

ANTHRO 106 2018 Week One: Genre

Reflection Questions

- Who “controls” Popular music?
- Is Popular music characteristically rebellious”?
- What is passive consumption in relation to Popular music?
- Can artistry co-exist with commercialism?
- Does commercialisation preclude an artist from contributing to a culture of resistance?
- Who creates/adjudicates genre?

Key Terms and names

- Genre
- Frith
- Fabbri
- Hebdige
- Adorno
- Hegemony
- Gramsci
- Resistance
- Liberating moments
- Music industry
- Transcendence
- Bourdieu- cultural capital

What is popular music

Phillip Tagg

Popular music, notation and musical formalism

Fig. 1 Folk, art and popular music: an axiomatic triangle.

CHARACTERISTIC		Folk Music	Art Music	Popular Music
Produced and transmitted by	primarily professionals		x	x
	primarily amateurs	x		
Mass distribution	usual			x
	unusual	x	x	
Main mode of storage and distribution	oral transmission	x		
	musical notation		x	
	recorded sound			x
Type of society in which the category of music mostly occurs	nomadic or agrarian	x		
	agrarian or industrial		x	
	industrial			x
Written theory and aesthetics	uncommon	x		x
	common	x	x	
Composer / Author	anonymous	x		
	non-anonymous		x	x

Are commercial success and artistic quality mutually exclusive?

Does commercialisation preclude an artist from contributing to a culture of resistance?

Cultural commodities may support the contemporary power of capital, but they have their civilising moments, and even as the most effortless background music, rock is a source of vigour and exhilaration and of good feelings that are as necessary for the next morning's political struggle as for the next day's work. My argument is that rock fun is as much a quality of the music's use as of its form. (Frith 1981, pp. 264–5)

GENRE

Frith 1996 "Genre Rules"

- Record companies
- Record Stores
- Grammy categories
- Radio
- Music Magazines

Fabbri

- Formal and Technical rules
- Semiotic rules
- Behavioural rules
- Social and ideological rules
- Commercial and Juridical rules

THEORY

Theodore Adorno

Artistry cannot co-exist with commercialism

Marxist, Frankfurt school

Pop music is passive, therefore an ideal temporary release

Jazz and pop do not fulfill the necessary social role of art in society

Hebdige- 1979

University of Birmingham, England

CCCS Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies

Hebdige showed the central place of popular music in the formation and expression of politically resistant subcultures.

Hebdige showed how young people appropriate and adapt elements of mass-produced popular culture to fashion distinct group identities

He explored the central place of popular music in the formation and expression of politically resistant subcultures.

- Massification
- Conformist middle-class youth

It is common to identify youth subcultures based on styles of dress, musical tastes, language and forms of behaviour. This position, using a series of ethnographies, is based on the idea of counter-hegemonic struggle and the attempts by post-war youth to resolve the social problems and

contradictions created by their material conditions. So the stylistic trappings of each subculture form part of a code by which the members communicate with the 'straight' world.

Subcultures form in communal and symbolic engagements with the larger system of late industrial culture; they're organized around, but not wholly determined by, age and class, and are expressed in the creation of styles. These styles are not to be read as simply resisting hegemony or as magical resolutions to social tensions. Rather subcultures cobble together (or hybridize) styles out of the images and material culture available to them in the effort to construct identities which will confer on them "relative autonomy" within a social order fractured by class, generational differences, work etc.

BUT

Do the 'choices' 'given' to us by corporation and commercial media actually represent true freedom of choice and cultural expression?

Does mass culture automatically mean alienated subjectivity

- Not a simple dichotomy
- Spectrum of cultural movement
- Fading distinction between high art and popular music
- Multi-layered social phenomenon

Music which is 'un-popular' - resistance, defines itself against the mainstream popular

Culture of reconciliation? Escapist, temporary, withdrawn

Or

Culture of Transformation?

Disruptive yet empowering, potentially subversive, brings people together to change certain social conditions

(Garofalo 1987)

Controlling concerns may use music for hegemonic purposes, and listeners may not all use music to resist domination.... But elements of rebellion and conformity exist in the production, distribution and reception of popular music

Need to extend beyond the dialectical pessimism of Adorno

Beyond the dichotomy of elites/masses

The aestheticification and manipulation of the sonic experience of contemporary life

To reduce pop history to the struggles of musician or small label heroes versus corporate wolves ignores the fact that: the music industry's strategies of market control have been developed because the market is one the CAN'T CONTROL (Frith 1981)

Commercial success and artistic quality are not mutually exclusive

Nor does commercialisation necessarily preclude an artist from contributing to a culture of resistance. (Garofalo 1987)

The pressure of commercialism places the artist in a number of 'arenas of struggle' which necessitate compromises that produce varying degrees of co-optation. (Garofalo 1987)

Gramsci- Hegemony

Coercion and consent

Has any subversive meaning become background to the (dominant) functions of popular music- entertainment and relaxation in the service of consumerism

(Garofalo 1987)

- Shifting alliances among class factions
- Possibilities for counter hegemonic practise
- Relative autonomy from the direct domination of ruling class

Posits “liberating moments “ in popular music history: Rock ‘n’ Roll, punk, Black power, and Woodstock

To all attempts at social control, music offers a counter-view, a space where rebellion is possible; and that explains music’s immense role in political contestation and subcultures (Middleton 1981)

Videos:

Moderators and rockers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r61ks18Bd7I>

Rock ‘n’ roll: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-j2rILarYA>

Woodstock: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKdsRWhyH30>

Punk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pf-yvJG608>

MUSIC INDUSTRY

- Billion-dollar global music industry: music production and distribution
- Major record companies – Warner Chappell, Universal, and Sony/ATV

Record labels

Music group

Independent

Sub-label

Imprints

<http://www.ifpi.org/news/IFPI-GLOBAL-MUSIC-REPORT-2016>

- In the U.S., the music industry was estimated to generate about 17.2 billion U.S. dollars in 2016. Forecasts expect that the music industry revenue in the U.S. will total over 22.6 billion U.S. dollars by 2021.
- In the last few years, LP/vinyl albums saw a 10% rise in popularity in the U.S.
- Online radio is gaining in popularity
- Digital albums, CD and digital track sales – have been declining since 2012.
- Single and album downloads, are being replaced by subscription and streaming services.
- 2016 subscription and streaming services generated more than quadruple the revenue of sales of single downloads.
- Revenue from streaming in the U.S. is projected to increase from about 2.4 billion U.S. dollars in 2016 to more than 5.1 billion U.S. dollars by 2021.

Live Music

- 33% of Americans attended a music festival
- 59% of Americans attended a live concert with a main headliner
- With sponsorship and ticket sales, the live music industry in the U.S. amassed over 9.5 billion U.S. dollars.
- Country music star, Luke Bryan, had the most successful music tour in North America, with more than 1.42 million tickets sold.

How musicians make money:

- Digital streaming services (itunes, Spotify)

- Youtube (ad revenue, affiliate marketing)
- Live performance, touring
- Merchandise
- Mechanical and Performance Royalties (Song writers)
- Digital Downloads (down)
- Album sales (down)
- Specialty appearances
- Sponsorship
- Film soundtracks (and games, and ads)
- Teaching session musicians, employee (band, symphony)
- Top 1% of artists earn 77% of recorded music income.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2011/07/05/137530847/how-much-does-it-cost-to-make-a-hit-song>

<http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/magazine-feature/6874217/adele-windfall-her-25-songwriters-producers-13-million>

Transcendence

- Rock music has traditionally resisted opera
- class and high boring, elitist and arcane,
- opera fans typically resent the perceived musical simplicity, loudness, commerciality and banality of rock music.
- Extreme vocal virtuosity, expression, and attention to nuances of vocal timbre, for example, are traits prized by both operatic and rock singers.
- extravagant excess and decadent display and spectacle.
- transcendence of fashions and changes in the socio-cultural framework (commonly referred to as 'standing the test of time'), historical importance (manifest from their influence on contemporaneous and subsequent artists), and 'greatness' (inherent artistic value). Accordingly, canonic status is indicated by artists' or works' perpetual presence, continuous generation of secondary materials pertaining to them, and the use of canonic language, i.e. words or phrases that signal fulfilment of the criteria of canonicity such as 'masterpiece', 'genius', 'great', 'immortal' and so forth, often by means of superlatives in terms of both content and grammar.
- In arts criticism in general, critics utilise the canonic criteria of transcendence, historical importance and 'greatness' as touchstones of artistic merit, in order to demonstrate their expertise and power as holders of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984)
- Rock music has traditionally resisted opera: it is classist, boring, elitist "Roll over Beethoven"
- Opera fans resent the musical simplicity, loudness, commerciality and banality of rock music.
- Both have: vocal virtuosity, extravagant excess and decadent display and spectacle.
- Queen has brazen commercial aspirations
- Queen's image and music as 'contrived', 'unnatural' 'imitative', 'high art'
- opulence of music, videos, stage spectacle and costumes,
- critics identified with the underground scene and/ or working class- felt Queen did not relate to the average person- not "authentic"
- Classical musicology used to conceptualise classical music as 'art music' and dismiss popular music as 'commercial music'

- Ironical that popular music studies should adopt any of the same elitist distinction to differentiate popular music artists and styles
- Popular Music Studies started out with a focus on the music of the 'lower' strata of society rather than that of the cultural elite.

Desler, Anne. "History without royalty? Queen and the strata of the popular music canon." Popular Music 32.03 (2013): 385-405.