



BEHIND THE MUSIC

Behind the Music: Music in America 1972

VH1 Music Studio
Cable in the Classroom

Lessons for High School Music Classes

AM to FM

Lesson 4

[Note to Teachers: This series of lessons covers music that rose to popularity during conflict in the United States over participation in the Vietnam War. Some of the topics may address social change, the sexual revolution, and drug culture. If your curriculum is subject to restrictions on the topic, you should review the videotape before using it in the classroom.]

The decline of the peace movement is addressed in the four lessons accompanying Behind the Music: Music in America 1972. The peace movement arose in the 1960s in response to the Vietnam War, but as U.S. combat troops were being withdrawn, the peace movement lost energy. This program explores the overall cultural transition of the time and its reflection in popular musicians and music turning inward for themes.

Objective

Students will learn about different music styles played on AM radio versus FM radio
Students will consider technological developments affecting how recorded music reaches an audience
Students will gain an understanding of advancements in the recording industry
Students will compare a 1972 music hit from AM radio with a 1972 hit album on FM radio

National Standards 6 --Listening to, analyzing, and describing music; 9— Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Materials

VHS VCR Player

Television

VH1 Cable in the Classroom program Behind the Music: Music in America 1972

Web-based lesson materials

Procedures

1. Before students enter classroom, have this definition written on the chalkboard:

bubble gum: 1: a chewing gum that can be blown into large bubbles 2: rock music characterized by simple repetitive phrasings and intended esp. for young teenagers

2. Tell students they are going to watch a segment from the program Behind the Music: Music in America 1972 about music being played on AM radio stations and music that was finding play on the FM dial. Have them pay attention to music described as “bubble gum.” Watch program from [22:00 through 24:53].

3. Stop program.

4. Ask students how they would define bubble gum music? (Accept reasonable answers, including soft rock, simple and light songs, happy tunes as well as some naming some of the artists or groups in the segment. Students might also recall Todd Rundgren’s words saying it has a “cloying quality,” and “no desire for truth or insight.”)

5. Lead students in a discussion of the program’s point that in the 1960s and early 1970s, AM radio ruled the radio airwaves and FM was in its infancy. You may include the following information:

1924-- AM-band (550--1550 kilocycles); 1400 stations are broadcasting; 3 million radio sets in U.S. homes

1934--Edwin Armstrong develops the theory of FM; FCC created by Congress

1940--FM gains public interest as a noise-free high fidelity broadcast

1941--FCC authorized FM broadcasting; color tv demonstrated

1944-- 30 million U.S. homes have 57 million radio sets

1950s-- the transistor was developed

1961-- FM Stereo broadcasting authorized by the FCC

1967-- Dolby sound introduced

1971-- computer on a chip developed by Intel

1977-- 205 million FM receivers in the U.S.; 95% of the nation’s homes have FM radio

1979-- 8,651 radio stations in the U.S. 4,549 are AM and 4,702 are FM.

6. Ask students why artists would be trying to appeal to AM radio?(Making the AM Top 40 play list was crucial to commercial success for bands.)

7. Lead students in a discussion of why artists would want their music played on an outlet other than the dominant AM radio. Include the following point made in the program, by musician Todd Rundgren: “Every musician that I knew started to think: ‘Why should I burden myself with trying to appeal to AM radio any longer? We’re going to make records that people will pay attention to and make quality time for.’” (Accept reasonable answers, including that commercial music formats played to an audience not prepared to listen to an entire side of an album, an audience wanting more familiar music, nor would advertisers find it attractive. Also, you may include that the narration pointed out “Serious artists were finding an outlet for their music way up the radio dial. FM was emerging as a hi-fidelity haven for album-length airplay.”)

8. Include the following from the video:

Vanity Fair contributing editor Lisa Robinson says “Albums were a very big deal and bands cared very much about making albums. Bands cared that it had a beginning, a middle, and an end...”

Village Voice senior editor Robert Christgau says “The artists have more to say than they can say in a single. They conceptualize their records. They make them cultural and social statements.”

9. Have students break up into groups of three or four. Have each group select one of the following topics to research and present their findings to the class in a short oral presentation.

1) Conduct home research on AM versus FM radio stations and single hits versus albums. Ask your parents or grandparents the following:

Do you remember when everyone listened only to AM radio?

What music was played?

When did FM radio begin to be popular?

What music was played on FM?

Was there any difference between the overall style or level of sophistication of the music played AM and FM stations?

2) Consider how recorded music reach people today. Just as the growth of FM radio created new avenues for more styles of music, what are comparable development since then? Include 45s and albums, 8 track tapes, cassette tapes, CDs , mp3s, computers and the Internet in the answer.

Extensions

Have students find a recorded version of “Puppy Love,” Donny Osmond’s AM hit from 1972, and the Rolling Stone’s album “Exile on Main Street,” that was receiving heavy play on the FM stations. Have them compare the musical elements of Osmond’s hit and the Stone’s landmark album. (They may use the musical matrix in Lesson 1 of this series.) Then lead students in a discussion of their findings.

This lesson was developed by Dee Spencer, professor of music at San Francisco State University and Willie Hill, president-elect of MENC: The National Association for Music Education and director of the University Fine Arts Center at University of Massachusetts-Amherst in collaboration with



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