in the 'alternative' label losing its original meaning and began to refer to this new, commercially lighter form of music.

Calypso

Calypso originated in Trinidad and Tobago and is its national dance. It is heavily associated with carnival. It has the following:

- 4/4 time with syncopation
- acoustic and bass guitar or band with trumpets, saxophones, electric guitars, drum kit and Latin percussion
- often uses three-beat rhythms with two long beats followed by a short beat
- often uses call and response
- simple harmony
- verse and chorus structure
- topical, witty lyrics - often satirical

Disco

Disco first appeared in New York in the 1970's and developed its unique sound to cater to nightclub audiences. It usually has the following:

- strong drum and bass lines
- fast tempo
- steady dance groove
- energetic guitar lines
- verse and chorus structure
- simple lyrics that usually encourage people to dance

Soul

Soul music is a style of African-American music and emerged out of rhythm and blues in the USA in the 1950's and 60's. A key feature is the subject matter of the songs, with much soul music taking the form of a love songs. This emotional subject matter goes hand in hand with the emotional vocal delivery. However, soul music also touches on social issues, especially those faced by Black Americans, and reflected the growing call for racial equality in the 50's and 60's. The characteristics of soul are as follows:

- Gospel influence – intense vocals, call and response structure.
- An emphasis on the rhythm section

- Large horn sections (trumpets, saxophones and trombones)

Film Music

Film music is original music written specifically for a film and encompasses a myriad of musical styles depending on the type of films they accompany. However, the majority of film scores are orchestral. Film music and video game music increased in popularity towards the end of the century, with the soundtracks to ET, Star Wars, Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings making their mark on Classical music. John Williams is a very famous composer, responsible for the soundtracks to the century's blockbuster smash films: ET, Star Wars and Superman. His score to Jurassic Park gives us an idea as to what makes him so successful

Rock 'n' Roll

Rock and roll is a style of pop music that originated in the USA during the 1940's and early 50's.

Some of its indicators are as follows:

- instrumentation includes – male vocals, backing vocals, electric guitars, double bass, drums, piano, harmonica, saxophone and other brass
- fast Tempo – 140bpm or faster
- energetic delivery of vocals (screaming and shouting)
- use of flamboyant guitar solos
- call and response structure – often between vocal and guitar