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Popular Music Genres:
The Past 70 Years to Now

Each decade is connected to specific music genres that are remembered years later. Artists who imprint in listeners' minds, album collections or playlists stand out within certain decades from when they were the most successful. Awards, charts, album sales and performances are some of the accomplishments that help the growth of their careers through the public. With pop and rap being the favored genres, proven in the charts from the last twenty years, what is today's music genre? Using a few artists as reference along with collecting data, starting from the 1950s and ending with the 2010s, this paper will show the core of what was the most desired genre.

With the present year at its end, it's time to reflect on what music has been released along with what is being played on radios and personal devices. Recognizing certain characteristics of a song will benefit listeners towards identifying similarities from past tunes. Possible aspects to focus on may include song key, melodies, lyrics and instrumentation. Also with present day technology, there are sources and features that provide examples of songs with their audio and/or side by side with details on how they are similar. With presenting the tasks of discovering new songs that sound the same, this paper considers that today's music is not fully original.

Therefore, some can be settled into a “recycled” category. Eventually, amongst the pile ups of similar material over the years, they will all be placed into the further category of “recycled pop.”

The 1950s was the decade that became known for rock ‘n roll including artists such as Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, The Big Bopper, Bill Haley & His Comets, Little Richard, Johnny Cash, Ray Charles, Bo Diddley, Fats Domino, Big Joe Turner, Link Wray and Jerry Lee Lewis (“1950s in Music”). Rock ‘n roll music was also influenced by jazz and blues from the previous decades including aspects such as the 12-bar form, rhythm, and being composed of guitar, drums and vocals (“Did Blues Influence Rock and Roll?”). With World War II at its end, people began having children, and it became known as the “baby boomer” generation. In ‘54, the Brown v. Board of Education case made nationwide news allowing black and white children to attend the same school. The following year, the rock ‘n roll community experienced its breakthrough when Bill Haley & His Comets had their first number one hit “Rock Around The Clock.” That same year, in ‘55, was when activist Rosa Parks was arrested and it commenced a peaceful resistance movement in the African American community seeking equality. By the end of the decade in ‘59, rising rock ‘n roll star Ritchie Valens died in a plane crash in Iowa that also killed Buddy Holly, The Big Bopper and their pilot (History.com Editors, “The 1950s”).

Elvis Presley, AKA “The King of Rock and Roll” and born 1935 in Mississippi, got his first guitar at eleven years old from his mother. After graduating high school in ‘53, he created his first demo record that included his first single “That’s All Right” and began touring to try to become a star. In ‘56, he signed with RCA Records and produced his first number one single “Heartbreak Hotel” along with his first number one album *Elvis Presley* that both became gold

while also releasing his second album *Elvis* the same year. He then began making appearances on television shows like the *Ed Sullivan Show* (Biography.com Editors, “Elvis Presley Biography”). The song “I Want You, I Need You, I Love You” reached number one being a follow up and “Hound Dog”/”Don’t Be Cruel” rose to the top of charts making them the best-selling singles at the time (Unterberger). That same year, he signed a movie contract with Paramount Pictures and filmed his first movie *Love Me Tender* (Biography.com Editors, “Elvis Presley Biography”). Towards the end of the decade he released “Jailhouse Rock” and “All Shook Up” that were both at number one (Unterberger). He went on to create multiple movies throughout the 1960s, received a Vegas residency, and later died in 1977 (Biography.com Editors, “Elvis Presley Biography”).

Chuck Berry, AKA the “Father of Rock ‘n Roll,” was born in 1926 in Missouri and had an interest in music at a young age as evidenced by singing in a church choir then learning guitar in high school. In 1951, he joined his friends band and briefly played at nightclubs. Berry left the group by the end of ‘52, and he joined Jonnie Johnson's band the Sir John’s Trio. In ‘55, he met with Chess Records. A few weeks later he recorded “Maybellene,” and the company offered him a contract. Within the next few months, the song was number one on the charts and “many music historians consider ‘Maybellene’ the first true rock 'n' roll song” (Biography.com Editors, “Chuck Berry Biography”). In ‘57, he released his debut album *After School Session* that contained songs that reached the top ten on charts like “Wee Wee Hours” at number ten, “Too Much Monkey Business” and “Brown Eyed Handsome Man” at four and five, and “School Day (Ring Ring Goes the Bell)” reaching number one (“After School Session”). The next year, he released his second album *One Dozen Berrys* and had songs like “Sweet Little Sixteen” at number two on charts and “Rock and Roll Music” at number eight (“One Dozen Berrys”). By the

end of the decade in '59, he released his third studio album *Chuck Berry Is on Top* and contained the recognizable song "Johnny B. Goode" that sat comfortably at number two on charts and "Maybellene" reaching number one ("Chuck Berry Is on Top"). He went on to record and release more albums and received induction to the rock 'n roll hall of fame before he passed away in 2017 at the age of 90 (Biography.com Editors, "Chuck Berry Biography").

The 1960s had popular genres made up of rock 'n roll, Motown and psychedelic rock towards the end of the decade. Rock 'n roll artists were The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, Bob Dylan, The Beach Boys, The Who, The Kinks, The Animals, The Byrds and Cream. Popular Motown artists included The Temptations, The Supremes, Four Tops, Diana Ross, The Jackson 5, Commodores, The Isley Brothers, The Four Seasons, The Ronettes, Marvin Gay, Stevie Wonder and The Marvelettes. The end of the decade brought psychedelic rock artists such as Jimi Hendrix, Jefferson Airplane, The Mamas & the Papas, The Doors, Janis Joplin, The Grateful Dead, Iron Butterfly, Procol Harum, Pink Floyd, Deep Purple and The Zombies. Throughout the sixties, "hippies" became popular with the "Summer of Love" movement across the nation. Those people were known to practice "free love" and some attempted to avoid politics (History.com Editors, "The 1960s History"). The decade started with a new President, John F. Kennedy, but unfortunately his presidency did not last long due to his assassination two years later in '63. The following year, artists from the U.K. traveled over to the U.S. and rose to popularity in what is known as the British Invasion. In '65, Jefferson Airplane made their debut in San Francisco, and the same year Malcolm X was assassinated in New York. A couple years later the popular magazine *Rolling Stone* was founded along with Pink Floyd releasing their first studio album as well as the first Monterey Pop Festival. In '68, Johnny Cash recorded his live album at Folsom Prison, and that same year Martin Luther King Jr. was fatally shot in

Tennessee. By the end of the decade, Neil Armstrong walked the first steps on the moon and the Woodstock festival was held in New York (“1960’s Timeline of Events”).

The Beatles, formed in 1960 in Liverpool, were discovered in ‘61 and signed a contract with the label Parlophone. The following year, they released their debut single “Love Me Do” and peaked at number seventeen on the U.K. charts. In ‘63, they released their second single “Please Please Me” claiming the number one spot on charts for two weeks and their first album *Please Please Me* also sitting at number one for twenty nine weeks both on U.K. charts. Later that same year, they released their second album *With the Beatles* and rose to number one twenty one weeks on the U.K. charts. “I Want To Hold Your Hand” was released in the U.S. and stayed at number one for seven weeks. In ‘64, the British Invasion began and they released their next album *Meet the Beatles!*, which stayed at number one for eleven weeks. That same year, they made their U.S. television debut on the *Ed Sullivan Show* and created a record amount of viewers. They now began to create the film *A Hard Day’s Night* that was first released in the U.K. The soundtrack was released in the U.S. and reached number one. By the end of that same year, the album *Beatles For Sale* was released in the U.K. and sat at number one on British charts. The following year, the album *Help!* was released, debuting at number one on both American and U.K. charts, and in ‘66, *Revolver* debuted at number one as well. The following year, *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* was released and reached number one in the U.K. and America. Towards the end of ‘68, they released *The Beatles*, AKA *The White Album*, and sat at number one. In ‘69, they released the soundtrack to *Yellow Submarine* and peaked at the number two position in America. In September of that year, *Abbey Road* was released and topped the charts in both countries, also making it the group’s last studio album. Within the next year, the group disbanded and pursued solo careers (Wood).

Diana Ross, born in 1944 in Michigan, is known for her early career success with the girl group the Supremes. The group signed to Motown Records in 1961 and later released their song "Where Did The Love Go?" in '64 that rose to number one. That same year, they released "Baby Love" and "Come See About Me," which both topped the charts, and the next year in '65, the songs "Stop! In the Name of Love" and "Back in My Arms Again" both reached number one as well. This back-to-back success made them the "first U.S. group ever to have five songs in a row to reach No 1" (Biography.com Editors, "Diana Ross Biography"). Over the next five years, in order, they released the number one hits "I Hear a Symphony," "You Can't Hurry Love," "The Happening," "Love Child," and "Someday We'll Be Together." This made them become the American vocal group with "the most Billboard chart-toppers in history." Ross later left the Supremes in '69 to begin her solo career and eventually released "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" that rose to number one (Biography.com Editors, "Diana Ross Biography").

Jimi Hendrix, born in 1942 in Washington, was encouraged by his father to learn guitar. In 1966, he met the bass player for the Animals, Chas Chandler, and created a contract to have him become his manager. After Hendrix was convinced to go to London, he managed to form the Jimi Hendrix Experience and built a following in Europe. In '67, he released his first single "Hey Joe" that was a number one hit and shortly followed with "Purple Haze" and "The Wind Cries Mary" that were also hits. That same year, he released his first album, *Are You Experienced?*, and in June, he performed at the Monterey Pop Festival that highlighted his musical talents and ended with him burning his guitar on stage. Later that year, he released his second album *Axis: Bold as Love* which became another hit. Hendrix released his final album, *Electric Ladyland*, the next year, which had the hit "All Along the Watchtower," written by Bob Dylan. After performing "The Star-Spangled Banner" at the Woodstock Music Festival later that year, the

band split up. He began creating a new group, the Band of Gypsys, and started the album *First Rays of the New Rising Sun* but did not live to complete it and passed away in September 1970 (Biography.com Editors, “Jimi Hendrix Biography”).

The 1970s continued with previous struggles from the 1960s including fights for equal rights for women, gays and lesbians, and African-Americans. This decade was also known for the disco era. The years included artists such as Chic, The Bee Gees, KC and The Sunshine Band, Sister Sledge, The Village People, Earth, Wind & Fire, ABBA, Kool & The Gang, A Taste of Honey, The Pointer Sisters, Blondie, The Emotions, The S.O.S. Band, The Gap Band, Ohio Players, and The Brothers Johnson. There was an ongoing war with Vietnam as Americans continued to protest against it. Some people seemed to question their faith in President Richard Nixon with his actions as he swept into office. His “New Right” movement had conservatives resisting the new change. He also pressured Congress to pass a health insurance plan that would provide affordable healthcare to all Americans. As liberalism bloomed, the environmental movement became extremely well known as well. The first Earth Day in America was celebrated in April 1970, the same year that Congress passed the National Environmental Policy Act. Unfortunately, the Watergate Scandal occurred involving Nixon and the administration of the U.S. from 1972 to 1974 that led to his resignation. There was a fun, quirky and distinct fashion style that ruled the 70s. 70s fashion emphasized maxi dresses, platform wedge heels, bell bottom pants, corduroy, vests, tie-dye and even frayed jeans. Even the popular movie *Saturday Night Fever* helped emphasize the variety of iconic outfits within the decade (History.com Editors, “The 1970s”).

ABBA was a Swedish Europop group that was successful in European music charts through the 1970s. The acronym is taken from each of the four members' first names. Being

established in 1969, the group traveled and worked throughout Sweden to contribute to the Euroscene not quite popular in America. In '73 the group placed third of the qualifying round in the Eurovision Song Contest with the single "Ring, Ring." The following year the band returned to Eurovision and won first place with the song "Waterloo," which also provided the title of their album released that same year. In '75, the two singles "Mama Mia" and "S.O.S." were hits in Europe, Australia and North America. Finally with the release of the album *Arrival* in '76, ABBA reached the United States at the high peaks of the disco frenzy. It gave the group its first American number one single, "Dancing Queen" (Ray).

KC and The Sunshine Band was another popular disco group. From their debut in 1973 until the group disbanded in the early 80s, they managed to stack up multiple hits that are some of the most recognizable and biggest dance hits from the decade. Harry Wayne Casey (KC) was the band leader, keyboardist and lead vocalist. Casey met Richard Finch in '72 while both were employed at TK Records in Miami. The two joined in songwriting and released the first single from KC and The Sunshine Junkanoo Band in '73 called "Blow Your Whistle." It reached the top 30 chart, and after that, 'Junkanoo' was dropped from the band's name. Then in '75, they had their first U.S. number one hit, "Get Down Tonight," which instantly became popular. Casey remarked that he "knew the record was a smash" (Goldmine Staff). That same year they produced another single "That's the Way (I Like It)." Every following year until '79 the band had a hit that placed them at number one: '76's "(Shake Shake Shake) Shake Your Booty," '77's "I'm Your Boogiemán" and "Keep it Comin' Love," '78's "Boogie Shoes" that was featured in the disco movie *Saturday Night Fever*, and '79's "Do You Wanna Go Party" and "Please Don't Go." With the peak of the 1980s, the band faced major repercussions that eventually led to the split of the Sunshine Band in the early 80s (Prato).

The Bee Gees, made up of Barry, Robin and Maurice Gibb, are originally from the United Kingdom but moved to Australia as children. They naturally inherited their musical talents from their parents. The boys first called themselves The Rattlesnakes and made their public debut in 1957 at Manchester's Gaumont Theatre. In 1959 they changed their name to "The BG's" and began performing outdoor venues that guaranteed a wider viewing net with the help of also performing on TV shows like *Anything Goes* and *Cottie's Happy Hour*. The trio now had the official name of the Bee Gees in 1963 and released their first single "The Battle of the Blue and the Grey" (Biography.com Editors, "The Bee Gees: How Three Small-Town Brothers"). After moving to America, they produced *Mr. Natural* in 1974. This album heavily dipped into an Americanized R&B sound. It had emphasis on dance rhythms, harmonies and funky beats. In '77 the popular movie *Saturday Night Fever* was released and featured numerous songs such as "Night Fever" and "Staying Alive" that topped the charts. The movie soundtrack album was on top of the charts for 24 weeks (Eder).

Donna Summer, born in Massachusetts, was known as the "Queen of Disco." She had a passion for singing from the moment she learned to talk. Summer's mother said, "she literally lived to sing." Weeks before her high school graduation at the age of 18, she auditioned for a musical production of *Hair* that was to open and run in Germany. She was cast and learned to speak fluent German within a short few months. After the production ended, she continued to reside in Germany where she worked in a recording studio singing back up and recording demos. In 1975, Summer recorded a demo version of a disco song called "Love to Love You Baby" that was originally for another artist. Producers greatly admired her version, so she claimed the song instead. Later upon release, at first, radio stations refused to play the song due to her "soft vocals and sensual moaning," yet it became an overnight success by climbing to the number two spot on

the U.S. singles chart. A few years later her album reached number one on the Billboard album charts. The next year she reached her biggest success of her music career with the album *Bad Girls* that featured two number one singles: “Bad Girls” and “Hot Stuff” (Biography.com Editors, “Donna Summer Biography”).

The 1980s was full of color and revolution and top music genres like classic rock, pop and a bit of new wave. Popular rock artists were Van Halen, Queen, Bon Jovi, Guns N’ Roses, Def Leppard, Journey, Pat Benatar, Joan Jett, Aerosmith, Foreigner, Rush, Tom Petty, Kenny Loggins, Scorpions, Ozzy Osbourne, Skid Row, Mötley Crüe, Poison and AC/DC. Artists within the pop category were Soft Cell, Bryan Adams, Rick Astley, Madonna, Wham!, George Michael, Elton John, Prince, Hall & Oates, Paula Abdul, Eurythmics, Phil Collins, Huey Lewis, Bonnie Tyler, Whitney Houston, Janet Jackson, Michael Jackson and New Edition. New wave artists included Duran Duran, Depeche Mode, Electric Light Orchestra, Culture Club, Tears For Fears, Echo & the Bunnymen, Devo, The Cars and the Pet Shop Boys. Fashion through the years remains one of the most recognizable styles from a particular era to date. People wore vibrant neon colors, matching denim sets, hair scrunchies, massive hair perms with tons of hairspray, hard metal/punk leather looks with an all black attire and even the memorable spandex athletic wear with leg warmers. For instance, a lot of iconic outfits/costumes contained similar styles for music videos like Michael Jackson’s “Thriller” and “Billie Jean” and Pat Benatar’s “Love Is A Battlefield.” On December 8th, John Lennon was shot and killed in front of his New York City apartment by crazed fan David Chapman just a few weeks after he released his first studio album in five years. The new television network MTV also became popular. It featured many artists and bands with live performances and/or music videos. The first music video to be broadcast was “Video Killed The Radio Star” by The Buggles. The Hollywood actor Ronald Reagan became

the President in '81 and served until '89. By '82, the U.S. was in the worst recession since the Great Depression and millions of people were unemployed along with closed businesses. Within the eight years Reagan served, the government accrued more debt than it had in its entire previous history. In '84, Steve Jobs introduced the world to the first Macintosh computer, and that same year Madonna performed "Like A Virgin" at the first MTV Awards ("The 80s: The Decade That Made Us). The Space Shuttle Challenger turned into a fatal accident just 73 seconds after liftoff in '86 killing all seven crew members aboard. In '87 the stock market crashed and the public began to judge Reagan's budgets and rethink his leadership as George Bush Sr. was being voted into office by the end of the decade (History.com Editors, "The 1980s").

Madonna was a huge success throughout the 80s. The Michigan-born singer dropped out of college to pursue dancing. She moved to New York and had to work odd jobs to support herself. While working those jobs, she continued her dance training and formed the band Madonna & the Sky. Her talent began to get noticed and she received her first contract with Sire Records who is owned by Warner Music Group. In '82 she released her first solo album *Everybody* and the following year *Madonna*. The big breakthrough she was looking for was when "Like A Virgin" was released in '84. The album shaped her into an international superstar as it held number one on the Billboard charts for six weeks. She worked in the film *Desperately Seeking Susan* in '85 and also sang "Into the Groove" that was a hit and became number one in the Billboard charts. The same year, "Crazy For You" for the film *Vision Quest* was released and she was yet again a hit at number one. Shortly after, she went on her first tour called The Virgin Tour. In '85, her single "Material Girl" peaked at number two on Billboard charts. The following year she had two number one singles: "Papa Don't Preach" and "Live to Tell." A year later in '87, she had three songs within the top five that were "Open Your Heart" at number one,

“Causing A Commotion” at number two, and “La Isla Bonita” at number four. From then until around the early 90s, she worked on several studio albums such as *True Blue*, *Who’s That Girl*, *You Can Dance* and *Like A Prayer*. In ‘89 she signed a contract with Pepsi but her music video for the song “Like A Prayer” sparked controversy and her contract was terminated (“Who Is Madonna? Everything You Need to Know”).

Michael Jackson - also known as the “King of Pop” - is one of the most recognizable names in music. He was the eighth of ten children born in Indiana in 1958 from Katherine and Joseph Jackson. Starting in the late 60s, their father Joe started a band that consisted of five of his sons with Michael singing lead vocals. The group was named The Jackson 5. Between traveling, appearing on TV shows, holding concerts and releasing music, the group eventually withdrew from Motown records in 1975. Around that time is when Michael began building his solo career. Later he released his November of 1982 album *Thriller*. This incredibly successful album “broke all records to become the best selling album of all time worldwide” (“Who Was Michael Jackson? Everything You Need to Know.”). The album stayed at number one for 37 consecutive weeks and produced singles like “Billie Jean,” “Beat It,” “Human Nature,” “The Girl Is Mine,” “Wanna Be Startin’ Somethin,” “P.Y.T. (Pretty Young Thing)” and “Thriller” (“Michael Jackson Hits #1”). The following year he reunited with his brothers for a concert where he showed off his dance skills. In this concert, he sang “Billie Jean” during which he moonwalked for the first time, and it became part of his signature. The dance move “captured the attention of the entire world” (Greene). His next album in August of ‘87, a follow-up to *Thriller*, was titled *Bad*. This record was another success by Jackson but not in comparison to *Thriller*, yet it still contained multiple number one hits. “Bad” and “I Just Can’t Stop Loving You” were the first two songs to reach number one the same year as the album release. In January of ‘88, “The

“Way You Make Me Feel” rose to the number one slot on the charts and stayed for five weeks. “Man In The Mirror” was number one the same year with “Dirty Diana.” That same year, Jackson wrote an autobiography titled *Moonwalk* and became a *New York Times* best-seller (“Who Was Michael Jackson? Everything You Need to Know.”).

Bon Jovi originated in New Jersey in 1983 with members Jon Bon Jovi, Richie Sambora, David Bryan, Tico Torres and Alec Such. In ‘84 they released their first, self-titled record, *Bon Jovi* and managed to reach the top 50 in 43rd place. The song “Runaway” gained notice for its music video that was played on MTV. The following year they created *7800 Degrees Fahrenheit*, and the album peaked at 37 on the charts. It also contained three singles: “Only Lonely,” “In and Out of Love,” and “Silent Night,” which all had accompanying music videos. Their third studio album, *Slippery When Wet*, came out in ‘86 soaring to the number one slot, and it produced two songs that the band is well known for. “Livin’ on a Prayer” and “You Give Love a Bad Name” both reached number one on the charts. The following year *Slippery When Wet* was named 1987's top-selling album by *Billboard*, and "Livin' On A Prayer" won an MTV Video Music Award for Best Stage Performance. By July of ‘86, the band went on tour for their latest album that ended in August of ‘87. In between performing almost every night for a year, they were still creating new material for their next album. *New Jersey* was released in ‘88 and also produced two singles with music videos that reached number one. “Bad Medicine” and “I’ll Be There For You” are still played on the radio today as well with their other number one singles. In October of ‘88 they embarked on their *New Jersey* worldwide tour until February ‘90. By the time it ended, the band went on a hiatus before returning in the 90s (“Bon Jovi”).

The 1990s contained important genres: rap, grunge/alternative and pop. Rap artists were 2Pac, Notorious B.I.G., Snoop Dogg, N.W.A., Dr. Dre, Ice Cube, P Diddy, Beastie Boys,

Cypress Hill, Bone Thing-N-Harmony, Naughty by Nature, Digital Underground, Digable Planets, Vanilla Ice, Run-D.M.C., Will Smith, Kriss Kross, OutKast, Public Enemy, A Tribe Called Quest, Sir Mix-a-Lot and Salt-N-Pepa. Grunge and alternative artists included Soundgarden, Pearl Jam, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Nirvana, Alice In Chains, Stone Temple Pilots, The Smashing Pumpkins, Foo Fighters, Pixies, Jane's Addiction, Queens of the Stone Age, R.E.M. and The Cranberries. The pop genre there are the Spice Girls, Mariah Carey, Celine Dion, Britney Spears, No Doubt, TLC, NSYNC, Boyz II Men, Christina Aguilera, Jennifer Lopez, New Kids On The Block and the Backstreet Boys. The attention to girl bands and boy bands rose with the fashion that took a unique turn. For example, the Spice Girls wore colorful, tight and spunky looks with exotic makeup and hair, and NSYNC featured a casual attire of oversized pants and denim jackets, sunglasses and "frost tip" bleached hair. In November of '91, Freddie Mercury - frontman of Queen - died of AIDS. In '94 O.J. Simpson led police officials on a car chase through Los Angeles freeways. He was wanted for the murders of his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman. That same year was when the lead singer to the grunge band Nirvana, Kurt Cobain, committed suicide and died on April fifth. In the Tejano music world, Selena Quintanilla Perez died by a single gunshot wound in Corpus Christi, Texas, after creating her first English crossover album, *Dreaming of You*. In '96, Tupac Shakur died from multiple gunshot wounds and succumbed to his injuries at a hospital in Las Vegas. This was a big loss for the rap world and fans (Rosenberg). Unfortunately, the following year The Notorious B.I.G, AKA Biggie Smalls, was shot to death at a stoplight in Los Angeles. His death is often identified as the "culmination of an ongoing feud between rap music artists from the East and West coasts" (History.com Editors, "Rapper Notorious B.I.G. is killed in Los Angeles").

Tupac Shakur, AKA 2pac, was a Harlem, New York native born in 1971. Crime was highly driven in his neighborhood so his family moved to Marin City, California in the late 1980s. In '89 he met Leila Steinberg, an average citizen with no music industry background, and convinced her to become his manager. By 1990 she obtained a gig as a background dancer for the hip-hop group Digital Underground. Shakur began recording after meeting Digital Underground, and one month later he released his solo artist debut album *2Pacalypse Now* and peaked at 64 on the charts and sold 500,000 copies. In '93 he released his second studio album *Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z.* that rose to number four on the charts. Singles "I Get Around" and "Keep Ya Head Up" peaked at eleven and twelve on the charts. Later that year, Shakur shot and injured two off-duty police officers in Atlanta, but the case was dismissed after information surfaced that the officers were under the influence of alcohol at the time and one of them initiated the altercation with the rapper. Before releasing his third album, Shakur was shot multiple times in Manhattan. Shakur eventually released a diss track towards his East Coast rival Biggie Smalls in '96 called *Hit 'Em Up*. His third album *Me Against The World* was released as he was serving a prison sentence and rose to number one. The single off the album, "Dear Mama," sat comfortably at number nine on Billboard. After being released, he began working on his fourth album and released *All Eyez on Me* in '96. It instantly retrieved the number one position and "would be certified quintuple platinum by the fall" along with "California Love" a duet with Dr.Dre sitting at number one (Erlewine, "2pac: Biography & History). In September of the same year, Shakur and Knight were in Las Vegas, when their car was ambushed. Multiple shots were fired and struck Shakur several times. Six days later, he succumbed to his injuries and died on the 13th (Biography.com Editors, "Tupac Shakur Biography"). Following his death, he won an award for Best Rap Album for *Me Against The World*, and in '97 he won R&B/Soul or

Rap Album of the Year for *All Eyez on Me* at the Soul Train Awards. Also in '97 he won Favorite Rap/Hip-Hop Artist from the American Music Awards (“List of awards and nominations received by Tupac Shakur”).

Nirvana popularized grunge which brought them to the spotlight of American music. Lead singer, Kurt Cobain, started to develop an interest in metal and punk music by the time he was in his late teens. He started to play in various punk bands like Fecal Matter and eventually met Krist Novoselic in '85. The two started a band called the Stiff Woodies that had rotating vocalists and guitarists before Cobain decided to sing instead of playing drums. The original drummer, Aaron Burkhart, eventually left and was replaced by Chad Channing. The trio decided on the name Nirvana in '87, and the group was officially formed. They started to play parties in Olympia and immediately gained a following while also starting to record demos with producer Jack Endino who introduced the recordings to Sub Pop label founder Jonathan Poneman. Their album debut, *Bleach*, in '89 got their career started and sold 35,000 copies upon release, and the group became a favorite on college radio. In January 1990, Cobain met Courtney Love at a nightclub in Portland, Oregon and the pair began to date shortly after while Nirvana's fame rose. In '91 the band released their second album *Nevermind* and managed to reach number one on Billboard. “Smells Like Teen Spirit” instantly rose to number one alongside its music video that was popularly played on MTV. “Come As You Are” managed to reach number three, and “Lithium” sat at number 25 in early February of the following year. This year, Cobain and Love were expecting their first child together amongst circulating rumours that the pair was involved with heroin (Biography.com Editors, “The Destructive Romance”). Their daughter Frances Bean Cobain was born in August, and unfortunately Cobain still couldn't quit his addiction. In September '93 the band released their third album *In Utero* that sold 180,000 copies the first

week of release and rose to number one in November the same year along with their single off the album “Heart-Shaped Box.” This album sparked controversy due to the cover art of “an anatomical diagram of a woman” and “models of human fetuses on the back” (Raul). Later the same year, the band played a live session for MTV Unplugged in New York that was later released as a live album the following year. In ‘94, Cobain’s close friends held an intervention for the singer to convince him to acquire help for his substance abuse and depression. Upon successfully convincing him to go to Los Angeles for treatment, he broke out of the facility and returned to Seattle without his friends or family knowing. On April 8th, his body was discovered by an electrician at his house and the cause of death was a single gunshot to the head with the autopsy report saying that he actually passed away three days prior to his discovery (Erlewine, “Nirvana: Biography & History”). Following his death came a massive increase in record sales. *In Utero* moved to number 27 from 72 on billboard charts; *Nevermind* had a 200 percent sales increase; and *Bleach* rose to number six making it the first appearance on a top ten chart (Bukspan).

Britney Spears, born 1981 in Mississippi, admired performing at a young age. At the age of eight, she auditioned for *The All-New Mickey Mouse Club* on Disney Channel but was rejected. Instead, a few years later she showcased her singing ability on *Star Search* in 1992 and won the first round but lost the second. The following year she auditioned for *The All-New Mickey Mouse Club* again and was accepted and got to appear alongside rising talents Justin Timberlake, Keri Russell and Christina Aguilera. The show was cancelled, and Spears moved back to Louisiana where she was raised and began working on her music career. A few years later she signed with Jive Records and released her debut album ...*Baby One More Time* in ‘98. Her single “...Baby One More Time” reached number one by the end of January ‘99

(Biography.com Editors, “Britney Spears”). She was the youngest female to have a single and album at number one the same week in Billboard history and one month after its release it managed to sell over 500,000 copies. This is her most successful album to date selling over 25 million copies worldwide making it one of the most successful and best selling albums of all time” (“...Baby One More Time (album)”). This same year, she won multiple awards including The Record of the Year from the British TV show *The Record of the Year*, Teen Choice Awards’ Choice Single, M6 Awards’ Best Song and Billboard Music Awards’ Female Singles Artist of the Year (“... Baby One More Time (Song)”). Spears grew with success alongside her new boyfriend Justin Timberlake from the pop boy band NSYNC, who was also her former *Mickey Mouse Club* co-star heading into the 2000s. She also started the new millennium with her album *Oops!...I Did It Again* and made history for a female artist to debut at number one with selling over 1.3 million copies within the first week (Trust).

The 2000s was the start of new music, fashion, politics and historical events. This decade was filled with R&B by artists such as Alicia Keys, Beyonce, Mary J. Blige, Mariah Carey, Usher, R. Kelly, Ne-Yo, Timbaland, Nelly Furtado and Michael Jackson. Emo bands included My Chemical Romance, Linkin’ Park, Paramore, Panic! At The Disco, Paramore, Fall Out Boy and Breathe Carolina. The decade also saw success from rap artists like Kanye West, Andre 3000, 50 Cent, Lil’ Wayne, Eminem and Jay-Z. Pop music started to grow towards the end of the decade with performers like Lady Gaga, Katy Perry, Kelly Clarkson, Jesse McCartney, Pink, Kesha and Avril Lavigne. Fashion trends took a turn for the weirdest yet most memorable with examples like trucker hats, low-rise jeans, jeans with no back pockets (and if there were pockets they were most likely bedazzled). Hair clips, track suits, airbrushed shirts and those embarrassing wide-legged yoga pants also featured in fashion of the time. All-denim looks became popular as

well when Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake wore their iconic matching denim outfits on the red carpet in '01 (Hoffman). George W. Bush became the 43rd President of the United States and served from '01 to '09. At the start of his presidency, the nation experienced the tragic and unforgettable event of the 9/11 terrorist attack that left thousands of people dead and even more injured. In August of that year, the “princess of R&B” Aaliyah tragically died in an accidental plane crash trying to return home after filming a music video in the Bahamas for her song “Rock the Boat.” In '02 NSYNC disbanded along with Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake breaking up. Timberlake’s '03 hit “Cry Me A River” had fans believe it hinted at his ex. In '05, Hurricane Katrina hit the United States and left severe damage to Mississippi and Louisiana. This same year is when the platform YouTube launched and made it easier to release music along with almost any type of video. This site also led to the discovery of the pop singer Justin Bieber. In '09, the “King of Pop” Michael Jackson unexpectedly died. By the end of the decade, Barack Obama was elected president and also made history by being the first African-American president of the United States (“U.S. History Timeline: The New Millennium - 2000 Onward”).

Alicia Keys, born in New York, New York in 1981 began piano lessons when she was seven years old and enrolled in Manhattan’s Performing Arts School. She graduated at sixteen due to excellent academic performance. While in high school, she began to attract record companies and eventually signed with Arista Records in 1998 but a year later she left the label to join J Records. In 2001 she released her debut album *Songs in A Minor* and “went platinum five times over” (Biography.com Editors, “Alicia Keys Biography”). During the Grammy Awards in '02, she won the awards for Song of the Year, Best New Artist, Best R&B Song, Best R&B Album and Best Female R&B Vocal Performance. In '03 she released her second album *The Diary of Alicia Keys* and debuted at number one on charts. The album won multiple Grammys

for Best R&B song, Best R&B album, Best Female R&B vocal performance and Best R&B performance by a group or duo with vocals regarding her duet with her fellow R&B singer Usher for the song “My Boo.” Later in ‘07 she released her third album *As I Am* debuting at number one and selling over 700,000 copies within the first week. She started to collaborate more with other artists and in ‘08 “she recorded ‘Another Way to Die’ with Jack White” that became the theme song for the James Bond movie *Quantum of Silence*. The next year, she recorded a duet with Jay-Z for the song “Empire State of Mind” that became a number one hit. By the end of the decade in ‘09, she released her fourth album *The Element of Freedom* that reached number two with the single “Doesn’t Mean Anything” reaching number 60 on the charts. She later redeemed herself with her 2012 album *Girl on Fire* debuting at number one and winning her a Grammy for Best R&B Album in 2014 (Biography.com Editors, “Alicia Keys Biography”).

My Chemical Romance was a popular emo band that originated from the East Coast in New Jersey after “watching the World Trade Center collapse on September 11, 2001” (Leahey). In 2002 they released their debut album *I Brought You My Bullets, You Brought Me Your Love* that gained a small following upon release. Their second album *Three Cheers For Sweet Revenge* was released in ‘04 and included singles “I’m Not Okay (I Promise),” “Helena” and “The Ghost of You” that were all played on the radio, featured in the top 20 charts and accompanied with music videos. Upon its debut, the album sold over a million copies in the United States alone. A couple years later in ‘06, the band released their third, and first live, album, *Life on the Murder Scene* and fourth studio album *The Black Parade*. *The Black Parade* was more successful and sat at number one for two consecutive weeks and became certified platinum by early ‘07. The album was followed by a live recording album in ‘08 from a concert in Mexico City, Mexico. By the end of the decade in 2010, they released their album *Danger*

Days: The True Lives of the Fabulous Killjoys, but it did not peak in the top ten in charts. The group proceeded to release ten singles that were made up of two songs per release that went in order from *Number One* to *Number Five* in '12. Shortly after, the group disbanded in '13. Eventually in '17 they reunited and performed a secret pop-up show and later in '19 performed sold out shows in Los Angeles (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica).

Eminem, AKA Slim Shady, born in 1972 in Missouri, dropped out of the ninth grade and worked other jobs until finally succeeding as a rapper consequent to the release of his 1999 album *The Slim Shady LP* that peaked at number two on charts. Two years prior to his '99 album, he released *The Slim Shady EP* which was recognized by Dr. Dre, former member of N.W.A., who worked with Eminem on his *LP* album. The following year in May of 2000, he released *The Marshall Mathers LP* that sat comfortably at number one selling over 19 million copies worldwide to date, winning a Grammy award for Best Rap Album. The album "is widely considered among the greatest rap albums of all time." Two years later in '02 he released *The Eminem Show* that peaked at number one upon debut and contained the popular songs "Without Me" at number two, "Cleanin' Out My Closet" at number four and "Sing For The Moment" at number fourteen the following year. That same year, he recorded the song "Lose Yourself" for the film *8 Mile* that won him an Academy Award for Best Original Song. In '04 he released *Encore* that had less success than his previous records but still contributed the popular songs "Like Toy Soldiers" and "Mockingbird." Over the next several years he did not record a lot of music due to his personal problems of struggling with addiction to alcohol, sleeping pills and painkillers along with his second divorce. In '07 he overdosed and almost died, which inspired his '09 album *Relapse* that featured the sober artist. The album reached number one upon release and contained the singles "Crack a Bottle" at number one and "Beautiful" at seventeen on the

charts. In 2010 he released *Recovery* that rose to number one upon debut and featured the popular song “Love the Way You Lie.” The release also won him a Grammy award for Best Rap Album (Biography.com Editors, “Eminem”).

The 2010s was filled with rap and pop that dominated other genres in the charts and continue to do so. Popular rap artists include Drake, Kendrick Lamar, Kanye West, Future, Nicki Minaj, Jay-Z, Tyler, the Creator, Cardi B, Iggy Azalea, Eminem, Post Malone, Migos, Lil Nas X, J. Cole, Big Sean, Mac Miller, 21 Savage, Lil Wayne, A\$AP Rocky, Travis Scott and Gucci Mane. Pop artists are Lady Gaga, Bruno Mars, Ed Sheeran, Justin Bieber, Katy Perry, Maroon 5, Miley Cyrus, Ariana Grande, The Weeknd, Pink, Taylor Swift, One Direction, The Jonas Brothers, Adele, Demi Lovato, Kesha, Shawn Mendes, Selena Gomez and Billie Eilish. In ‘11, Spotify was released to the public and “streaming revenue eventually overtook physical sales in 2017” (Milano). Currently, streaming platforms contribute to 80 percent of music sales. “Soundcloud rap” became popular on its streaming app with the help of Post Malone, Lil Peep and XXXTentacion (Milano). In ‘13, the Black Lives Matter movement was created in the U.S. to protest against racial injustices and police brutality (Pruitt). Many artists such as Taylor Swift, Harry Styles and Ariana Grande speak in support of the movement through their social media platforms along with attending peaceful protests (“Here Are All The Musicians Standing In Solidarity For #BlackLivesMatter, And How You Can Help”). In ‘15, the pop boy band One Direction disbanded after five years together and the removal of a member. The next year was the Presidential election with Donald Trump being inaugurated over Hillary Clinton, and during his years of Presidency, artists continued to speak out against the President. Artists like Childish Gambino created songs with accompanying music videos that displayed hidden messages and easter eggs to show their beliefs regarding America. In ‘17, Ariana Grande's concert at

Manchester Area in the United Kingdom, faced a traumatizing and fatal experience with a bombing that left 23 people dead and 800 injured. Two weeks later, Ariana Grande held a benefit concert, One Love Manchester, to show support for affected victims and the community (“Manchester Arena Bombing”).

Rap artist Drake was born in Canada, October 1986 to an African American Catholic father and a white Canadian Jewish mother. In 2001, he made his acting debut on the Canadian show *Degrassi: The Next Generation*, which pushed him to celebrity status in Canada. Still appearing on the show, in ‘06 he released his mixtape *Room for Improvement* that sold a mere 6,000 copies. The next year he released another mixtape titled *Comeback Season* that had his first single “Replacement Girl,” which was featured on the television show *106 & Park*. *Degrassi* decided to remove his character from the show in ‘08, and he then received a call from rapper Lil Wayne to join his Carter III tour. He later released the album *So Far Gone* in ‘09 that featured the single “Best I Ever Had” that peaked at number two on the charts. Coming into 2010, he released his first official studio album *Thank Me Later* that debuted at number one in the U.S. and Canada making it certified platinum. The following year he released *Take Care* that contained the popular songs “The Motto,” “Make Me Proud,” and “Headlines” and later won a Grammy for the Best Rap Album in ‘13. *Nothing Was The Same* was released in ‘13 and debuted at number one and featured the single “Started From the Bottom” that peaked at number six on the charts. Three years later he released his fourth studio album *Views* “debuting at No. 1 and spending 13 non-consecutive weeks atop the Billboard charts” (Biography.com Editors, “Drake”). With the album came the single “Hotline Bling” that awarded him two Grammys for Best Rap Song and Best Rap/Sung Performance. In May 2017, the Canadian artist won thirteen Billboard Music awards including Top Artist, Top Male Artist, Top Hot 100 Artist, Top

Billboard 100 Album and Top 200 Artist. The next year, he released his fifth album *Scorpion*, and it “shattered streaming records over its first 24 hours” with Apple Music reaching 170 million streams and “another 132 million on Spotify.” By the end of the decade in ‘19, his single “God’s Plan” won a Grammy for Best Rap Song (Biography.com Editors, “Drake”).

The pop singer Lady Gaga, born and raised in New York, began to learn the piano at four years old, and by thirteen, she wrote her first piano ballad. In 2005 she signed with Def Jam records but was dropped shortly after. In ‘08 she released her debut album *The Fame* which rose to number one that featured the singles “Just Dance” and “Poker Face” that both peaked at number one upon release. A few years later in ‘11, *Born This Way* was released and debuted at number one along with the single “Born This Way” and “The Edge of Glory” at number three. Then in ‘13, she released her third album *Artpop*, but it was not a success compared to her previous albums. A critic claimed her “third full-length album bears little resemblance to fine art” and that “it’s barely even Pop Art” (Barker). The following year she released an album featuring multiple jazz duets with Tony Bennet titled *Cheek to Cheek* and later won a Grammy for Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album. That same year, she was cast for a role in the television series *American Horror Story: Hotel*. In ‘16, she released her fifth album, *Joanne*, and it rose to the number one position upon release with the single “Million Reasons” peaking at number four. Gaga was cast in a lead part for the remake movie *A Star Is Born* alongside Bradley Cooper in ‘16. She won an Academy Award for the performance and a Grammy and Golden Globe for the movie soundtrack song “Shallow.” Heading into 2020, she released her sixth studio album *Chromatica*, peaking at number upon release and also featuring artists like Ariana Grande, BLACKPINK and Elton John. Singles from the album “Rain on Me” rose to number one while “Stupid Love” sat comfortably at number five (Biography.com Editors, “Lady Gaga”).

With the end of the last decade and now concluding 2020, it's important to note what genres have diminished and which have stayed, primarily focusing on a timeframe within the past twenty years. Reviewing each decade with its provided examples of popular artists per genre, will help understand the developing shape of today's music genre and why we are experiencing recycled music. Through the given timeline, the farther decades constantly changed genres as the years did, so it seems as if the modern decades should follow the same change. Yet noticeably by 2000, rock n' roll, psychedelic rock, classic rock, grunge and disco have all disappeared from the top of the charts leaving focal points to rap and pop. If these two groups are still undeniably favored, then this translates to being stuck in a pop phase. This paper's definition of the phase stands for the use of repetition in style and imitation within the music. It is important to remember the key aspects that can be used to help identify those songs and is to be noticed that the majority of the last two decades have been persistent regarding the same top genres. In whole, there has not been drastic change in the music charts that is enough to create a new label for the most recent decades. There is now a restart in observing what will come within the next decade for music and what categories may be discovered.

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