

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN: “SMELLS LIKE TEEN SPIRIT”: HIP-HOP, “ALTERNATIVE” MUSIC, AND THE ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS

### Chapter Outline

#### I. Hip-Hop Breaks Out (1980s–1990s)

A. In the mid-1980s, rap moved into the popular mainstream.

B. 1986 saw the release of the first two multiplatinum rap albums:

1. *Raising Hell* by Run-D.M.C.

a) Number Three on *Billboard*'s pop albums chart

b) Over three million copies sold

2. *Licensed to Ill* by the Beastie Boys

a) Number One for seven weeks

b) Over seven million copies sold

3. Expansion of the audience for hip-hop music was the key to the commercial success of these albums.

a) Included millions of young white fans, attracted by the rebelliousness of the genre.

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C. Both *Raising Hell* and *Licensed to Ill* were released on a new independent label called Def Jam.

1. Co-founded in 1984 by the hip-hop promoter Russell Simmons and the musician-producer Rick Rubin
2. Cross-promoting a new generation of artists
3. Expanding and diversifying the national audience for hip-hop
4. In 1986, Def Jam became the first rap-oriented independent label to sign a distribution deal with one of the “Big Five” record companies, Columbia Records.

D. Run-D.M.C.

1. Trio:
  - a) MCs Run (Joseph Simmons, b. 1964) and D.M.C. (Darryl McDaniels, b. 1964)
  - b) DJ Jam Master Jay (Jason Mizell, b. 1965)
2. Adidas Corporation and Run-D.M.C. signed a \$1.5 million promotional deal.

E. The Beastie Boys

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1. In 1985, the Beastie Boys were signed by Def Jam Records.
2. Appeared in *Krush Groove*—one of the first films to deal with hip-hop culture
3. Toured as the opening act for both Madonna and Run-D.M.C.

F. *Yo! MTV Raps* launched in 1988.

1. Immediately attracted the largest audience in the network’s history
2. In 1988, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences added a rap category to the Grammy Awards, and *Billboard* added a rap singles chart.

G. Public Enemy

1. Founded in 1982
2. Core members met as college students
3. Drawn together by their interest in hip-hop culture and political activism
  - a) Two MCs—Chuck D (Carlton Ridenhour, b. 1960) and Flavor Flav (William Drayton, b. 1959)

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b) DJ Terminator X (Norman Lee Rogers, b. 1966)

c) “Minister of Information” (Professor Griff, a.k.a. Richard Griffin)

d) Security of the First World (S1W)

(1) Dancers who dressed in paramilitary uniforms,  
carried Uzi submachine guns, and performed martial  
arts–inspired choreography

H. M. C. Hammer (Stanley Kirk Burrell, b. 1962)

1. Rapper from Oakland, California

2. *Please Hammer Don’t Hurt ’Em* (1990)

a) Held the Number One position for twenty-one weeks and sold  
over ten million copies

b) Bestselling rap album of all time

I. Vanilla Ice (Robert Van Winkle, b. 1968 in Florida)

1. *To the Extreme* (1990)

a) His first album

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b) Number One position for sixteen weeks in early 1991

c) Sold seven million copies

2. Many fans turned their backs on him when it was discovered that Van Winkle, raised in comfortable circumstances in a middle-class neighborhood, had invented a gangster persona for himself.

**J. N.W.A. (Niggaz with Attitude)**

1. Recordings that expressed the gangsta lifestyle, saturated with images of sex and violence

2. Formed in 1986

a) O’Shea “Ice Cube” Jackson (b. 1969), the product of a middle-class home in South Central Los Angeles

b) Andre “Dr. Dre” Young (b. 1965), a sometime member of a local funk group called the World Class Wreckin’ Cru

c) “Eazy-E” Wright (1973–95)

(1) A former drug dealer who was using the proceeds of his occupation to fund a record label, Ruthless Records

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- d) Eventually adding D.J. Yella (Antoine Carraby) and M.C. Ren (Lorenzo Patterson) to the group
- 3. Indebted to earlier rap recordings, but in some ways unlike anything heard before
  - a) Tracks with titles like “F---the Police” and “Gangsta Gangsta”
  - b) Mixed the sound of automatic weapon fire and police sirens with samples from funk masters such as George Clinton and James Brown, a bouncy drum machine–generated dance groove called new jack swing, and high-pitched, thin-sounding synthesizer lines.

**K. Snoop Doggy Dogg**

- 1. Calvin Broadus, born in Long Beach in 1972
- 2. *Doggystyle* (1993)
  - a) Debuted at the top of the album charts
  - b) Included gold single “What’s My Name?”
- 3. “What’s My Name?”
  - a) Intended to cross over to the pop charts

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- b) Released on the album in its original, unexpurgated version and in a “clean” version on a single designed for radio airplay and mass distribution
- c) Opens with a dense, scratchy sample reminiscent of a Public Enemy/Bomb Squad recording—actually a brief sequence from an old Parliament track, looped to create a syncopated pattern
- d) Texture shifts to a smoother, more dance-oriented sound
- e) A relaxed, medium-tempo dance groove is established by drum machine and keyboard synthesizers.
- f) The lyrics describe Snoop’s gangsta persona and establish his street credibility.
- g) The song is essentially an updated version of “Stagger Lee,” a traditional African American ballad about a powerful black desperado of prison toast fame.
- h) Despite its controversial verbal content, “What’s My Name?” is a quintessential pop record, carefully calibrated for dance club consumption.

L. Hip-hop, sampling, and the law

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1. The increasing sophistication and affordability of digital sampling technology had, by the late 1980s, made it possible for rap producers to weave entire sound textures out of prerecorded materials.
2. This development triggered some interesting court cases as artists sought to protect their rights.
3. In 1989, the Miami-based rap group 2 Live Crew released a song called “Pretty Woman,” which borrowed from the rock ’n’ roll hit “Oh, Pretty Woman” (Number One pop in 1964), written by Roy Orbison and William Dees.
  - a) The publisher denied permission to 2 Live Crew to make a rap version of the song.
  - b) The publisher sued Luther R. Campbell (a.k.a. Luke Skyywalker) for his raunchy version of the song.
  - c) Campbell took the position that the song was a parody and within the guidelines of fair use.
  - d) The Supreme Court recognized the satirical nature of the song and held that 2 Live Crew’s copying of portions of the original lyric was not excessive.

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4. In 1991, the 1960s folk rock group the Turtles sued the hip-hop group De La Soul for using a snippet of the Turtles’ song “You Showed Me” on a track called “Transmitting Live from Mars.” The Turtles won a costly out-of-court settlement.

5. Biz Markie recorded a track that sampled the sentimental pop song “Alone Again (Naturally).”

a) A Number One pop hit for the Irish songwriter Gilbert O’Sullivan in 1972.

b) O’Sullivan forced Warner Brothers to remove Biz Markie’s album from the market until the offending track was itself removed from the album.

6. These decisions sent a chill through the rap music industry and encouraged producers to be less ambitious in their use of sampled materials.

M. Queen Latifah (b. 1970)

1. The most important woman in the history of hip-hop, in terms of both her commercial success and her effectiveness in establishing a feminist beachhead on the male-dominated field of rap music

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2. Born in inner-city Newark, New Jersey, Dana Elaine Owens received the nickname Latifah—an Arabic word signifying “gentle” or “pleasant”—from a cousin at the age of eight.
3. She began rapping in high school.
4. In college, she participated in Afrika Bambaataa’s Native Tongues collective, a group dedicated to raising the political consciousness of hip-hop.
5. Her debut album on Tommy Boy Records, *All Hail the Queen* (1989), reached Number Six on the R&B album chart and spawned the hit single “Ladies First” (Number Five rap, 1990), a direct challenge to the putative supremacy of male rappers.
6. Her second album (*Nature of a Sista*, 1991) failed to crack the R&B Top 20
  - a) She was dropped by Tommy Boy Records.
  - b) She took a hiatus after the death of her brother.
7. She signed with Motown Records and in 1993 released *Black Reign*.
  - a) Earned a gold record

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- b) Dedicated to her brother
- c) Featured her biggest hit single, “U.N.I.T.Y.”
- d) Reached Number Seven on the R&B charts, crossed over to the pop Top 40, and won a Grammy for Best Solo Rap Performance

8. Versatile performer

- a) Recording artist and in television and films

(1) Appeared in the movie musical *Chicago* (2002), which garnered her Best Supporting Actress nominations from both the Screen Actors Guild and the Golden Globe awards

(2) In 2004, she released an album of Tin Pan Alley and soul standards backed with big band and strings, *The Dana Owens Album*, which broke the Top 20 on the both the pop and R&B album charts and presaged a whole new set of commercial and artistic opportunities for the queen of hip-hop.

N. Hip-hop feuds and rivalries

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1. Between the East Coast’s Bad Boy Records and the West Coast’s Death Row Records
2. Tupac (2Pac) Shakur (1971–96)
  - a) Up-and-coming star with Los Angeles-based Death Row Records
  - b) Victim of the conflicts between East and West Coast factions within the hip-hop business
  - c) Shot and killed in Las Vegas
3. The Notorious B.I.G. (Christopher Wallace, a.k.a. Biggie Smalls, 1972–97)
  - a) Worked with producer and rapper Sean “Puffy” Combs (a.k.a. Puff Daddy, P. Diddy), CEO of the New York independent label Bad Boy Records
  - b) Shot to death in Los Angeles in 1997
4. Both 2Pac and the Notorious B.I.G. had recorded prophetic raps that ended with the narrator speaking from the grave rather than standing in bloody triumph over his victims.

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5. Highly profitable posthumous albums:

a) *Life after Death*

b) *Born Again*

c) *Still I Rise*

d) *Here After*

O. Gangsta rap

1. Chronicled the dilemmas faced by urban communities from a first-person, present-tense viewpoint

2. The recordings of artists like Ice-T, N.W.A., Snoop Doggy Dogg, 2Pac Shakur, and the Notorious B.I.G. combine a grim, survivalist outlook on life with a gleeful celebration of the gangster lifestyle.

3. Provoked an understandable ambivalence from observers genuinely sympathetic to the plight of people struggling for economic and cultural survival in America's cities

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### **II. Techno: Dance Music in the Digital Age**

A. Up-tempo, repetitive, electronic dance music developed in the club scenes of cities such as New York, Chicago, and Detroit.

1. Cross-fertilized with developments in London, Düsseldorf, and other European cities

2. These styles, generally traced to early-1980s genres such as garage and house music, and loosely lumped together under the general term “techno,” are in fact quite varied.

3. Dozens of subcategories, each patronized by a loyal cadre of fans

B. Techno culture is focused on DJ/producers.

1. DJs and producers often attempt to remain anonymous.

2. Most techno “groups” are in fact solo acts, or teams of two or three DJs: Orb, Orbital, Prodigy, and Moby.

C. The main venues for techno were dance clubs and semipublic events called raves, modeled partly on the be-ins of the 1960s counterculture.

1. A controversial aspect of raves was the prevalent use of a psychoactive drug called Ecstasy (MDMA).

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D. The roots of techno are often traced to the Detroit area, home of Motown, the Stooges, and George Clinton.

1. During the early 1980s, a group of young, middle-class African American men living in the predominantly white suburban town of Belleville developed a form of electronic dance music that Derrick May, a pioneer of the genre, described as being like George Clinton and Kraftwerk “stuck in an elevator” with just a sequencer.
2. Detroit techno was grounded in a different cultural scene from that which had spawned the Motown sound.
3. Young men like May and Juan Atkins were obsessed with symbols of class mobility, Italian fashions, and European disco recordings, and they developed a form of electronic dance music that featured futuristic imagery, samples from European records, and a dry, minimalist sound, underlain by a subliminal funk pulse.

E. At around the same time, a genre called house music (named after the Warehouse, a popular gay dance club) was developing in Chicago.

1. The Chicago house scene was pioneered by Frankie Knuckles, a DJ from New York who worked at the Warehouse from 1979 until 1983.

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2. Knuckles introduced New York turntable techniques to Chicago, manipulating disco records to emphasize the dance beat—the drums and bass—even more strongly.
3. Many house recordings were purely instrumental, with elements of European synth-pop, Latin soul, reggae, rap, and jazz grafted over an insistent dance beat.
4. By the mid-1980s, house music scenes had emerged in New York and London, and in the late 1980s, the genre made its first appearances on the pop charts, under the guise of artists like M/A/R/R/S and Madonna.
5. In the 1990s, techno music began to diversify into dozens of specialized subcategories.
  - a) Often distinguished by their relative “hardness,” a quality connected with the tempo or b.p.m. (beats per minute) of recordings.
  - b) Forms of techno were influenced by
    - (1) punk rock,
    - (2) experimental art music, and
    - (3) black popular music (funk and hip-hop).

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c) The sensual and emotional tone of the music varied widely.

(1) Stark, futuristic sound of Belgian gabba

(2) Energetic funkiness of jungle

(3) World music influences of tribal

(4) Otherworldly sonic atmospheres of ambient

6. Techno produced only a few commercial hits throughout its history.

a) The recordings of musicians like Prodigy, Orbital, and Moby did make inroads into the charts during the late 1990s.

b) Techno recordings have been licensed as the soundtracks for technologically oriented television commercials and films.

### **III. Alternate Currents**

A. By the end of the 1990s, almost every major genre had sprouted an alternative subcategory.

1. The range of alternative genres

a) Alternative dance (Pop Will Eat Itself, Everything but the Girl)

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- b) Adult alternative pop/rock (Alanis Morissette, Dave Matthews Band)
- c) Alternative country (k.d. lang, Dwight Yoakam, Lyle Lovett)
- d) Alternative country rock (Uncle Tupelo, the Jayhawks)
- e) Alternative contemporary Christian music (Sixpence None the Richer, Jars of Clay), alternative metal (Rage against the Machine, Korn, Limp Bizkit)
- f) Alternative rap (De La Soul, Arrested Development, Lauryn Hill)
- g) Alternative pop/rock (R.E.M., Sonic Youth, Living Colour, Soundgarden, Nirvana, Nine Inch Nails, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Phish)

**B. Difficult to establish a one-size-fits-all definition of “alternative music”**

1. The term is used to advance two different and often conflicting agendas.

- a) “Alternative”—like the broadly equivalent terms “underground” and “independent”—is used to describe music that, in one regard or another, challenges the status quo.

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(1) Alternative music is fiercely iconoclastic,  
anticommercial, and antimainstream.

b) An entirely different sense of the term underlies the music industry’s use of “alternative” to denote the choices available to consumers via record stores, radio, cable television, and the Internet.

(1) This sense of the term is bound up with the need of the music business to identify and exploit new trends, styles, and audiences.

### **IV. Alternative Rock, 1980s–1990s**

A. Strong underground rock scenes developed in towns across the United States.

B. The most influential indie rock bands of the 1980s were R.E.M. (formed in 1980 in Athens, Georgia) and New York’s Sonic Youth (formed in New York City in 1981).

1. R.E.M.’s reinterpretation of the punk aesthetic incorporated aspects of folk rock and a propensity for catchy melodic hooks.

2. Sonic Youth pushed underground rock music in a quite different direction.

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a) Influenced by avant-garde experimentalists such as the Velvet Underground

b) Developed a dark, menacing, feedback-drenched sound, altering the tuning of their guitars by inserting screwdrivers and drumsticks under the strings at random intervals, and ignoring the conventional song structures of rock and pop music

### **C. Hardcore**

1. Developed in clubs on the West Coast
2. An extreme variation of punk, pioneered during the early 1980s by bands in San Francisco (the Dead Kennedys) and Los Angeles (the Germs, Black Flag, X, and the Circle Jerks)
3. These groups—and others, such as the Texas-based Butthole Surfers—took the frenzied energy of the Ramones and the Sex Pistols and pushed it to the limit.
4. Playing simple riff-based songs at impossibly fast tempos and screaming nihilistic lyrics over a chaotic wall of guitar chords
5. Most hardcore recordings were released by independent labels like SST, Alternative Tentacles, and IRS, and the typical hardcore disc was

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produced to look and sound as though it had been made in someone’s basement.

6. “Holiday in Cambodia” by the Dead Kennedys

a) Released on the independent label Alternative Tentacles in 1981

b) The lyrics—written by the band’s lead singer, Jello Biafra (Eric Boucher, b. 1959 in Boulder, Colorado)—brim with merciless sarcasm.

c) The song is directed at the spoiled children of suburban yuppies, who Biafra suggests ought to be sent to forced labor camps in Cambodia—then in the grip of Pol Pot’s genocidal regime—to gain some perspective on the magnitude of their own problems.

d) The recording opens with a nightmarish display of guitar pyrotechnics, a series of Hendrix-inspired whoops, slides, scratches, and feedback, evocative of a war zone.

e) The band—guitar, electric bass, and drums—gradually builds to an extremely fast tempo (around 208 beats per minute).

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- f) Over this chaotic din, Jello Biafra’s quavering voice sneers  
out the caustic lyrics:

*So you been to school for a year or two  
And you know you’ve seen it all  
In daddy’s car, thinkin’ you’ll go far  
Back east your type don’t crawl  
Play ethnicky jazz to parade your snazz  
[coolness]  
On your five grand stereo  
Braggin’ that you know how the niggers  
feel cold  
And the slums got so much soul . . .  
Well you’ll work harder with a gun in your  
back  
For a bowl of rice a day  
Slave for soldiers till you starve  
Then your head is skewered on a stake . . .  
Pol Pot, Pol Pot, Pol Pot, Pol Pot . . .  
And it’s a holiday in Cambodia  
Where you’ll do what you’re told  
A holiday in Cambodia  
Where the slums got so much soul . . .*

7. The Dead Kennedys’ variant of hardcore was lent focus by the band’s  
political stance. They opposed

- a) American imperialism overseas,
- b) the destruction of human rights and the environment, and
- c) what they saw as a hypocritical and soulless suburban  
lifestyle.

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8. Jello Biafra composed songs with titles like “California über Alles,” “Kill the Poor” (a Jonathan Swift–like suggestion for the practical application of neutron bombs), and “Chemical Warfare.”
9. As the hardcore scene began to attract right-wing racial supremacists—a problem that the genre shared with 1970s punk rock—Biafra penned a song entitled “Nazi Punks F——Off” (1981), in an attempt to distance the progressive hardcore skinheads from their fascist counterparts.
10. By the mid-1980s, the hardcore movement had largely played itself out, though aspects of the music’s style and attitude were carried on by bands playing thrash.

**D. Thrash**

1. Blended the fast tempos and rebellious attitude of hardcore with the technical virtuosity of heavy metal guitar playing
2. Was a harder, faster version of the commercially successful speed metal style played by bands such as Metallica, Megadeath, and Anthrax
3. The 1991 album *Metallica* was the ultimate confirmation of heavy metal’s mass popularity and newfound importance to the music industry:

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- a) Number One on album charts, sold over five million copies
  - b) Stayed on the charts for 266 weeks
4. Unlike speed metal, thrash didn't produce any superstars, but it did exert an influence on alternative rock bands of the 1990s.
5. Thrash never developed a mass audience; dedicated fans kept the style alive as an underground club-based phenomenon through the 1990s.

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### E. Nirvana

1. In 1992, the commercial breakthrough for alternative rock was achieved by Nirvana, a band from the Pacific Northwest.
2. Between 1992 and 1994, Nirvana released two multiplatinum albums that moved alternative rock's blend of hardcore punk and heavy metal into the commercial mainstream.
3. A trio centered on singer and guitarist Kurt Cobain (b. 1967 in Hoquiam, Washington; d. 1994) and bassist Krist Novoselic (b. 1965 in Compton, California)
4. Cobain and Novoselic met in 1985 in the town of Aberdeen, an economically depressed logging town some one hundred miles from Seattle.
5. They formed Nirvana in 1987.
6. The following year, they were signed by the independent label Sub Pop Records, formed in 1987 by the entrepreneurs Bruce Pavitt and Jonathan Poneman.
7. Nirvana's debut album, *Bleach* (1989)
  - a) Sold thirty-five thousand copies

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8. In 1991, the group signed with major label DGC.
9. The album *Nevermind* was released in September 1991, quickly selling out its initial shipment of fifty thousand copies and creating a shortage in record stores across America.
  - a) By the beginning of 1992, *Nevermind* had reached Number One.
  - b) Remained on the charts for almost five years
  - c) Eventually sold more than ten million copies
10. One source of *Nevermind*'s success was the platinum single “Smells Like Teen Spirit,” a Top 10 hit.
  - a) Combination of heavy metal instrumental textures and pop songwriting techniques
  - b) The band's sound is sleek and well focused
  - c) The song combines a four-chord heavy metal harmonic progression with a somewhat conventional formal structure, made up of four-, eight-, and twelve-bar sections.

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11. As *Nevermind* rose up the charts, Nirvana had begun to attract a mass audience that included millions of fans of hard rock and commercial heavy metal music, genres to which their own music was explicitly opposed.

a) This realization impelled the group to ever more outrageous behavior, including baiting their audiences, wearing women’s clothing, and kissing one another onstage.

12. In 1992, Cobain married Courtney Love, the leader of an all-female alternative rock (a.k.a. “foxcore”) group called Hole.

a) Rumors concerning the couple’s use of heroin began to circulate, and an article in *Vanity Fair* charged that Love had used the narcotic while pregnant with the couple’s child, leading to a public struggle with the Los Angeles child services bureau over custody of the baby.

13. In the midst of this adverse publicity, Nirvana released the album *In Utero*, a return to the raw sound of Nirvana’s early Sub Pop recordings; the album shot to Number One in 1993 and sold four million copies.

14. In 1994, after the band had interrupted a concert tour of Europe, Kurt Cobain overdosed on champagne and tranquilizers, remaining in a coma for twenty hours.

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- a) Although the event was initially described as an accident, a suicide note was later discovered.

15. He returned to Seattle and entered a detoxification program, only to check out two days later.

16. On April 8, 1994, Cobain’s body was discovered in his home; he had died of a self-inflicted shotgun wound.

**F. Phish**

1. Created a loyal following by extending the approach of the quintessential 1960s concert band, the Grateful Dead, and embracing their eclectic tastes and influences
2. A typical Phish concert would weave together strands of rock, folk, jazz, country, bluegrass, and pop.
3. A band devoted to improvisation, Phish required a live performance environment to be fully appreciated.
4. There are some obvious differences between Phish and the Dead—Phish being a smaller and in some regards more technically adept band, with a range of stylistic references arguably even broader than that of the Grateful Dead.

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5. Bands like Phish, Blues Traveler, and Dave Matthews Band, inspired by the counterculture of the 1960s and by the improvisational work of jazz musicians such as Miles Davis and Sun Ra, provide an optimistic, energetic, and open-minded alternative to the nihilism and relentless self-absorption of many alternative rock bands.

6. Phish was often dismissed by rock critics—in part because their music did not make sense in terms of the rock-as-rebellion scenario that dominated such criticism.

7. Their popularity as a touring act never translated into massive record sales.

8. By the mid-1990s, Phish was able to pack stadiums—selling out Madison Square Garden in merely four hours.

9. None of their albums has sold as many as a million copies.

10. The twelve-and-a-half-minute track “Stash,” from the concert album *Phish: A Live One* (1995), exemplifies the band’s loose-jointed, freewheeling approach to collective improvisation.

a) The song—in the sense of a verse-chorus structure with a more or less fixed melody and lyrics—takes up only a small proportion of the track.

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b) Most of the track is an extended collective exploration of the improvisational possibilities of a minor-key chord progression, carried along on a rhythmic groove indebted to Latin American music.

c) Certain relatively fixed elements create a sense of structure—for example, the tango-like melody played by guitarist Trey Anastasio at the beginning of the track and periodically throughout.

11. Phish’s approach to improvisation resembles the collective polyphony of early New Orleans jazz more than the hierarchical structure of rock bands, in which the soloist becomes the more or less exclusive center of attention and the rest of the band plays a subservient role.

### V. Women’s Voices: Alternative Folk, Hip-Hop, and Country

#### A. Ani DiFranco (b. 1970 in Buffalo, New York)

1. Folk singer dressed in punk rock clothing
2. Spent her career resisting the lure of the corporate music business, releasing an album and playing upward of two hundred live dates every year

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3. Built a successful independent record label (Righteous Babe Records) and a substantial grassroots following

4. At nine, began performing covers of Beatles songs at a local coffeehouse

5. By nineteen, DiFranco had written over one hundred original songs and relocated from her native Buffalo to New York City to pursue a musical career.

6. In 1989, she recorded a demo album and pressed five hundred copies of an eponymous cassette to sell at shows.

a) The tape—a spare collection of intensely personal songs about failed relationships and gender inequality, accompanied with acoustic guitar—quickly sold out, and in 1990, DiFranco founded the independent label Righteous Babe Records to distribute her recordings more effectively.

7. By the mid-1990s, the mainstream media had begun to take notice of DiFranco’s homespun, low-tech music.

a) Her 1995 album *Not a Pretty Girl* garnered notice from CNN and the *New York Times*, though it did not appear in the *Billboard* charts.

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b) But 1996 brought *Dilate*, an eclectic work recounting a love affair with a man, which debuted in the Top 100 of the *Billboard* charts.

c) The live album *Living in Clip*, released in 1997, became her first gold album.

d) In 1998, DiFranco released the studio effort *Little Plastic Castle*, her highest-charting album to that date, which debuted at Number Twenty-two on the Top 200 chart.

e) All of these albums were released on the Righteous Babe label, despite many offers from major record companies.

8. “Not a Pretty Girl,” from the album *Not a Pretty Girl* (1995)

a) Written and performed by Ani DiFranco

b) Typical Ani DiFranco recording

(1) Self-revealing lyrics, important to the effect of the song

(2) Austere, minimalist studio sound, focused on DiFranco’s voice and acoustic guitar

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c) The lyrics operate on at least two levels:

(1) As a response to an individual, a man who has wronged the singer in some way

(2) As a more general indictment of society’s treatment of women.

d) The track opens in a reflective mood, with the solo acoustic guitar playing a four-chord progression.

e) DiFranco’s performance of the lyrics creates an effect entirely different from that of seeing the words laid out on the page.

f) DiFranco lays her lyrics over the structure of the song like ropes, tightening them here, loosening them there, and creating a sense of emotional intensity and musical momentum.

g) She begins the first verse of the song in a whisper, her dislike for the man to whom the song is addressed emerging clearly only on the word “punk,” which she spits out derisively.

h) The accents in the text are distributed around the strong waltz rhythm:

*I am not a*  
(1) **pretty** girl,

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(2) *that is not what I do, I ain't no*  
**dam-**  
(3) *sel in distress, and I don't need*  
(4) *to be rescued, so, so put me*  
**dowwwwn,**  
(5) **punk.** *Wouldn't you pre-*  
(6) **fer** *a maiden* **fair?** *Isn't there a*  
(7) **kitten** *stuck up a* **tree** *somewhere?*  
(8)

i) At this point, DiFranco's acoustic guitar is joined by electric guitar, bass, and drums, changing the texture of the recording to a blend of folk music and alternative rock.

j) In the second verse, DiFranco packs more syllables into each four-bar musical phrase, the words rushing out and then being held back, emphasizing the central point of the lyrics.

k) In the second half of the verse, the accents of her words coincide with the stressed beats of the music more frequently, creating a sense of urgency:

*I am not an*  
(1) **angry** *girl, but it seems like*  
(2) *I've got* **everyone** *fooled. Every time I*  
*say*  
(3) **something** *they find hard to* **hear,**  
*they chalk it* **up**  
(4) *to my* **anger,** *and* **never** *to their own*  
*fear. I-*  
(5) **ma** *gine you're a girl, just trying to*  
(6) **fin** *ally come* **clean,** *knowing full*  
(7) **well** *they'd prefer you were* **dirty**  
(8) *and* **smi-i-iling.** *And I am*  
(9) **sorry,** *but I am*

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(10) **not** a **maiden** fair, and I am not a  
(11) **kitten** stuck up a tree somewhere  
(12)

l) In the third verse, the texture moves even further toward the rock side, and DiFranco further escalates the emotional tension.

m) At the very end of the verse, a slight shift in the lyrics makes us more aware of the singer’s mixture of defiance and vulnerability:

And **generally** my  
(1) **generation** wouldn’t be caught **dead**  
(2) **working** for the **man**, And generally I  
a-  
(3) **gree** with them, **Trouble** is, you’ve got  
to **have**  
(4) yourself an **alternate** plan, And I have  
**ear . . .**  
(5) **ned** my **disillusionment**, I have been  
(6) **working** all of my **life** And I am a **pa-**  
(7) **triot**, **I** have been  
(8) **fighting** the good **fight**. And **what** if  
there are no  
(9) **damsels** in distress? **What** if I knew  
(10) **that**, and I called your **bluff**? Don’t  
you think every  
(11) **kitten** figures out how to get **down**  
(12) **Whether** or not you ever **show up**?

n) The final stanza of “Not a Pretty Girl” reinforces the more general message of the text, a critique of the physical norms by which society, and men in particular, so often judge women:

I am **not** a **pretty** girl  
I don’t really **want** to be **pretty** girl  
I want to be **more** than a **pretty** girl.

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o) The recording ends gently, with DiFranco’s overdubbed voice singing two melodic patterns in a responsorial manner.

p) The impact of “Not a Pretty Girl” is closely tied up with its carefully controlled fluctuations in musical texture, verbal density, and emotional color.

9. DiFranco artfully blends the progressive outlook of urban folk music with the rebellious energy of alternative rock.

**B. Lauryn Hill (b. 1975 in South Orange, New Jersey)**

1. Hip-hop artist whose work is a self-conscious alternative to the violence and sexism in the work of rap stars such as Dr. Dre, the Notorious B.I.G., and 2Pac Shakur
2. Her commitment to female empowerment builds on the ground-breaking example of Queen Latifah.
3. Hill raps and sings in her own distinctive voice.
4. She started her recording career with the Fugees, a New Jersey-based hip-hop trio that scored a Number One hit in 1996 with their second album, *The Score*.

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5. Hill’s debut solo album, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (1998), extended the Fugees’ successful blend of rap, reggae, and R&B.
6. The album shot to Number One on the charts, selling seven million copies in a little over a year, and spawning the Number One hit “Doo Wop (That Thing).”
7. “Doo Wop (That Thing)” written and performed by Lauryn Hill; recorded in 1998

- a) Combines aspects of 1950s R&B—including a soulful lead vocal, four-part vocal harmony, and a horn section—with Hill’s penetrating observations on male and female behavior
- b) The cut opens with Hill and a few of her friends reminiscing about the good old days.
- c) The digital drum machine’s groove enters, and Hill launches into the first half of her rap, directed to female listeners:

*It’s been three weeks since you were looking  
for your friend  
The one you let hit it [have sex with you]  
and never called you again  
Remember when he told you he was ’bout  
the benjamins? [interested only in  
money]  
You act like you ain’t hear him, then gave  
him a little trim [had sex with him] . . .  
Talkin’ out your neck [being hypocritical],*

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*sayin' you're a Christian  
A Muslim, sleeping with the Gin  
Now that was the sin that did Jezebel  
in . . .*

d) Hill admonishes the women in her audience to be more selective about their sexual relationships and to avoid being hypocritical about their personal conduct.

e) She then turns to the men in her audience, opening up a rapid-fire volley of wordplay that strips the so-called gangstas of their tough-guy trappings, exposing them as mother-dependent, sneaky, woman-beating, sexually immature hypocrites:

*The second verse is dedicated to the  
men . . .  
Let's stop pretendin' they wanna-packpistol-  
by-they-waist men  
Cristal [champagne]-by-the-case men,  
still [living] in they Mother's basemen'  
The pretty-face-men-claimin'-that-they-did-  
a-bid [prison time] men  
Need-to-take-care-of-their-3-and-4-kids  
men  
But they face a court case when the child  
support's late  
Money-takin', heart-breakin', now you  
wonder why women hate men*

*The sneaky-silent men, the punk-domestic-  
violence men  
The quick-to-shoot-the-semen . . . Stop  
acting like boys and be men!  
How you gon' win when you ain't right  
within?!*

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- f) “Doo Wop (That Thing)” is essentially a moral parable, delivered in terms that leaven Hill’s righteous anger with lighthearted and up-to-date hip-hop jargon.
- g) She lowers her audience’s potential defensiveness by admitting that she has found herself in similar situations, and she pleads with them to pay attention to the development of an inner life to avoid the twin traps of materialism and easy pleasure.
- h) “Doo Wop (That Thing)” is an important contribution to hip-hop and is distinguished by
  - (1) the mixture of sweet soul singing and assertive rapping,
  - (2) R&B horns and a digital groove, and
  - (3) moral seriousness and playful humor.

C. k.d. lang (b. 1961 in Alberta, Canada)

1. Occupied a marginal position in the conservative world of country music
2. Raised in an isolated rural town on the high plains of Canada

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3. Listened to classical and rock music as a young girl, discovering country music somewhat later, when she played a Patsy Cline–type character in a college play
4. Began her career in 1982 as a Cline imitator; called her band the Reclines
5. During the early 1980s, she released two albums on the Edmonton-based independent label Bumstead Records.
6. In 1987, when Sire Records released her *Angel with a Lariat*, she came to the attention of a broader audience.
7. Her subsequent albums, 1988’s *Shadowland* and 1989’s *Absolute Torch and Twang*, moved toward a more traditional honky-tonk sound and produced her first appearances on the country Top 40 chart.
  - a) Grammy, Best Female Country Vocal Performance
8. Her image did not fit with the Nashville establishment.
9. A scandal over lang’s appearance in a commercial for the “Meat Stinks” campaign of the People for Ethical Treatment of Animals led stations in the cattle-producing areas of the Midwest to boycott her records and generated an impressive volume of hate mail.

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10. In 1992, lang officially announced her homosexuality, a move that rather than hurting her career, led to her being christened an “icon of lesbian chic” (*New York* magazine).

11. During the 1990s, lang moved in the direction of adult contemporary pop music, becoming an “alternative” star in that category as well.

12. *Ingénue*, a 1992 album that owed little to country music, sold over a million copies in the United States and over two million in Canada.

a) A single from *Ingénue*, “Constant Craving,” reached the pop Top 40 and won a Grammy for Best Female Pop Vocal Performance.

13. Although she was not able to repeat this commercial success, she has continued to maintain a dedicated following.

14. “Nowhere to Stand,” from the 1989 album *Absolute Torch and Twang*

a) Written by k.d. lang; performed by k.d. lang and the Reclines

b) Recorded in 1989

c) Traditional song in musical terms

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(1) Series of four-line verses and a repeated chorus

(2) In triple meter

d) The content of the lyrics is an indictment of the “traditional” practice of child abuse.

e) The song begins quietly with lang’s country-tinged alto voice, accompanied by acoustic guitar.

f) The message of the song is not explicit in the first two verses, the second of which is accompanied by a solo fiddle:

*As things start to surface, tears come on down  
Scars of a childhood in a small town  
The hurt she pushed inward, starting to show  
Now she’ll do some talkin’, but he’ll never know  
Tables have turned now, with a child of her own  
But she’s blind to the difference, what’s taught is what’s known  
Numbed by reaction, and stripped of the trust  
A young heart is broken, not aware that it’s just*

g) The intensity of lang’s performance builds through the second verse

h) Only in the chorus do we become aware that this is not the typical lovelorn country song; something hidden, and deadly serious, is being revealed to us:

*A family tradition, the strength of this land  
Where what’s right and wrong is the back of a hand*

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*Turns girls into women, and a boy to a man  
The rights of the children have nowhere to stand.*

i) The characterization of child abuse as a “family tradition, the strength of this land” drives lang’s message home without resorting to explicit descriptions of violence.

j) The verse that follows sketches the psychological legacy of domestic violence as a deeply buried memory.

k) lang creates a tender but powerful critique of American (and Canadian) culture.

D. Ani DiFranco, Lauryn Hill, and k.d. lang have all achieved the status of alternative artists in their respective genres, and it is worth taking a moment to consider why.

1. DiFranco’s “Not a Pretty Girl” is an alternative folk recording.

a) The introduction of instrumental textures and vocal style from punk rock

b) Released on a small independent label, managed by the artist herself

2. Hill’s “Doo Wop (That Thing)” is classified as an alternative hip-hop recording.

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a) The song’s lyrics challenge aspects of the materialistic and sexist ideology promoted on many of the most commercially successful rap recordings.

3. lang’s “Nowhere to Stand”

a) Hews quite closely to the norms of country and western music in its form, its vocal and instrumental style, and its emotional tone

b) Its status as an alternative country song has more to do with the singer’s public persona (the only Jewish Canadian vegetarian lesbian in country music) and with the subject matter of the song, the secret of child abuse in “traditional” families.

4. There are strong parallels among the careers of DiFranco, Hill, and lang.

a) All three are innovative singer-songwriters whose “alternative” perspectives are deeply informed by historical knowledge of the particular genres in which they have chosen to work.

(1) DiFranco refers to herself as “just a folk singer” and performs at tribute concerts for urban folk pioneers like Pete Seeger.

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(2) Hill demonstrates her “old school” credentials by evoking and citing the sound of postwar rhythm and blues.

(3) lang uses the 1960s country style of Patsy Cline to convey her social messages.

b) All three artists are committed to creating popular music that engages with contemporary social issues, particularly the rights of women and children.

c) DiFranco, Hill, and lang have all been able to achieve a degree of commercial success without compromising their passionate and distinctive voices.

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E. Latina Superstars of the 1990s: Gloria Estefan and Selena

1. Gloria Estefan (born Gloria María Fajardo García, 1957)

- a) Born in Havana, Cuba, fled with her family to the United States when Fidel Castro rose to power in the late 1950s
- b) Became a member of Miami Sound Machine in 1975
- c) Released bestselling albums *Primitive Love* (1985, included Number-One dance hit “Conga”) and *Let It Loose* (1988) with Miami Sound Machine
- d) Took top billing in 1988, and 1989 album *Cuts Both Ways* yielded Number-One pop hit “Don’t Wanna Lose You”
- e) Suffered serious back injury in a tour bus accident in 1990, then resurfaced in 1991 with the chart-topping single “Coming Out of the Dark,” a song inspired by her experience
- f) Stayed in the public eye throughout the 1990s and has continued producing hits with international audiences in the 2000s
- g) Has sold over 90 million albums worldwide over the course of her career

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2. Selena (born Selena Quintanilla-Pérez, 1971–1995)

- a) Texas-born singer known as the “Queen of Tejano [Texas-Mexican] Music”
- b) By the mid-1990s released a series of popular albums
- c) In 1994 appeared in *Don Juan DeMarco* with Johnny Depp and won a Grammy for her multi-million-selling album *Amor Prohibido* [Forbidden Love] (Number One Latin, Number Twenty-Nine pop)
- d) Murdered in 1995 by Yolanda Saldívar, president of her Texas fan club, who had been embezzling money from the club
- e) Her death was an event of iconic importance for millions of fans, and her posthumously released album *Thinking of You* was the first ever by a Latin artist to debut at Number One on the pop album charts in the United States.

VI. More Country Alternatives: *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* and the Resurgence of Bluegrass

- A. The unexpected popularity of the Coen Brothers’ film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000)—and especially of its bestselling soundtrack album—illustrates the

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power of movies to carry musical styles and artists previously viewed as marginal into the mainstream.

1. The movie deals with the odyssey of three escaped convicts in 1937 as they wander through Mississippi, and the music appropriately emphasizes rural southern acoustic styles of this period.
2. The soundtrack encompasses several generations of country artists and recordings, extending back to Harry “Mac” McClintock’s 1928 version of “Big Rock Candy Mountain” (titled “The Big Rock Candy Mountains” on the original record) and forward to recreations by twenty-first-century musicians of such “hillbilly” classics as “Keep on the Sunny Side” and “You Are My Sunshine.”
3. From a musical standpoint, the most significant aspect of the *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* “phenomenon” was the way in which it pushed bluegrass music, and artists associated with it, into the limelight.

### B. Bluegrass, a style modeled on that of the early acoustic string bands

1. Probably the original “alternative country” music
2. It continued to flourish steadily as an “alternative” to western swing, honky-tonk, rockabilly, countrypolitan, and any number of other, more “modern,” country idioms.

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3. The roots of bluegrass can be traced back to the period in which *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* is set; it was in 1938 that Bill Monroe formed the Blue Grass Boys.

4. Throughout its long history, bluegrass has had an enthusiastic following, but the following was not large enough to move the music out of the margins in the big picture of American popular music.

**C. The Stanley Brothers**

1. One of the featured artists on the movie soundtrack is bluegrass veteran Ralph Stanley (b. 1927 in Virginia).

2. He and his brother Carter (1925–66) performed as the Stanley Brothers beginning in 1946 and produced a body of outstanding bluegrass recordings.

3. After his brother’s death, Ralph Stanley continued his own career as the leader of the Clinch Mountain Boys.

4. Stanley can hold his own simply as a solo vocalist; his unaccompanied performance of the eerie traditional lament “O Death” on the *O Brother* soundtrack is remarkably powerful.

**D. Alison Krauss (b. 1971 in Illinois)**

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1. At the other end of the spectrum from the Stanley Brothers in almost every respect
2. She is heard singing traditional material on the soundtrack, but before she reached the age of thirty, her career had already ranged much further from strict traditionalism than Ralph Stanley ever desired to go.
3. Fiddling champion and bluegrass fan by the time she was twelve
4. Quickly went on to establish her credentials as a bandleader, vocalist, and producer, and as a valuable collaborator on numerous recordings by other artists
5. Her fine albums with her band, Union Station, demonstrate both her close connections to traditional bluegrass and her interest in creating a distinctive and original development of those connections.
6. Union Station
  - a) Employs the instruments of a typical bluegrass ensemble (fiddle, guitar, mandolin, dobro, banjo, and acoustic bass)
  - b) Occasionally adds drums and even an upright electric bass
  - c) Wide repertoire:

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(1) Traditional country material

(2) Woody Guthrie’s “Pastures of Plenty”

(3) The 1968 pop hit “Baby, Now That I’ve Found You”

(4) Newly composed material by group member Ron Block and by other rising artists in the “alternative country” field

**VII. Globalization and the Rise of World Music**

A. During the 1980s, the boundary between mainstream and marginal music became fuzzier.

B. The twin pressures to expand the global market for American popular music and create new alternative genres and audiences within the American market grew ever stronger.

C. A new category called world music emerged.

1. The term was first systematically adopted in the late 1980s by independent record label owners and concert promoters.

2. It replaced categories such as “traditional music,” “international music,” and “ethnic music” in the popular music marketplace.

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3. International records were generally purchased by:
  - a) immigrants hungry for a taste of home,
  - b) cross-cultural music scholars such as ethnomusicologists, and
  - c) a handful of aficionados.
4. While transnational entertainment corporations successfully marketed American pop music around the globe, most of the world’s music continued to have little or no direct influence on the American marketplace.
5. There have been examples of international influence on the American pop mainstream before the 1980s:
  - a) Cuban rumba
  - b) Hawai’ian guitar
  - c) Mexican marimba records of the 1920s and 1930s
  - d) Indian classical musician Ravi Shankar’s album *Live at the Monterey Pop Festival* (Number Forty-three in 1967)
  - e) “Grazing in the Grass” (1968), a Number One hit by the South African jazz musician Hugh Masekela

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f) “Soul Makossa” (1973), the Top 40 dance club single by the Cameroonian pop musician Manu Dibango

6. These cosmopolitan influences were typically filtered through the sensibilities of Western musicians and channeled by the strategies of American and European record companies and publishing firms.

a) A quintessential example of this is the Tokens’ rock ’n’ roll hit “The Lion Sleeps Tonight” (Number One in 1961), an adaptation of a hit single by the urban folk group the Weavers, titled “Wimoweh” (a Number Fourteen pop single in 1952).

(1) “Wimoweh” had in turn been an adaptation of a 1939 South African recording by a vocal group made up of Zulu mine workers, Solomon Linda and the Evening Birds.

(2) By the time the Evening Birds’ song reached the ears of Americans, it had undergone several bouts of invasive surgery, including the insertion of a pop-friendly melodic hook and English lyrics, and removal of all royalty rights pertaining to the original performers.

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(3) This sort of rip-off reflected the global imbalances of power that had initially been created by Western colonialism.

b) Later world fusion or world beat projects helped redress this imbalance to some degree:

(1) Paul Simon’s pioneering albums *Graceland* and *The Rhythm of the Saints*

(2) The annual WOMAD (World Music and Dance) festival, initiated in 1982 by Peter Gabriel

(3) Various recordings by David Byrne and Ry Cooder

c) Nonetheless, the unequal economic relationship between “the West” and “the rest” continues to haunt such cross-cultural collaborations up to the present day.

7. The 1980s also saw musicians from Africa, South Asia, the Near East, Eastern Europe, and Latin America touring the United States with increasing frequency and appearing, if rarely, on the *Billboard* pop charts.

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8. The first indication that musicians from the so-called Third World might gain increased access to the American market was the release in 1982 of the album *Juju Music*, by a Nigerian group called the African Beats, led by the guitarist King Sunny Adé.

a) Featured an infectious brand of urban African dance music that blended electric guitars, Christian church hymns, and Afro-Caribbean rhythms with the pulsating sound of the Yoruba “talking drum”

b) *Juju Music* sold over 100,000 copies and rose to Number 111 on *Billboard*’s album chart.

c) The African Beats’ next album, *Synchro System*, reached Number 91 on the chart; however, the group was soon thereafter dropped by Island Records and never again appeared on the American pop charts.

d) Adé did succeed in establishing a market for so-called Afro-pop music, opening the door for African popular musicians:

(1) Youssou N’dour (Senegal)

(2) Salif Keita (Mali)

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(3) Thomas Mapfumo (Zimbabwe)

(4) Ali Farka Touré

9. “Adult alternative albums”

a) By 1990, when the heading “world music” first appeared above a *Billboard* record chart, it was as a subcategory of the broader heading “adult alternative albums.”

b) This latter category also included New Age music.

(1) Genre of instrumental music designed to facilitate contemplative and mystical moods

(2) Sometimes loosely linked with the religious and healing practices of Native American, African, and Asian cultures

c) The category “adult alternative albums” suggests an effort to identify forms of alternative music that would appeal to an affluent baby boomer audience.

10. The world music sections of most record stores usually do not include Latin dance music (salsa) or reggae, genres that sell enough records to justify their own discrete territories.

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11. What, then, is world music? In a strictly musical sense, it is a pseudo-genre, taking into its sweep diverse styles:

- a) African urban pop (juju)
- b) Pakistani dance club music (bhangara)
- c) Australian Aboriginal rock music (the band Yothu Yindi)
- d) The Bulgarian State Radio and Television Female Vocal Choir, whose evocatively titled 1987 release *Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares* (*The Mystery of the Bulgarian Voices*) reached Number 165 on the *Billboard* album chart in 1988.

12. Bestsellers on *Billboard*'s world music chart:

- a) The Celtic group Clannad (whose popularity was boosted in the United States by their appearance in the soundtrack for a Volkswagen advertisement)
- b) Spanish flamenco music (played by the Gypsy Kings, a hotel band from France)
- c) Tibetan Buddhist chant (presented by Mickey Hart, one of the drummers for the Grateful Dead)

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d) Diverse collaborations between American and English rock stars and musicians from Africa, Latin America, and South Asia

13. The overlap among various types of “adult alternative” music—including New Age, world music, techno, and certain forms of European sacred music—is reflected in the commercial success of albums like *Vision* (1994), a mélange of “12th-century chant, world beat rhythms, and electronic soundscapes.”

14. The attraction of world music for its contemporary American audience is bound up with stereotyped images of the “exotic.”

15. There are limits to the degree of musical exoticism most listeners are willing to tolerate.

a) This may explain the almost total absence on the *Billboard* charts of music from East Asia, which many American listeners find particularly challenging.

D. The assertion that music is a universal language and can transcend the boundaries separating diverse nations, cultures, or languages does not stand up to close scrutiny.

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1. Music, with its ability to flow over the boundaries of society and the borders of nations, holds open the possibility that we may glimpse something familiar and sympathetic in people strange to us.
2. There is no denying that music has the potential to traverse the boundaries of culture and language and thereby add to our understanding of people very different from us.
3. But the ultimate responsibility for interpreting its meanings, and determining its impact, lies with the listener.

### VIII. Two World Music Collaborations: Ali Farka Touré and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan

A. By the 1990s, collaborations between American and foreign musicians had become more common.

1. Folk and alternative music fans’ search for a broader range of musical experiences
2. The globalization of the music industry
3. Two particularly interesting examples of this sort of transnational collaboration:
  - a) The album *Talking Timbuktu*, which won the Grammy Award for Best World Music Recording in 1994

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- b) A sampler album inspired by the film *Dead Man Walking*, which reached Number Sixty-one on the album charts in 1996

**B. *Talking Timbuktu***

1. Produced by the singer and guitarist Ry Cooder (b. 1947 in Los Angeles)
  - a) Cooder’s Career as a session musician and bandleader encompassed a wide array of styles, including blues, reggae, Tex-Mex music, urban folk song, Hawai’ian guitar music, Dixieland jazz, and gospel music.
2. The sound and sensibility of *Talking Timbuktu* are derived from the music of Ali Farka Touré (b. 1950), a guitarist and traditional praise singer (griot) from the West African nation of Mali.
3. An American listener will notice that “Diaraby,” has similarities to blues styles in America.
  - a) The blues styles of Mississippi, Texas, and other southern states were strongly influenced by the traditions of African slaves.
  - b) Many slaves came precisely from the Sahel region of West Africa, the homeland of Ali Farka Touré’s people, the Bambara.

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c) Many features represent an evolution of centuries-old links between the West African griot tradition and the blues created by black musicians in America’s Deep South:

(1) The high pitched, almost wailing sound of Touré’s singing

(2) The percussive, ostinato-driven guitar patterns

(3) The use of song as a medium for social and personal commentary

4. In point of fact, it turns out that Touré’s style was directly influenced by American blues musicians such as John Lee Hooker, whose records he discovered after his career was established in Africa.

5. *Talking Timbuktu* features contributions by the blues guitarist and fiddler Clarence “Gatemouth” Brown and various prominent session musicians.

a) The result, as exemplified by “Diaraby,” sung in the Bambara language, hews close to its African roots, with the American musicians playing in support of Touré.

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- b) The lyric is itself reminiscent of the bittersweet emotion of some American blues:

*What is wrong my love? It is you I love  
Your mother has told you not to marry me, because I have nothing.  
But I love you.  
Your friends have told you not to marry me, because I have  
nothing. But I love you.  
Your father has told you not to marry me, because I have nothing.  
But I love you.  
What is wrong my love? It is you I love.  
Do not be angry, do not cry, do not be sad because of love.*

6. The sound and sensibility of “Diaraby” provide additional evidence of the deep links between African and American music.

C. The track “The Face of Love”

1. Features

- a) The lead singer for the Seattle-based alternative rock band Pearl Jam, Eddie Vedder (b. 1966 in Chicago)
- b) The great Pakistani musician Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (1948–97)
- c) Produced by Ry Cooder

2. Khan was a leading performer of *qawwali*, a genre of mystical singing practiced by Sufi Muslims in Pakistan and India.

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a) Sufism was founded in Iran between the ninth and twelfth centuries C.E.

b) A response to orthodox Islam, Sufism emphasizes the inner kinship between God and human beings and seeks to bridge the distance between them through the force of love.

3. *Qawwali* singing is traditionally accompanied by a double-headed drum called the dholak (or a tabla, used in Indian classical music) and a portable keyboard instrument called the harmonium, which creates a continuous drone under the singing.

4. In traditional settings, the lead singer (qawwal) alternates stanzas of traditional poetic texts (sung in unison with a choir) with elaborate melodic improvisations, in an attempt to spiritually arouse his listeners and move them into emotional proximity with the Divine.

5. During the 1990s, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan became the first qawwali artist to command a large international following.

a) Performed at the annual WOMAD festivals, curated by the rock star Peter Gabriel

b) Made a series of recordings released on Gabriel's Real World label

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6. Khan began to experiment with nontraditional instruments and to work with musicians outside the qawwali tradition, leading some critics to charge that the music had moved away from its spiritual roots.

7. The 1996 film *Dead Man Walking*—the story of a nun’s attempt to redeem the soul of a convicted murderer on the verge of execution—was the first to foreground Khan’s contributions.

a) Many reviews of *Dead Man Walking* emphasized the contribution of Khan’s voice to the haunting, mystical, and spiritual atmosphere of the film.

b) The song “The Face of Love” is based on a simple melody, sung first by Khan with lyrics in the Urdu language, and then with English lyrics by Pearl Jam’s lead singer Eddie Vedder:

*Jeena kaisa Pyar bina* [What is life without love]—  
*Is Duniya Mein Aaye ho to* [Now that you have come to this world]  
(2x)  
*Ek Duj se pyar karo* [Love each other, one another]  
*Look in the eyes of the face of love*  
*Look in her eyes, oh, there is peace*  
*No, nothing dies within pure light*  
*Only one hour of this pure love*  
*To last a life of thirty years*  
*Only one hour, so come and go*

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c) The sound of the music and the mysticism of the Sufi poetic text resonate with the atmosphere of the film—the contemplative mood of a man sentenced to die by lethal injection.

d) Eddie Vedder manages to blend the timbre of his voice and his acoustic guitar playing with the mood and texture of the qawwali ensemble.

8. This is not an example of music’s functioning as a universal language; most members of the film’s American audience neither understood the words that Khan sang nor possessed any knowledge of the centuries-long history of Sufi mystical traditions.

9. This is a case where the well-meaning effort of artists to reach across cultural and musical boundaries does produce something like an aesthetic communion, a common purpose embodied in musical texture and poetry.

10. Khan’s appearance on the soundtrack for *Dead Man Walking* led to his being signed by the indie label American Recordings.

a) Managed by Rick Rubin, formerly the mastermind behind the rappers Run-D.M.C. and the Beastie Boys

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b) The label’s roster included not only Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan but also the “death metal” band Slayer, the rap artist Sir Mix- A-Lot, and the country music icon Johnny Cash.