

Studying Popular Music: A Comprehensive Guide



Studying Popular Music by Richard Middleton

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

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Popular music is a vast and ever-changing field. It encompasses a wide range of genres, from rock and pop to hip-hop and electronic dance music. As a result, studying popular music can be a daunting task. However, it is also a rewarding one. By studying popular music, you can gain a deeper understanding of the music that you love, as well as the culture that surrounds it.

Approaches to Studying Popular Music

There are many different approaches to studying popular music. Some scholars focus on the music itself, while others focus on the social and cultural context in which it is produced and consumed. Some scholars use qualitative methods, such as interviews and ethnography, while others use quantitative methods, such as surveys and statistical analysis.

The best approach to studying popular music will vary depending on your interests and goals. However, it is important to be aware of the different

approaches that are available so that you can choose the one that is right for you.

Historical Approaches

Historical approaches to studying popular music focus on the development of popular music over time. Scholars who use this approach examine the factors that have influenced the evolution of popular music, such as technological changes, social movements, and economic conditions.

Historical approaches to studying popular music can be divided into two main categories: internalist and externalist. Internalist approaches focus on the music itself, while externalist approaches focus on the social and cultural context in which it is produced and consumed.

Some of the most influential historical studies of popular music include:

- *Popular Music: The People's Art* by John Shepherd
- *The History of Rock 'n' Roll* by Paul Friedlander
- *The Cambridge History of American Music*, edited by David Nicholls

Analytical Approaches

Analytical approaches to studying popular music focus on the music itself. Scholars who use this approach examine the musical elements of popular music, such as melody, harmony, rhythm, and texture.

Analytical approaches to studying popular music can be divided into two main categories: formalist and contextualist. Formalist approaches focus on

the music itself, while contextualist approaches focus on the social and cultural context in which it is produced and consumed.

Some of the most influential analytical studies of popular music include:

- *Understanding Popular Music* by Allan F. Moore
- *The Analysis of Popular Music* by Richard Middleton
- *The Cambridge Companion to Popular Music*, edited by John Covach

Sociological Approaches

Sociological approaches to studying popular music focus on the social and cultural context in which it is produced and consumed. Scholars who use this approach examine the ways in which popular music reflects and shapes society.

Sociological approaches to studying popular music can be divided into two main categories: macro-sociological and micro-sociological. Macro-sociological approaches focus on the big picture, while micro-sociological approaches focus on the individual.

Some of the most influential sociological studies of popular music include:

- *Popular Music and Society* by Simon Frith
- *The Social Meaning of Popular Music* by John Fiske
- *The Cambridge Companion to Popular Music Culture*, edited by Thomas Swiss

Methods for Studying Popular Music

There are a variety of methods that can be used to study popular music. Some of the most common methods include:

- Interviews
- Ethnography
- Content analysis
- Statistical analysis

The best method for studying popular music will vary depending on your interests and goals. However, it is important to be aware of the different methods that are available so that you can choose the one that is right for you.

The Benefits of Studying Popular Music

There are many benefits to studying popular music. Some of the benefits



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