

Popular music of the 20th and 21st centuries

Popular music of the 1960s: The beginnings



Rhythm 'n' blues

- # During the 1960s, pop musicians developed musical styles that had emerged during the 1950s, often creating new and exciting forms of popular music.
- # Two important styles that had a major impact on popular music during the 1960s were **rhythm'n'blues** and **rock'n'roll**.
- # Rhythm'n'blues had developed in the clubs and dance halls of American cities such as Chicago.
- # It mixed the strong vocal style and harmony of **gospel** music with **city-blues** instrumentation, using electric guitars and amplification.

Although it was based on the earlier blues structure

Rock 'n' Roll

- # Rock 'n' roll was also a mixture, or **fusion**, of two popular music styles: rhythm 'n' blues and country and western music.
- # Fast, loud, and using energetic **syncopated** rhythms, rock 'n; roll was one of the most important popular music styles to emerge during the 1950s.
- # It became a craze amongst teenagers, not only for its loud driving rhythms, but also for the way its singers and lyrics challenged adult authority.
- # Many of its performers such as Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry and Little Richard became pop legends, and songs like 'Jailhouse rock', 'Blue suede shoes' and 'Tutti frutti' are popular music classics.
- # Although originally it used a string bass and piano, rock 'n; roll helped to establish the typical pop music instrumental combination of lead and rhythm guitars, bass guitar and drum kit.



Gospel and soul

- # Gospel music has its roots in African-American church services, where it developed from religious songs called **spirituals**.
- # Performed by choirs or groups of singers, gospel music combines the harmonic style of European hymn tunes with **call-and-response** patterns and syncopated rhythms from West African music and melodic features of blues music (**blue notes**).



Gospel and Soul

- # Gospel can be very energetic, but its main features are:
- # A powerful solo singer, often improvising over a choral background
- # The use of **melisma** to extend certain words to make them more important, or repeating a syllable a number of times, with gaps in between (e.g. 'Swee – ee – ee – eet Jesus')
- # 'sliding' into a note from a higher or lower pitch
- # A fervent emotional quality achieved by sobbing or shouting
- # Sophisticated vocal arrangements with strong harmonies.



Gospel and soul

- # Gospel singing is often accompanied by a keyboard (typically piano or electric organ), drum kit, and bass guitar.
- # Soul music is a mix of rhythm 'n' blues and gospel music.
- # The use of saxophones, brass, electric guitars, drums and amplifiers are an influence of rhythm 'n' blues, while the vocal style and the addition of an electric organ come from gospel music.
- # In soul music, the religious words of gospel are replaced by lyrics about human relationships, heartbreak and love, but the vocal style, featuring a powerful solo improvisation and vocal effects to emphasise certain words or phrases, is pure gospel.



Research study

Gospel influences in soul music

Listen to some pieces of soul music written in the 1960s. Try to identify the instruments, and any vocal techniques taken from gospel music. Notice how the backing singers, or **bvox** (short for backing vocals), often 'comment' on a line or phrase the solo vocalist has just sung, often repeating part of it. This is a typical gospel technique, developed from the call-and-response patterns found in spirituals. Try to find some examples of spirituals, such as 'Go down, Moses' and sing them.

