Introduction to Rock Music

Introduction & Chapter 1: Understanding Popular Taste and the Tin Pan Alley Era
Group Activity

- You will be put into several groups.
- Share your favorite Rock song with the group and why you like it.
- Why do you like the song? What makes it so great?
- Do you notice any trends in the reasoning of your group although your songs are different? Be ready to share your thoughts.
Introduction & Background

Two great eras of mainstream popular music in the United States:

- **Tin Pan Alley Era (1900-the end of WWII)**
  - Sound recording, radio broadcasting, film and television
  - Blues, jazz, country, rhythm & blues
  - Light hearted
  - Appealed to the middle-class
  - Did not target a particular age group
  - Sheet music
  - Euro-American paradigm

- **Rock ‘n’ Roll: 1950’s to present**
  - Result of social and cultural shifts in US society
  - Heavy & urban
  - Working class orientation
  - Targeted youth
  - Records rather than sheet music
  - African-American influences
Popular Music & Mass Culture

- Tin Pan Alley music based on folk music/culture and classical/art music and high culture.
  - Folk Culture: poor/lower class, oral tradition
  - High culture: upper class/elite, written down
  - Popular culture: between folk and high culture
    - Tin Pan Alley sought to find an alternative to the high culture of the European elite that would appeal to both the working and upper classes
    - Culture of the people

- Mass Culture
  - Developed out of the technological advances of the early 20th century.
  - Culture for the masses

Where does Rock ‘n’ Roll fit in these???
Listening and comparing

► How is the music of the Tin Pan Alley era and early rock the same or different? What do you hear? Write down your ideas.
Birth of Rock

What makes Rock Different?

- Urban orientation, focus on youth, appeal to working-class, relationship to technology, African American influences and performance styles
- Connection to technology (film, radio, television, records, cd’s, videos, mp3’s, file sharing, electronic instruments—technology as part of the creative process)
- Teenagers are the new consumer group in post WWII US society
  - However, the baby boomers (the original rockers) continued to buy records creating fragmentation and disagreement in later development of rock and popular styles (rap, heavy metal, etc.)
Race and Music

“The way in which music actually unfolds as a social practice does not necessarily determine the way in which it reaches the ears of its audience.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race (Rhythm &amp; Blues)</th>
<th>Hill-billy (folk, country, western)</th>
<th>Popular Mainstream (northern, urban, middle-upper class, white)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American popular music</td>
<td>White-working class (Rural southern white)</td>
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←Crossover→ Result of post WWII Integration
Discrimination in music was not simply related to race, but also in language and gender.

- **Language**: Latin music had a great influence on early and current Rock music...but the language barrier created problems. Harder for non-English music to become hits in the US. (LaBamba)

- **Gender**: Women’s emergence into Rock ‘n’ roll was difficult based in part to their image in Rock music:
  - Angel, baby, earth mother, sex goddess, bitch and “ho”
    - Ideas of intimacy and sexual practices in the US
    - How many songs are truly about degradation, sex, incest, etc.?
  - Degradation, belittling, offensive, double standards
  - Female artists feel pressure to adhere to stereotypes
  - Singers more than instrumentalists
Rock from Its Roots

The Tin Pan Alley Tale
Tin Pan Alley Era

- Late 1800’s to late 1940’s
- Tin Pan Alley: Literally the area of Broadway and 28th Street in NY, NY.
  - Broadway, Vaudeville, Hollywood were focus areas
  - Identified more with the “literate” side of music
- Dominated mainstream popular music until WWII.
- Less impressed with Edison’s “talking machine” (1877), focused on sheet music (main source of income) versus sound recording.
  - Music publishers would “push” (not always ethically) the dissemination of songs (Vaudeville, etc).
- The piano was the main focus in musical output.
- Eventually would move to recording but in no way were the “music industry” and “recording industry” synonymous with each other much like they are today.
Advances in Sound Recording

Sound Recording

Edison
“Talking Machine”
Tin foil cylinder

Alexander Graham Bell
“Graphophone”
Wax coated cardboard
Hill & Dale Grooves

Phonograph
Jesse Lippincott & Louis Glass

Eventually, the flat recording disc (wax coated zinc discs designed by Emile Berliner) would become the industry standard. First demonstrated on the Gramophone in 1888 and patented in 1896. The Zinc discs would be used as masters to make “stamped” copies, or records. Eventually consolidated into what is now known as Victor/RCA The industry standard would soon move to 78rpm pressings until the late 1940’s.
The Music of Tin Pan Alley

- Centralized US Popular music while competing with the more European, high culture tastes.
  - “Did not draw on traditional music, but created traditional music.”
- More Homogenous US Sound
  - Irving Berlin: Born Israel Baline in Russia, 1888
    - Could only play piano in one key!
    - Alexander’s Ragtime Band (1911)
      - Father of Ragtime
    - Puttin’ on the Ritz (1929)
    - Most successful songwriter until Paul McCartney.
- Incorporates African American influences.
Incorporating African American Influences

- Compare and contrast two recordings of Irving Berlin’s music. What do you/do you not hear?

- Tin Pan Alley era was also the emergence of Ragtime. Borrowing between black and white artists was common.
  - Ragtime: syncopated (off beat), African-American piano music. (Scott Joplin—Maple Leaf Rag)
  - Alexander’s Ragtime Band—Bessie Smith
    - Use of Blues and Jazz influences
      - Jazz: syncopation and improvisation
      - Blues characterized by “blue” notes
Major Jazz & Blues Influences on Tin Pan Alley

- W.C. Handy: Father of the Blues
  - Memphis Blues

- George Gershwin: Greatest Tin Pan Alley composer with most association with Jazz:
  - Rhapsody in Blue
  - Summertime (from “Porgy & Bess”)
    - Bridge the gap between art music and popular music
Copyright Act of 1909: royalties to be paid included mechanical reproduction. “Mechanical’s” are still required today be it to sell, play, or create a recording.

Advent of Commercial Broadcasting and Network radio saw a decline in record sales and sheet music. (1920’s)

- Radio was first used to promote patriotism and was dominated by RCA as a holding company for the major radio patent holders (AT&T, GE, Westinghouse). RCA would also form NBC.
Radio Advertising & Hollywood

- Advertising:
  - Effected by prohibition
  - Good Taste
    - News, literature, drama, concert music
  - Product Advertising
    - During business hours only
    - Eventually led to more commercialized industry
      - More popular programming and advertising

- Hollywood first used the silent film with musical background. With the advent of Tin Pan Alley, it was clear that both would work together with the development of the “talkie.”
  - Jazz Singer (1927) by Warner Brothers (truly a silent film with songs, but given the title of the first “talkie.”)
For Next Week...

• Chapters 2 & 3

• No Class on the 8th

Have a great weekend!