

# Style Indicators

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# Rock

## What are the general style indicators of Rock music?

- 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.

## What are the general style indicators of Hip Hop?

- 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 ie 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.

## What are the general style indicators of Blues music?

- 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
- The Blues uses a 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
- The lyrics in a Blues song 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.

## What are the general style indicators of Bhangra?

- 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
- The lyrics can cover social issues or be about love, but they are always rooted in a rich culture
- The word 'Bhangra' is used to describe a high-energy style of Dance music, developed by young people and performed at weddings, parties and clubs
- 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.

## What are the general style indicators of Funk music?

- The focus is on a strong rhythmic groove rather than melody
- The strong beat is on 1 ie 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.

## What are the general style indicators of Folk music?

- 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.

## What are the general style indicators of Latin music?

- 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)

# Pop ballad

A gentle love song that is full of emotion.

## What are the style indicators of a Pop ballad?

- Slow and gentle backing
- Uses instruments like strings and piano and acoustic guitar
- The bass and drums are subtle
- The words of the ballad are about lost love or celebrating love!
- The mood of the words and music match each other
- Sometimes a Pop ballad can have a Rock backing and it then becomes a power ballad. This is because of its more powerful backing using electric guitars and heavier drum patterns

# Motown

The Motown label was created by Berry Gordy in 1960 and employed exclusively black musicians, artists and producers in its Detroit studios. Gordy wanted to produce music that could cross over from the R&B charts to the Pop charts. He employed a famous house band called The Funk Brothers. Motown songs did not use the Blues idiom, they adopted a more Pop approach and were usually all at the same tempo of 120bpm. The songs have rhythmically inventive basslines and drums would stress the down beat or beat 1. There is often a tambourine in the mix. Some important artists that started at Motown were: Smokey Robinson, Diana Ross, Marvin Gaye, The Jackson 5, Otis Redding, Stevie Wonder and James Brown.

# 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.

## **What are the general style indicators of Gospel music?**

- 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
- The lyrics can have a non-religious meaning (secular)
- Has musical crossover appeal to non-religious listeners

## **Urban Contemporary Gospel music:**

- This style 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
- The lyrics can have a non-religious meaning (secular)
- Has 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:**

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

# Reggae

## What are the general style indicators of Reggae music?

- The 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
- Then 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.

## What are the general style indicators of contemporary R&B music?

- A 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 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.

## **Jazz Swing music:**

- A big Jazz band
- Sixteen or eighteen different instrumentalists including saxophones, trumpets, trombones, piano, bass, drums
- A swingy, jazzy feel
- 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 swingy, jazzy feel
- 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.

- 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. An instrument called the shawm was also rather popular; it was a sort of primitive oboe. Towards the start of the Renaissance, early versions of keyboard instruments like the harpsichord began to appear
- Developments in printing during this period hugely helped the spread of musical instruments. For the first time, manufacturers were able to disseminate descriptions of their instruments, meaning it became much easier for others to make their own versions
- 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
- Most music written during this period is intended to be sung, either as large choral pieces in church, or as songs or madrigals. Non-vocal music flourished too, as technology enabled musical instruments to be more expressive and agile. Pieces could now be written specifically for instruments such as the sackbut and lute
- 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
- Italian composers started appearing. At the Basilica of St Mark's, Venice, Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli produced magnificent pieces for huge choirs and groups of instruments. In Rome, Allegri and Palestrina were the last great Renaissance composers, writing huge, flowing choral works that are still loved today

# Baroque

## What is the Baroque period of music?

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.

- The orchestra was born
- Opera became popular
- The rise of the concerto gave soloists the chance to show off in a big way
- From the period's beginnings in the early 1600s to when the Classical period-style began to take over in the mid 1700s, the sound of Baroque music remained distinct - ordered, ornate and increasingly emotive as the period went on
- 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.

- 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 four-movement 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

# Romantic

The Romantic period started around 1830 and ended around 1900, as compositions became increasingly expressive and inventive. Expansive symphonies, virtuosic piano music, dramatic operas, and passionate songs took inspiration from art and literature. Famous Romantic composers include Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Mahler and Verdi.

The Romantic era is known for its intense energy and passion. The rigid forms of Classical music gave way to greater expression, and music grew closer to art, literature and theatre.

- Beethoven pioneered Romanticism and expanded previously strict formulae for symphonies and sonatas, and introduced a whole new approach to music, giving his works references to other aspects of life - for example, his 'Pastoral' Symphony No 6 describes countryside scenes
- As well as symphonies, the tone poem and descriptive overture were popular as pieces of stand-alone orchestral music that evoked anything from a painting or poem to a feeling of nationalistic fervour
- The Romantic era gave birth to the virtuoso. Liszt was one of the greatest of his time, and wrote demanding piano music to show off his own brilliance. Chopin is also among the outstanding composer-performers from this time
- In the world of opera, cue the entrance of Verdi in the middle of the Romantic era. He turned Italian opera on its head by introducing new subject material, often with social, political or nationalistic themes, and combined these with a direct approach to composing
- Germany's Richard Wagner also played a key role in developing opera
- Wagner's ideas dominated most music, from the large-scale symphonies of Bruckner and Mahler to the tone poems and operas of Richard Strauss, even reaching Italy, where Verdi and Puccini started to produce operas according to many of Wagner's rules

As music grew more expressive, the standard orchestra wasn't rich enough for many Romantic composers. Woodwind instruments like the contrabassoon, bass clarinet and piccolo made guest appearances in the orchestra to add some much needed colour, and the percussion section exploded in size with the addition of xylophones, drums, celestes, harps, bells and triangles.

Ideas and compositions became more and more outlandish and inventive until the musical rules had to be rewritten, and the scene was set for the biggest change in music for centuries.

# 20th Century and Contemporary music

The history and politics of the 20th century provided inspiration for the diverse range of musical styles developed between 1900 and 1999, pioneered by composers ranging from Elgar and Britten, to Stravinsky, Gershwin and John Williams. Advancing technology enabled the recording of Classical music and Jazz, which in turn led to the rise of globe-straddling artists like Pavarotti and Callas. Contemporary Classical music belongs to the period that started in the mid-1960s with the retreat of Modernism.

- Music was greatly influenced by the enormous political events which shook Europe in the middle of the 20th century. Shostakovich, in particular, was persecuted by the Soviet regime when his music was thought to be too 'modern' or élitist, meaning he was forced to write in two styles - symphonies for the authorities, and smaller works such as string quartets which were true to his own voice. The Holocaust, Hiroshima and World War II convinced many post-war composers that they needed to put the past behind them and find ever more progressive methods: see Pierre Boulez's Structures, Schoenberg's experiment with tonality and John Cage
- American composers like George Gershwin and Duke Ellington began to draw on their own native music - Jazz. Stravinsky and Ravel responded with music that also embraced Jazz styles. Folk music was also a great source of inspiration for composers like Vaughan Williams, Bartók and Messiaen
- Modernism in music was about being radical and different. For the first time, musicians and audiences realised that music didn't have to be confined to tradition, but by 1960 this idea had run out of steam. The next generation of 'serious' composers relaxed and had a wider palette of musical colours to work with - influences from other cultures, Popular music, Ancient music and the experiments of Modernism
- Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Michael Nyman and John Adams championed Minimalism, breaking musical boundaries and winning them huge popularity. Their music reflects advances in music and technology - sometimes including elements of Jazz and Rock
- A group of composers who met while studying in Manchester have become the main exponents of 'post-modern' music in Britain. While music written by Peter Maxwell Davies, Harrison Birtwistle and Alexander Goehr isn't everybody's cup of tea, it can be profoundly powerful and stimulating
- 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
- Two choral stars of the 20th Century include John Rutter and Karl Jenkins, whose music is hugely popular with modern choirs. Listen to Jenkins' Adiemus: Songs of Sanctuary from 1995, or Rutter's Gaelic Blessing for two strikingly different examples of late 20th Century Choral music. Eric Whitacre, an American Choral composer is famous for his rich harmonies