



The History of Rock and Roll: Part 8 – The 70's Have a Nice Day

**VH1 Music Studio
Cable in the Classroom**

**Lessons for Middle and High School Music Classes
(Lessons can be adapted based on the level of students)**

The Emergence of Technology in Music

Lesson 1

Note to Teachers: Parts of the content of these programs may be found, in many communities, to be inappropriate for classroom use because of references, consistent with the era portraying, sexual, political, and violent lyrics and acts. Many sections, however, provide educational content to enhance the music and interdisciplinary curriculum. Please review this program before presenting it to your students and choose sections that enhance your curriculum and are acceptable for use in your classroom.

Objective

Students will discuss technological advancements through the decades
Students will discuss the technological advancements in music that emerged during the 1970's and how they were used
Students will discuss how technology in music influenced the artists and their music

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

Materials

VHS VCR Player
Television
VH1 Cable in the Classroom program The History of Rock and Roll: Part 8, beginning

with Stevie Wonder and “Superstition”, through end of segment

Web-based lesson materials

Teacher selected recording of Baroque harpsichord music (Bach, Buxtehude, Handel Mozart, etc.) and piano work (Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, etc.)



Procedures

1. Play recording of harpsichord selection as students enter the classroom
2. After students have settled into their seats, explain that there has been much technological advancement in music over the decades (notation, instrument construction, acoustics, etc.). Play the harpsichord selection again, asking students to note the characteristics of the harpsichord and the music itself. Is the harpsichord's sound bright or dark, light or heavy, crisp or muddled? Is the music played cheery, somber? What range of musical expression and variance does the harpsichord show (dynamics, octave range, tone color, phrasing and line, etc.)?
3. Play recording of selected piano work, and ask students to consider the same questions above. Explain that the invention of the piano changed the way keyboard music could be written and performed. Use the following as needed:

The piano has occupied a central place in professional and domestic music-making since the third quarter of the 18th century. In addition to the great capacities inherent in the keyboard itself – the ability to sound simultaneously at least as many notes as one has fingers and therefore to be able to produce an approximation of any work in the entire literature of Western music – the piano's capability of playing notes at widely varying degrees of loudness in response to changes in the force with which the keys are struck, permitting crescendos and decrescendos and a natural dynamic shaping of a musical phrase, gave the instrument an enormous advantage over its predecessors, the clavichord and the harpsichord. (Although the clavichord was also capable of dynamic expression in response to changes in touch, its tone was too small to permit it to be used in ensemble music; the harpsichord, on the other hand, had a louder sound but was incapable of producing significant changes in loudness in response to changes in touch.) The capabilities later acquired of sustaining notes at will after the fingers had left the keys (by means of pedals) and of playing far more loudly than was possible on the harpsichord made this advantage even greater.

Excerpted from Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians

4. Lead students in a discussion comparing the characteristics of the piano and harpsichord and the music for each. How did the technological advancement influence the way keyboard music could be written (fluidity of line, dynamics, expression, role in musical works)?
5. Ask students to list other technological advancements that have had an impact on the way music could be written and performed. (Acceptable answers could include the invention of valves for the trumpet, the Boehm flute, synthesizers, the electric guitar, MIDI, etc.)
6. Show HRR: Part 8, beginning with Stevie Wonder and “Superstition”, through the end of the segment. Ask students to pay particular attention to elements of the music of Stevie Wonder and Pink Floyd.

7. Stevie Wonder was an influential figure in the emergence of synthesized music. What elements of his song “Superstition” are characteristic of music using synthesizers?

“The 70’s was the time when music blossomed...so many different styles and so many ideas...the artist had developed the ability to create an income to allow him some freedom. A lot of the bands...used that time to experiment.”

Jeff “Skunk” Baxter, HRR: Part 8

8. Lead students in a discussion of the way artists experimented with using synthesizers to enhance their music. How did Pink Floyd use the technology to convey mood (sound effects, voice distortion)? How did technology affect artists’ writing and work in the studio (more time in the studio to experiment, willing to give up traditional methods)? Discuss some of the difficulties with using synthesizer technology (process was tedious, equipment was complicated, not designed by musicians).

9. Discuss the use of technology in the music of today (Alanis Morissette, Jewel, N*Sync, etc.) Are synthesizers used in the same way now, as they were when they first evolved?

For more information and lessons pertaining to technological advancements and its influence on music, please refer to: History of Rock and Roll Overview Lesson 2: “Influences of Technological Advancements on Popular Music” at <http://www.vh1musicstudio.com/supplies/specials/rr-history-3.html>



VH1, in partnership with Cable in the Classroom, collaborated with MENC: The National Association for Music Education to develop this series of lessons.