

ICONS OF AMERICAN MUSIC

A timeline of America's genres and the
geniuses that influenced them



Brief History of American Music

- American music is a reflection of its culturally and ethnically diverse population.
- The USA has the world's largest music industry.
- Much of today's modern popular music can trace its roots to African American blues and gospel music from the 1920s.

We begin with
the...

The Blues



Blues is a genre that began in the American "Deep South" in African American communities.

Blues is known as being very soulful music and the words usually express the sadness that life can bring.

Blues is the foundation of jazz, rhythm and blues (R&B), rock and roll, and country music.



The King of Blues

B.B. King



Now let's listen to B.B. King and Eric Clapton play "Ten Long Years".

When most Americans hear the word "blues", they think of guitarist, singer, and songwriter B.B. King.

In his youth, he played on street corners for dimes.

King calls every one of his guitars "Lucille".



**Blues heavily
influenced our
next genre...**

Jazz



Jazz is the combination of all the musical cultures that were happening in the city of New Orleans in the 1900s; traditional African drumming, church music, classical music, the blues, and more.

Jazz's most unique quality is improvisation.

A jazz ensemble can have many different instruments, but the traditional jazz quartet includes piano, bass, drums, and either saxophone or trumpet.

Jazz is called America's only original art form.

BLUE TRAIN

blue note 1577



The Father of Jazz

Louis Armstrong

Armstrong influenced jazz in many ways, both with his incredible trumpet playing and his singing.

Renowned for his charismatic stage presence as much for his musical virtuosity.

In a racially divided America, Armstrong was popular with both races, being the first "cross-over" artist.



Jazz is not dead!

Esperanza Spalding



At the age of 26, Esperanza Spalding is one of the most popular jazz musicians alive.

Spalding won the Grammy for Best New Artist against Justin Bieber in 2011.


Spalding is a brilliant acoustic bass player and singer. She also writes and arranges her own songs.

Esperanza is being called the hope for jazz because not only is her music truly great, but very accessible to people who aren't musicians.

What difference do you hear between Esperanza Spalding's music and Louis Armstrong's music?



When you hear this music it means...Quiz Time!

1. Who is the King of the Blues?
1. Why is Esperanza Spalding being called the hope for jazz?

1. What instrument did Louis Armstrong play?
1. What is jazz's most unique quality?

**“Country music is
three chords and the
truth”**

Country music

Country music is a popular American music style that began in the rural South in the 1920s.

It takes its roots from Western cowboy and folk music.

Country music tends to have simple forms and harmonies, and is most often accompanied by string instruments (banjos, guitars, and fiddles).



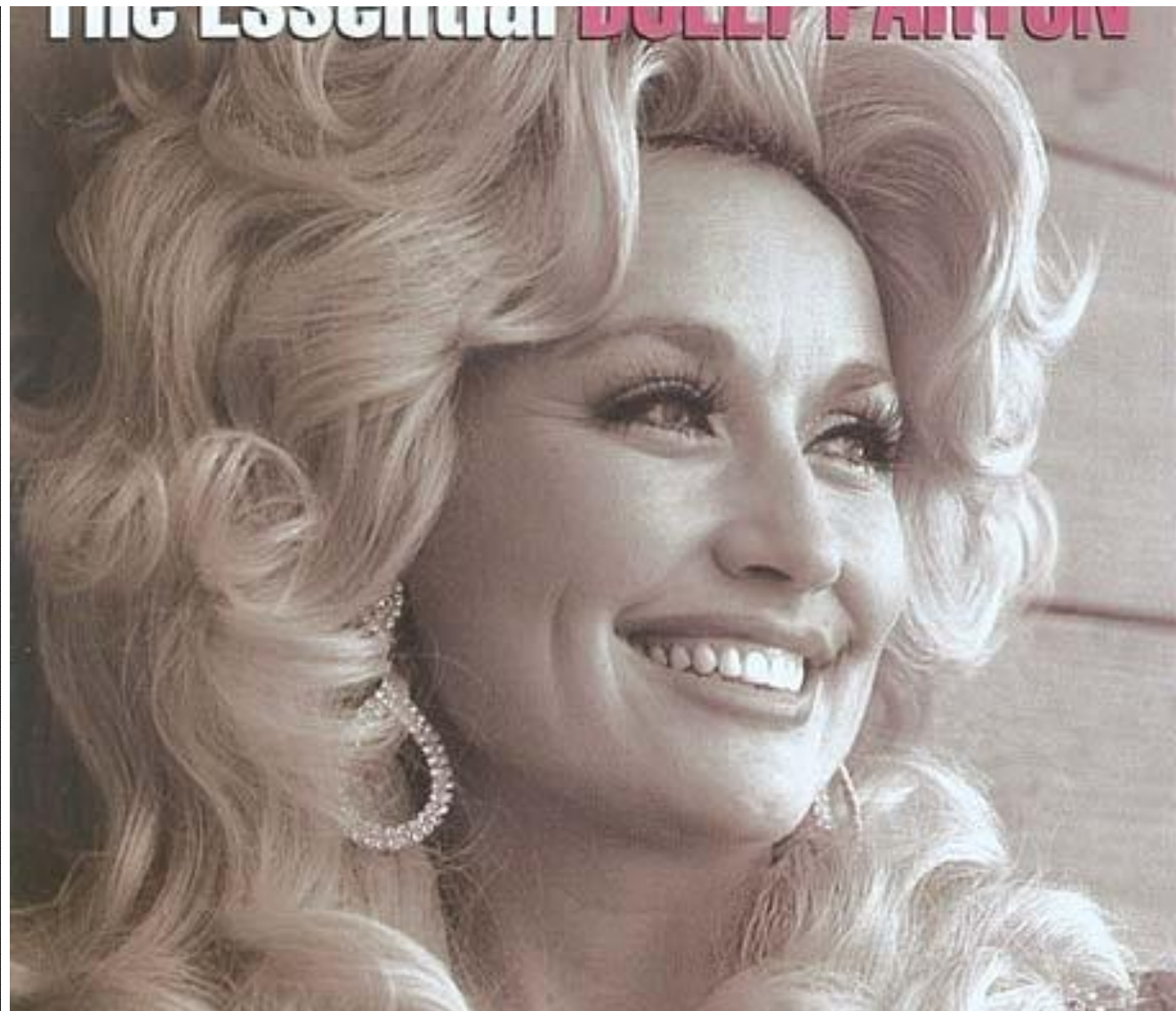
The Queen of Country Music

Dolly Parton



Dolly Parton is one of the most successful female country artists of all time, with more #1 hits than any other musician in this genre.

Parton is now rich and famous, but grew up, in her words, "dirty poor". Her family lived in a one room, broken down cabin in rural Tennessee.



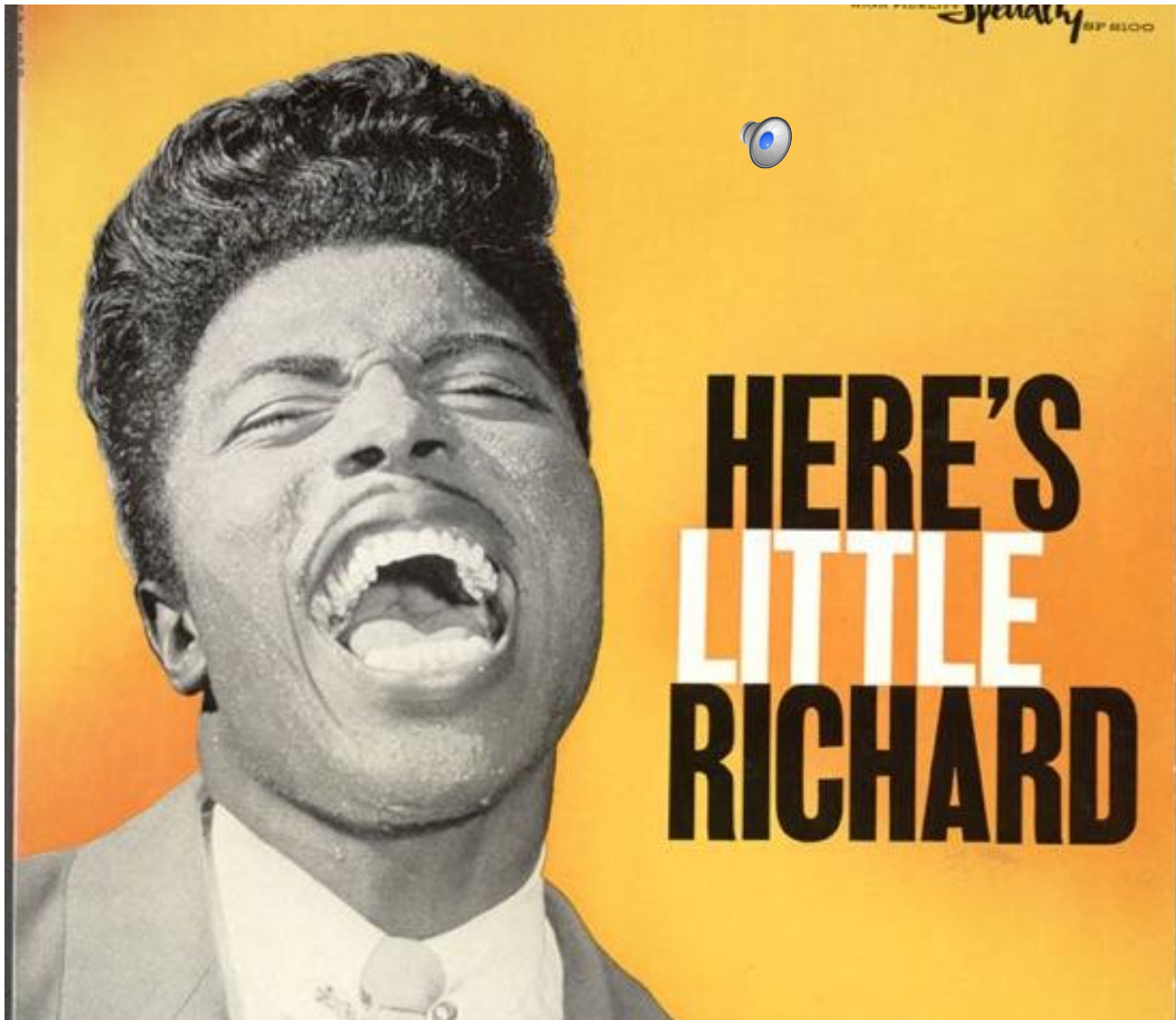
Our next genre is...

Rock and Roll

Rock and roll originated in the US during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

It is a combination of blues, country, jazz, and gospel music.

Rock and roll influenced much of the music that came after it.



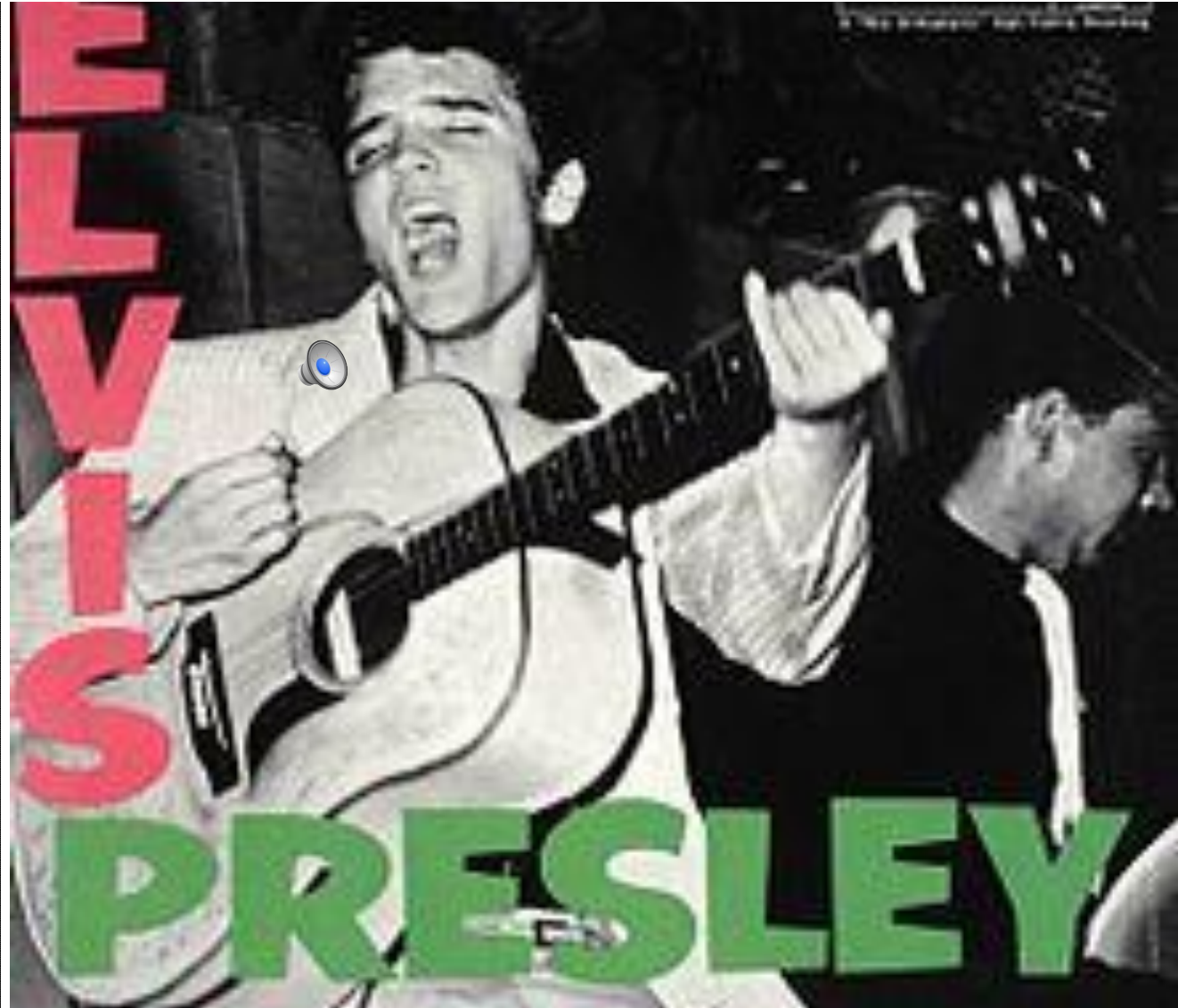
The King of Rock and Roll

Elvis Presley

Elvis Aaron Presley is one of America's cultural icons and is widely known only as Elvis.

Elvis was one of the originators of rock and roll.

Elvis had hits in many different genres: country, pop ballads, gospel and blues.



Quiz #2

1. Where in America did country music begin?



2. Who is the Queen of Country Music?

3. Rock and Roll is a combination of which musical genres?

4. Elvis is the originator of which genre?

And now to
something
different...

Rhythm and Blues

Let's take a listen to En Vogue singing "My Lovin' (You're Never Gonna Get It)"

Rhythm and blues is a genre that originated in African American communities in the 1940s.



**The legendary
record label...**

Motown

Motown is one of America's most influential record labels.

Motown was based in the city of Detroit.

The Jackson 5 were on the Motown record label and their singer was a very young Michael Jackson!

Motown was important in the racial integration of popular music because of its cross cultural success.



“Sorrow is so easy to express and yet so hard to tell” – Joni Mitchell

Folk

Joni Mitchell, pictured here, is one of folk’s most innovative artists. The song we are hearing is “California”.

American folk music was revived as a popular genre in the 1940s.

From the beginning, folk music songs were written to protest various inequalities in American society.

The sound of folk music tends to be softer, with acoustic guitars and melodic vocals.



Although it is impossible to define, our next genre can be called....

New Folk



Listen to their song "Attaboy" and decide which genres you hear.

This is a genre that is hard to define because its roots are in so many different types of music.

This group, with the famous cellist Yo-Yo Ma, is proud that their music fits no genre.

The instruments you are hearing are mandolin, cello, acoustic bass, and violin.



Quiz #3



1. What is the name of the legendary record label that produced cross cultural hits?
1. What does R&B stand for? Describe the music.
1. What did American folk music protest against?
1. Why is it difficult to put "New Folk" into one genre?

**And now
something
completely
different...**

Funk

We are now listening to Stevie Wonder, one of the greatest songwriters of all time. This song is entitled "Black Man".

Funk began in the mid-1960s when African American musicians combined soul, jazz, and R&B music into a danceable form of music.

The bass line is the central part of every funk song.



One of the
founding fathers
of funk...

James Brown



Listen to Brown's "Get Up Offa That Thing".

James Brown is one of the most influential figures in all of America's musical history.

James Brown is the world's most "sampled" artist; this means that different musicians and producers have taken pieces of his songs, and created their own songs from them.

He influenced the development of many different musical genres.

Is James Brown singing or speaking the words? What other type of music speaks its words?



**James Brown
influenced our
next genre...**

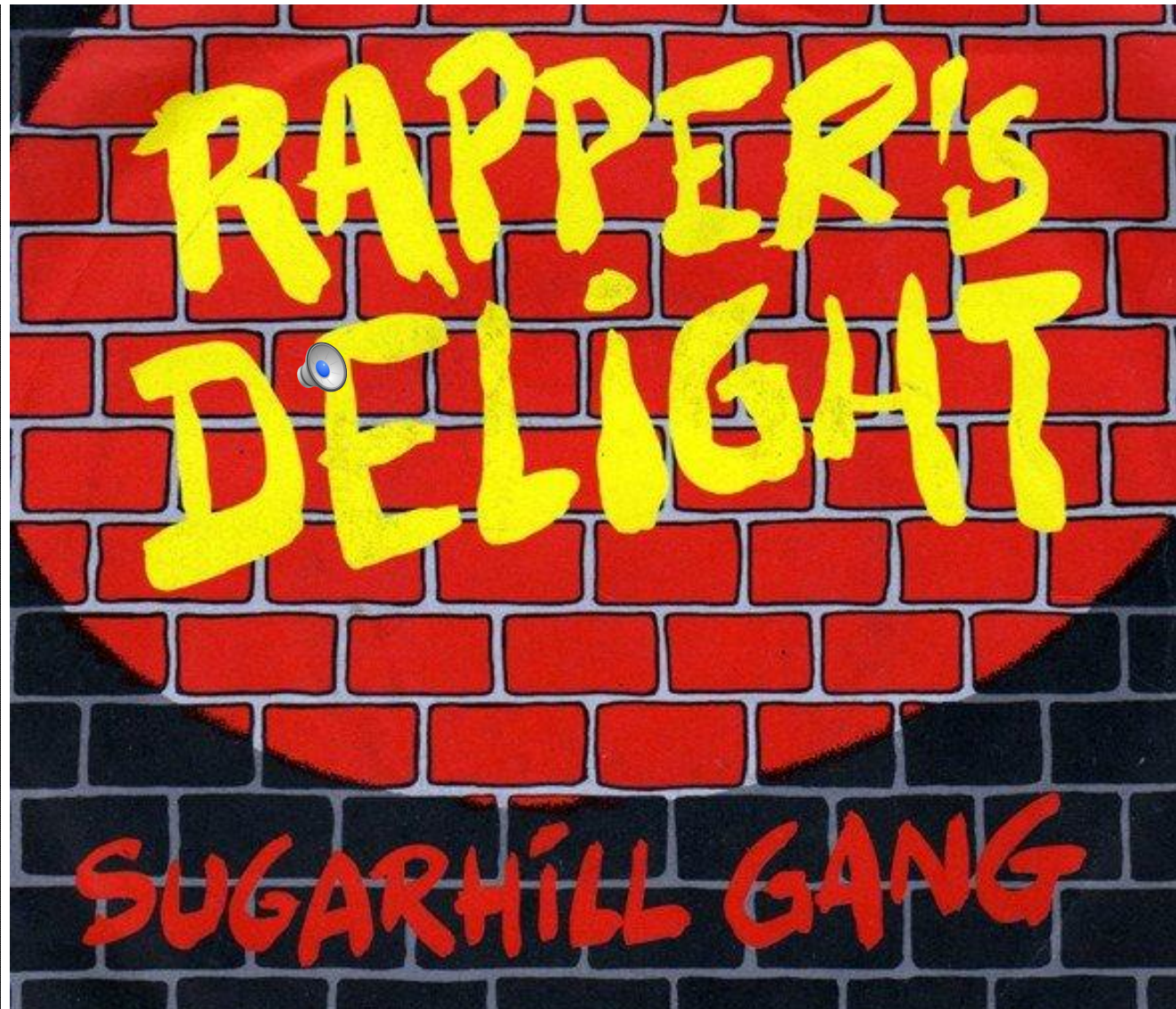
Rap

Let's listen to "Rapper's Delight" and discuss the differences between this song and the rap you hear today.

The roots of rap can be traced back to West African storytellers; they would deliver stories rhythmically, over a drum beat.

Sugarhill Gang's "Rapper's Delight" was released in 1979 and is the first rap single to be a Top 40 hit.

Which instruments do you hear in this song? Which instruments do you hear in rap songs today?



All of this
brings us to our
final genre...

Pop



The word “pop” stands for popular music.

Today’s pop music is a blend of all the different genres we talked about today.

Beyonce is one of the world’s biggest pop artists today.

She has an all-female band which tours with her and performs in her videos. Many of the women in this band are also talented jazz musicians.

What do you think Beyonce’s musical influences are?



Quiz #4



1. Which instrument is the central part of every funk song?
1. Which funk artist is one of the most influential musicians of all time?
1. When did “Rapper’s Delight” come out?
1. Describe Beyonce’s band.

And now we come to ...

The End

