

Popular music of the 20th and 21st centuries

British popular music in the 1960s



British popular music of the 1960s

- # Although the origins and development of popular music styles had taken place in America, during the 1960s British groups began to play a major part in creating a new and exciting popular music scene.
- # In fact, some British groups, such as the Beatles, became so popular both in Britain and America that they directly influenced American popular music.



The Beatles

- # The Beatles had their first big chart success early in 1963 with 'Please please me'; by 1964, a string of number one hit singles had made the four band members – John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr and George Harrison – famous in both Britain and America.
- # At the start of their first American tour a crowd of 3,000 screaming fans greeted them at New York's John F. Kennedy airport, and 'Beatlemania' followed the band wherever they went.



The Beatles

- # Although their music sounded new and fresh, the Beatles had in fact learned their trade in the clubs of Hamburg and elsewhere in Europe, and their music drew on a wide range of styles, including rhythm 'n' blues, rock 'n' roll and country & western.
- # In 1967 they met the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in London, and thereafter spent some time in India, where they became influenced by Indian classical music (incorporating the sitar, for example, into their music).
- # After 1967 the Beatles became more experimental, make us of unusual instrumental combinations and effects, and new and different structures.



Research study

The Beatles

Find out more about the Beatles and the different popular music styles that influenced their music. Listen to and compare early songs like 'She loves you' and albums like *With the Beatles* with later songs such as 'Strawberry Fields forever' and the album *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

In what ways does the music change between these two periods?



The Rolling Stones

- # The Rolling Stones – Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Brian Jones, Bill Wyman and Charlie Watts – were the opposite of the Beatles.
- # Where the Beatles wore smart collarless jackets and were charming and personable, the Rolling Stones were scruffy, casual, and had a provocative manner that enraged adults.
- # Their music was raw and distinctive, inspired by rhythm 'n' blues, and characterised by **distorted** guitar sounds and a harsh, thick instrumental **mix**.



The Who

- # The Who were formed in 1964, with an original line-up of guitarist Pete Townshend, vocalist Roger Daltrey, John Entwistle on bass, and drummer Keith Moon.
- # Their music was characterised by frenzied, wild performances that often ended with Townshend smashing his guitar on stage.
- # Townshend used **feedback** and **power chords** to add power and aggression to the music.
- # The Who's music was greatly admired by the **Mods**, a popular youth culture of the period.



Research study

The Mods

Find out more about the Mods and the Who, and how their music and that of the Beatles and Rolling Stones reflected social attitudes in Britain during the 1960s.



Listening Quiz

- # Listen to 'I can't get no Satisfaction' by the Rolling Stones.
- # Describe the effect or technique used by the guitars in this excerpt.
- # What effect does this have on the music?
- # What term best describes the short, repeated guitar melody heard at the beginning of the music?

scalic sequence riff triadic

- What term best describes the rhythm of this guitar melody?

irregular rubato polyrhythmic syncopated



Key terms

- # **Feedback** – a loud whining sound created by over-amplifying the guitar.
- # **Power chord** – an open chord, containing just the root and fifth of a chord.

