Your notes

GCSE Music: revision notes

Popular music

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The strands (AQA)

- Music of Broadway from the 1950s to the 1990s (musicals).
- Rock music of the 1960s and 1970s.
- Film and computer gaming music from the 1990s to the present.
- Pop music from the 1990s to the present.

Features of popular music

- Structure: intro, verse, chorus, bridge (middle 8) and outro; **hooks** and **riffs** make songs memorable.
- Instruments: vocals, electric guitars, bass guitar, drum kit, keyboards and synthesisers; music technology such as sampling, looping, reverb and auto-tune.
- Rock: distorted guitars, **power chords**, guitar solos and a strong **backbeat** on beats 2 and 4.
- Musicals: songs move the story on; solos, duets and ensemble numbers; a pit orchestra accompanies.

Film and game music

- A **leitmotif** is a short musical idea linked to a character, place or idea.
- Music creates mood: low brass and ostinatos for danger, soaring strings for romance, and dissonance for tension.
- **Diegetic music** is heard by the characters (such as a band in a scene); **non-diegetic music** is only heard by the audience.
- Game music often loops and changes as the player moves or the action changes.

Key terms

Hook	A catchy musical idea that makes a song memorable.
Riff	A short, repeated pattern, often on guitar.

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Backbeat	Accents on beats 2 and 4, typical of rock and pop.
Leitmotif	A musical idea linked to a character, place or idea.
Diegetic music	Music that the characters can hear.
Non-diegetic music	Music only the audience hears.
Power chord	A chord of a root and fifth, common in rock.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What is a leitmotif?
2. What is a hook?
3. What is a backbeat?
4. What is diegetic music?
5. Which musical device suggests danger in film music?
6. What is a power chord?
7. Why does game music often loop?
8. What is a middle 8?

Answers

1. A musical idea linked to a character, place or idea
2. A catchy idea that makes a song memorable
3. Accents on beats 2 and 4
4. Music the characters in a film can hear
5. Low brass and repeating ostinatos
6. A chord of a root and fifth, common in rock
7. Because players spend different amounts of time in each part
8. A contrasting section, often before the last chorus

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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