

CHAPTER  
8



# The British Invasion

*The Beatles*

## Pre-reading Questions

1. Can you name the four members of the Beatles?
2. What kind of British music do you know or like?
3. Do you think there's a difference between American and British music?
4. Are you interested in club music?

## Introduction

Influenced by American blues, R&B, soul and '50s rock'n'roll, British music added vitality and freshness to the '60s music scene in America. The "British Invasion" took place in the period from 1964 to 1966 and introduced America to the British sound, which continued to play a major role in the 1960s music scene. From the 1970s onwards, Britain produced a large number of singers and bands that were successful around the world. Punk, ska, reggae, electronica, dance music and guitar-based rock have continued to influence British popular music.

## 🌀 The Beginnings of the British Music Scene

Throughout the 20th century, Britain had always had its own popular songs and singers. Music hall songs, jazz, Tin Pan Alley and traditional folk music were strong influences. In the 1950s, however, American rock'n'roll began to grow in popularity. The best-known British rock'n'rollers in the late 1950s were Cliff Richard and the popular band the Shadows. British skiffle, a mix of folk, jazz and blues, was also popular, but neither of these became successful in America. By the late 1950s, Britain looked to the excitement of American rock'n'roll and soul for inspiration.



*The Rolling Stones in the 1990s*

## 🌀 The British Invasion: 1964–1966

The British Invasion began with the Beatles' first tour of America in 1964. It was a return to roots for most British bands, as they were all inspired and influenced by American blues, R&B, rock'n'roll and soul. During this short period, British bands recorded a large number of original songs that became popular not only in Britain and America, but around the world. Some of the long-lasting and influential songs include the Beatles' "Nowhere Man," the Kinks' "You Really Got Me," the Who's "My Generation," "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" by the Rolling Stones, "House of the Rising Sun" by the Animals, and "Sunshine Superman" by Donovan.

## 🌀 From Blues to Progressive Rock

In the early 1960s, some British bands became devotees of American blues. Artists like John Mayall, Eric Clapton and Jeff Beck, and bands like Fleetwood Mac and the Yardbirds all contributed to the strong blues-based music in Britain in the early 1960s. At first they merely copied American blues songs, but then they went on to create their own brand of mostly up-tempo blues, and rhythm

and blues songs.

British bands and musicians also contributed greatly to the psychedelic rock genre, especially the Beatles, the Animals and Donovan. Psychedelic music used exotic sounds, such as the Indian sitar, and combined guitar and studio effects with poetic and surreal lyrics. Unusual yet creative album cover art and live concerts using colorful visuals were also part of the psychedelic scene. 5

Progressive rock was a style of music that developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It mixed classical orchestration, jazz, folk and sound experimentation with rock music. Most of these bands were British. Electronic keyboards, drums, guitars and bass were the common instruments. Wind instruments were also frequently used. Songs became longer, instrumental solos were common and lyrics became more fantastic, literary and philosophical—they were rarely about love or romance. The bands in this genre all sound very different from each other. The well-known bands include the Moody Blues, Pink Floyd, King Crimson, Genesis, Emerson, Lake and Palmer, Yes and Jethro Tull. Pink Floyd was one of the most successful, and their elaborate stage shows, rich lyrics and lush soundscapes made them one of the most popular progressive rock bands in the 1970s and 1980s. 10 15

British bands like Deep Purple, Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin played a role in the genre of music that came to be called heavy metal. Fast tempos, heavy guitars and screaming vocals defined the early examples of heavy metal, which was the favorite music genre of white males throughout the world. 20

### Questions

**Matching:** Match the words with the correct letters from the list at the bottom. Some letters may be used more than once.

1. Progressive rock
  2. British blues and R&B singer
  3. First tour of America in 1964
  4. Heavy metal
  5. The Kinks
  6. Studio effects, Indian music
  7. Successful progressive rock band
  8. Skiffle, Cliff Richard
- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| a) Eric Clapton              | e) "You Really Got Me"                      |
| b) 1950s British rock'n'roll | f) Quick tempos, heavy guitars, loud vocals |
| c) Pink Floyd                | g) Classical, jazz and folk influences      |
| d) The Beatles               | h) Psychedelic music                        |

## The 1970s

Many British musicians who began their careers in the '70s are still influential. Elton John has had numerous hits in every decade of his career, and even ended up writing the soundtrack for Disney's *The Lion King*. David Bowie, an important figure on the '70s glam rock scene—where costumes, makeup and theatrics were prominent—has also had a long career. Artists like Rod Stewart, the Who, Queen, Elvis Costello and the Rolling Stones, as well as the ex-Beatles, were some of the big names in British rock music in the '70s.



Queen

Punk music first appeared around 1974, and its fashion and anti-establishment attitude created controversy and excitement. The word “punk,” meaning beginner or useless person, was originally used to describe “garage” bands from the 1960s. Punk in the 1970s was known for simple arrangements, fast beats and harsh vocals; punk instrumentation was basically drums, guitars and bass. Punk represented a dislike of authority and a reaction against progressive rock, disco, heavy metal and easy listening music. Punk lyrics were very direct and confrontational. The British band the Sex Pistols’ song, “God Save the Queen,” contained the line “God save the Queen, It’s a fascist regime.”

Punk music was popular in New York City at the same time; but in Britain, the attitude and fashion (colored, spiky hair, safety pin piercings, leather and a do-it-yourself attitude) were more rebellious and outrageous. The influential British bands included the Clash, the Sex Pistols, the Buzzcocks, the Jam and the Damned, while the popular punk bands in America were the Ramones, Television and Blondie. By the early 1980s, the punk music scene had started to fade, but the force and drive of punk has influenced bands in every decade since the '70s.

Ska, a style of reggae, was well known in Britain because of the country’s immigrant population. There was a huge British ska movement in the late 1970s and early 1990s. Most of the early bands recorded with the British recording label Two Tone. They include Madness, the Selecter and the Beat. Reggae, ska and punk influenced the sound of Elvis Costello and the Attractions, and the Police, whose singer and bassist, Sting, later became a respected songwriter on the international scene.

## From the 1980s to the Present

British music from the 1980s onward saw several trends. Guitar-based rock was popular with many bands. Judas Priest and Iron Maiden were models for the new wave of British heavy metal. Guitar-based indie rock was a strong force in the '80s and '90s with innovative bands like the Smiths, the Cure, Stone Roses, Oasis, Blur, Radiohead, Primal Scream and Coldplay.

Electronic pop music, using electronic instruments, synthesizers and



programmed drumming, became popular in the 1980s. It was influenced by the '70s German band, Kraftwerk—one of the first bands to record with electronic instruments. The bands were very different from each other—some very light and pop-oriented, others very dark and moody. The Pet Shop Boys, the Eurythmics, Duran Duran, Joy Division and Depeche Mode are examples of bands from the 1980s. In the 1990s and 21st century, the electronic music scene expanded to include a variety of sounds, rhythms and moods. The main artists include Underworld, Massive Attack, the Chemical Brothers and Fat Boy Slim.

Dance culture began to grow in the late 1980s in Britain, with influences from American techno and house music of the same period. Around this time, outdoor rave parties and use of the drug ecstasy began. The DJs for these parties played the latest underground dance music, “acid house.” As the dance and electronic music scene exploded, new genres of dance music were created: jungle, trip hop, acid jazz, trance, hardcore and drum’n’bass. Indian and Pakistani influences are also heard on the British scene, with styles like bhangra and desi-beats, and bands like Asian Dub Foundation.

Pop music also had a British flavor. Boy and girl bands like Take That and the Spice Girls sold millions of CDs to adoring young fans around the world. Soul, funk, blues, hip hop, electronica, dance, folk and especially rock are all musical genres popular in Britain today. The Beatles began the British Invasion in the 1960s, and it hasn’t ended yet.

## European Pop

European pop has also contributed to the world popular music scene, and followed the same popular styles in the Americas: jazz, rock, folk, pop, Latin, Brazilian, electronic and hip hop. French-style chanson songs have been popular in many countries and there is a vibrant popular music scene in Southern and Eastern Europe where gypsy music and marching band influences are huge. In Scandinavia, some popular bands sing in English, while German bands have been very influential in the electronic and dance music field. Every year, the popular Eurovision Song Contest is held, during which one group or singer is chosen as Europe’s top musical act.

### Questions

*True or False: Mark the following statements True or False.*

1. David Bowie only recorded in the 1970s in the glam rock style.
2. Punk music began in the 1960s.
3. Fashion was important to the punk music scene.
4. Ska music originally came from Britain.
5. Rock music includes the genres of indie rock and heavy metal.

# SPOTLIGHT



## The Music Makers

### ★ The Beatles

Guitarists John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison began playing music together in 1958 in Liverpool, England. By 1962, their band was named the Beatles; Paul was the bassist, and their new drummer was Ringo Starr. They recorded their first single in 1962. Their early singles, written by the team of Lennon and McCartney, sold well in England. In December 1963, the Beatles' musical revolution was about to begin. They had their first number one hit in America: "I Want to Hold Your Hand." From 1964 until 1969, the Beatles' music ruled the Top Ten charts for singles and albums around the world. In 1964 alone, the Beatles sold more than 30 million records in the U.S.

After successful tours of America and the world, the Beatles decided to stop touring in 1966. From this point, they began to concentrate on recording in the studio. New sounds and effects made their songs unique and creative. In 1967, the Beatles were the first band to be televised by satellite around the world when they sang "All You Need Is Love." Their last recorded album was *Abbey Road* in 1969. Finally, in 1970, the Beatles officially broke up over personal, financial and musical differences.

In addition to their huge influence on popular music and musicians, the Beatles affected popular culture in many ways. The Beatles' fashion and their interest in Indian music, meditation and mysticism sparked interests in the same things among people who listened to their music.

It is estimated that the Beatles have sold more than one billion records, the most of any recording artist. But beyond the sales, the Beatles proved their talent in the

large number of great songs that they wrote. The Beatles are, without a doubt, the biggest pop and rock stars of the 20th century, and they have done more to popularize rock music than any other rock'n'roll artist.



## Songs

### ★ "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction"

This song was written by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards in 1964. Its lyrics are notable in that they contrast with the upbeat and positive lyrics found in many pop songs from that time period. The Rolling Stones were referred to as the "greatest rock'n'roll band in the world," and they have maintained a successful recording and touring career for more than 40 years.

*I can't get no satisfaction  
I can't get no satisfaction  
'Cause I try and I try and I try and I try  
I can't get no, I can't get no*

*When I'm drivin' in my car  
And that man comes on the radio  
He's tellin' me more and more  
About some useless information  
Supposed to fire my imagination*

*I can't get no, oh no no no  
Hey hey hey, that's what I say*

*When I'm watchin' my TV  
And a man comes on to tell me  
How white my shirts can be  
But he can't be a man 'cause he doesn't  
smoke  
The same cigarettes as me  
I can't get no, oh no no no  
Hey hey hey, that's what I say*

*I can't get no satisfaction  
I can't get no girl reaction  
'Cause I try and I try and I try and I try  
I can't get no, I can't get no*

*When I'm ridin' round the world  
And I'm doin' this and I'm signing that  
And I'm tryin' to make some girl  
Who tells me baby better come back later  
next week  
'Cause you see I'm on losing streak  
I can't get no, oh no no no  
Hey hey hey, that's what I say*

★ "Creep"

Radiohead began in the 1990s and have been praised as one of the most progressive and diverse bands of their time. "Creep," one of their biggest hits, came out in 1992. The song's dark and confused images are typical of Radiohead lyrics.

*When you were here before  
Couldn't look you in the eyes  
You're just like an angel  
Your skin makes me cry*

*You float like a feather  
In a beautiful world  
I wish I was special  
You're so very special*

*But I'm a creep  
I'm a weirdo  
What the hell am I doin' here  
I don't belong here*

*I don't care if it hurts  
I wanna have control  
I want a perfect body  
I want a perfect soul*

*I want you to notice  
When I'm not around  
You're so very special  
I wish I was special*

*She's running out the door . . .  
She's running out  
she's run, run, run . . .*

*Whatever makes you happy  
Whatever you want  
You're so very special  
I wish I was special*

**Questions**

*True or False:* Mark the following statements True or False.

1. The Beatles had five members.
2. The Beatles' popularity grew after their number one hit in America.
3. *Abbey Road* was the Beatles' last album and was released in 1970.
4. The Beatles have sold more records than any other recording artist.
5. The Beatles' interests affected the culture of the time.
6. In "Satisfaction," the singer is happy with what he hears on the radio.
7. In "Creep," the singer is unhappy with himself.



### ⌘ Success, Excess and More Excess

Success brings with it many temptations, and modern popular music has seen much success and excess. For every performer that finds success in the music industry, there are many who are destroyed by it. Being successful in the music  
5 business has always had its “perks”: adoring fans, lovers, money, travel, alcohol and drugs. As far as the story of popular music is concerned, there are many performers who fell victim to these temptations. Many musicians have abused their riches and wasted them on parties, possessions and the pursuit of pleasure.

In the 1990s, some hip hop artists focused on the “bling bling” lifestyle in  
10 which jewelry, possessions and money became very important. Many saw this as too materialistic and criticized it strongly. People are naturally attracted to successful people, and successful musicians have always had access to many lovers, groupies and adoring fans. While some people might envy this situation, it has also destroyed many marriages, created huge ego problems, and revealed the ugly sexist  
15 side of popular music. Many people have criticized sexist lyrics and videos, and questioned the examples they set for younger listeners.

Drugs and alcohol have had a long association with popular music. Booze, heroin, marijuana, cocaine, acid, speed, ecstasy, uppers, downers, barbiturates and anti-depressants are all well known on the music scene, from jazz and blues to  
20 rock, pop and hip hop. Some musicians have avoided these temptations, or have changed their drug- or alcohol-fueled lifestyles, but there is a long list of musicians who have died because of drug and alcohol abuse. There are many who dislike this dark side to the music industry, but there are many musicians and fans who embrace it willingly. The excesses of the music world have simply become accepted  
25 as just another chapter in the sometimes sordid story of popular music.

### ⌘ Follow-up

*Discuss or write about one or more of the following questions.*

1. What are your impressions of the story of the British Invasion?
2. Are you a bigger fan of British or American music? Does it make a difference to you?
3. Do you enjoy electronic music? Do you have any CDs of this kind of music?
4. Do you often go to clubs and dance to the music?
5. What is your impression of the Beatles?
6. Are lyrics important to you?
7. Why do you think there is so much excess in the music industry?