

Essay on a comparison of pop and punk music culture

[Art & Culture](#), [Music](#)



Introduction

The late nineteenth century and the beginning twentieth century were marked by the great expansions and development in the society. The same was also evident in music which is part of an art that was in a revolution stage resulting to various movements. This paper will analyse two twentieth century movements which are pop and punk music. Works done by artists in the different genres will also be analysed to bring out the difference.

Pop Music

According to Hubbard, pop music is a music genre that is associated with rock and roll music and intended to appeal to the youth market (3). In short it is referred to as a softer alternative to the hardcore rock and roll genre.

The music consists of somewhat short simple songs that use creative technology to come up with unique sounds completely different from existing themes. The term 'pop music' originated in 1926 in UK signifying music that has popular appeal (Hubbard 4). Recordings of pop in the 1920's are seen as the birth of later day genres such as hillbilly, country, and blues music genres.

The meaning of pop music changed in the late 1950's to mean a strain of non classical music that was performed by artists such as ABBA, the Beatles, and Rolling Stones. By the early 1960's the term pop music had a synonym called Beat music commonly used in England. From 1967 onwards the term was used as a form of resistance to rock and roll music.

Throughout history since its origin pop music has been influenced greatly by other genres of music. Early pop originated from romantic ballads for its

form, and obtained vocal harmonies from nearly all music genres with the recent addition being spoken passages of rap. The music also took advantage of technological innovations such as the 1940's improved microphone design that was intended for a more emotional singing style. Decades latter with innovations such as portable transistor radios, and colour television, pop took advantage of the technology to make it more visual attractive hence more commercially successful (Hubbard 17). The music has been dominated by UK and USA music industries whose influence have made the it an international monoculture culture with each country having different forms of the genre just like various forms of culture we have globally.

Analysis of Works

Michael Jackson was a well know artist in this genre whose works have contributed immensely in evolution of pop culture to what it is presently. The Thriller album by Michael Jackson released in 1982 took advantage of the then innovation of coloured television and portable radio transmission. Singles such as ' Thriller', ' Billie Jean', and ' Beat it' had videos that would be used to promote the album into commercial success. The four other singles that were in the album also went on to become great successes in the mainstream media selling an excess of ten million records (Anderson 1). The dance and rock tracks were more forceful with the pop tunes and ballads being more soulful and emotional ballads. This characteristic of the album clearly shows the direction that pop music was heading to and its current characteristics which are (Hubbard 28): having the goal of charming the

general public rather than a specific ideology; focusing on innovation and creativity rather than basic artistic qualities; focusing on recording, production, and technology over live performances; reflecting on existing trends rather than societal development; and encouragement of dancing.

Punk Music

The genre was originated from Rock in the mid-seventies in countries such as Australia, UK, and USA. The core of the punk music is rooted from garage rock and what is presently referred to as protopunk music (Cogan 4). Punk music artists abstained from using the supposed extremes of that the mainstream 1970's rock artists used. Their style was a fast hard-edged music style that had typical short songs, reduced instrumentation, and commonly political anti-establishment lyrics (Cogan 7). The genre embraces a Do It Yourself (DIY) ethic where artists and bands self produced and distributed their works through informal channels by themselves.

In the late seventies, bands such as Sex pistols, The Clash, and Ramones were recognised as the godfathers of the new music movement. In the eighties the movement spread globally to becoming a major culture specifically in the UK. In most cases the music shunned commercialism taking root in local scenes that rejected the mainstream media. This resulted in a subculture called punk that is characterised by youthful rebellion witnessed in unique clothing and decorations, and various anti-authority philosophies (Cogan 24).

The beginning of the eighties also witnessed the emergence of a faster aggressive mode of punk music referred to as Oi! and hardcore. There was

also a focus on other punk styles such as alternative and post-punk movement. Before the twentieth century ended the genre had been accepted by the mainstream with bands such as The Offspring and Green Day being the successful representatives.

Analysis of Works

Works in punk music genre that clearly bring out its characteristic is that of Sex Pistols band. Their album 'Anarchy in The UK' released in 1976 set the evolution of punk music from rock and roll. The album openly criticized the British political system and societal morals. There was also a typical mocking and advocating against sex and relationships in singles such as 'Love Come in Spurts.' The lyrics in the entire album promote a specific impression of the violent idea of anarchy being felt across the British youth in the 1970's. The youth of that time identified with the anarchy through anger, restlessness, economic frustration, confusion, and social isolation (sex pistols 1).

From the works of Sex Pistols it is evident that lyrics of punk are candid and confrontational compared to pop music. There is a frequent comment on social and political issues influencing the society. The characteristics that come out from the analysis are that the genre (Cogan 32): appeals to a specific ideology as opposed to the general public; focuses on basic artistic qualities as opposed to creativity, technology, and innovation; there is a focus on live performances with bands; reflection on societal developments as opposed to trends; and little or no dancing involved.

Conclusion

The two movements—pop and punk music—have a common origin in that they originated from a larger movement of rock and roll. Over the years in the twentieth century they have evolved taking on different directions. While pop is seen to be commercial-centred appealing to the general masses, punk is ideology-centred and appeals to certain groupings in a society. In addition, evolution of the two movements occurs at different rates with pop being at the stage of being a monoculture and punk at sub-culture level. The future of the movements is that there would be an emergence of new subgenres from these specific genres creating numerous music cultures in the society.

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