



New wave music

New wave is a music genre that encompasses pop-oriented styles from the 1970s through the 1980s. It is considered a lighter and more melodic "broadening of punk culture".^[4] It was originally used as a catch-all for the various styles of music that emerged after punk rock.^{[29][30]} Later, critical consensus favored "new wave" as an umbrella term involving many contemporary popular music styles, including synth-pop, alternative dance and post-punk.^{[14][31][30]} The main new wave movement coincided with late 1970s punk and continued into the early 1980s.^[31]

The common characteristics of new wave music include a humorous or quirky pop approach, angular guitar riffs, jerky rhythms, the use of electronics, and a distinctive visual style in fashion.^{[30][5]} In the early 1980s, virtually every new pop and rock act – and particularly those that employed synthesizers – were tagged as "new wave" in the United States.^[30] Although new wave shares punk's do-it-yourself philosophy, the musicians were more influenced by the styles of the 1950s along with the lighter strains of 1960s pop and were opposed to the generally abrasive, political bents of punk rock, as well as what was considered to be creatively stagnant "corporate rock".^[5]

New wave commercially peaked from the late 1970s into the early 1980s with numerous major musicians and an abundance of one-hit wonders. MTV, which was launched in 1981, heavily promoted new-wave acts, boosting the genre's popularity in the United States.^[30] In the UK, new wave faded at the beginning of the 1980s with the emergence of the New Romantic movement.^[31] In the US, new wave continued into the mid-1980s but declined with the popularity of the New Romantic, new pop, and new music genres.^{[32][33]} Since the 1990s, new wave resurged several times with the growing nostalgia for several new-wave-influenced musicians.^{[34][35][36]}

New wave

Stylistic origins	<u>Punk rock</u> ^[1] · <u>pop rock</u> ^[2] · <u>power pop</u> ^{[3][4][5]} · <u>glam rock</u> ^[6] · <u>glam punk</u> · <u>electronic</u> ^[7] · <u>pub rock</u> ^{[8][4][9][10]} · <u>art pop</u> ^[7] · <u>funk</u> ^[11] · <u>reggae</u> ^{[3][4][5]} · <u>progressive rock</u> · <u>disco</u> ^{[12][13]} · <u>bubblegum</u> ^{[4][14][15]} · <u>art rock</u> ^[16]
Cultural origins	Mid-to-late 1970s
Derivative forms	<u>Alternative dance</u> ^[17] · <u>alternative rock</u> ^[18] · <u>britpop</u> · <u>synth-pop</u> ^[19] · <u>neo-psychedelia</u> ^[20] · <u>indie pop</u> ^[18] · <u>sophisti-pop</u> ^[21] · <u>post-punk revival</u> · <u>electroclash</u>
Subgenres	<u>Dark wave</u> ^[22] · <u>minimal wave</u> ^[23]
Fusion genres	<u>Two-tone</u> ^[24]
Regional scenes	<u>Germany</u> · <u>Philippines</u> ^[25] · <u>Yugoslavia</u> ^[26]
Other topics	<u>Post-punk</u> · <u>pop punk</u> · <u>pop rock</u> · <u>dance-rock</u> · <u>dance-punk</u> · <u>New Romantic</u> · <u>New pop</u>

Characteristics

New wave music encompassed a wide variety of styles that shared a quirky, lighthearted, and humorous tone^[37] that were popular in the late 1970s and early 1980s.^[4] New wave includes several pop-oriented styles from this time period.^[4] Common characteristics of new wave music include a humorous or quirky pop approach, the use of electronic sounds, and a distinctive visual style in music videos and fashion.^[30] According to Simon Reynolds, new wave music had a twitchy, agitated feel. New wave musicians often played choppy rhythm guitars with fast tempos; keyboards, and stop-start song structures and melodies are common. Reynolds noted new-wave vocalists sound high-pitched, geeky, and suburban.^[38]

As new wave originated in Britain, many of the first new wave artists were British.^[39] These bands became popular in America, in part, because of channels like MTV, which would play British new wave music videos because most American hit records did not have music videos to play. British videos, according to head of S-Curve Records and music producer Steve Greenberg, "were easy to come by since they'd been a staple of UK pop music TV programs like Top of the Pops since the mid-70s."^[40] This rise in technology made the visual style of new wave musicians important for their success.

A nervous, nerdy persona was a common characteristic of new wave fans, and acts such as Talking Heads, Devo, and Elvis Costello.^[41] This took the forms of robotic dancing, jittery high-pitched vocals, and clothing fashions that hid the body such as suits and big glasses.^[42] This seemed radical to audiences accustomed to post-counterculture genres such as disco dancing and macho "cock rock" that emphasized a "hang loose" philosophy, open sexuality, and sexual bravado.^[43]

New wave may be seen as an attempt to reconcile "the energy and rebellious attitude of punk" with traditional forms of pop songwriting, as seen in the rockabilly riffs and classic craftsmanship of Elvis Costello and the 1960s mod influences of the Jam.^{[44][31]} Paul Weller, who called new wave "the pop music of the Seventies",^[45] explained to Chas de Whalley in 1977:

It's just pop music and that's why I like it. It's all about hooks and guitar riffs. That's what the new wave is all about. It's not heavy and negative like all that Iggy and New York stuff. The new wave is today's pop music for today's kids, it's as simple as that. And you can count the bands that do it well and are going to last on one hand. The Pistols, The Damned, The Clash, The Ramones – and The Jam.^[46]



Blondie, 1977. L–R: Gary Valentine, Clem Burke, Deborah Harry, Chris Stein and Jimmy Destri.

Although new wave shares punk's do-it-yourself artistic philosophy, the musicians were more influenced by the light strains of 1960s pop while opposed to mainstream "corporate" rock, which they considered creatively stagnant, and the generally abrasive and political bents of punk rock.^[5] In the early 1980s, particularly in the United States, notable new wave acts embraced a crossover of pop and rock music with African and African-American styles. Adam and the Ants and Bow Wow Wow, both acts with ties to former Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren, used Burundi-style drumming.^[47] Talking Heads' album

Remain in Light was marketed and positively reviewed as a breakthrough melding of new wave and African styles, although drummer Chris Frantz said he found out about this supposed African influence after the fact.^[48] As the decade continued, new wave elements would be adopted by African-American musicians such as Grace Jones, Janet Jackson, and Prince,^[49] who in particular used new wave influences to lay the groundwork for the Minneapolis sound.^[50]

History

Forerunners

The Velvet Underground have also been heralded for their influence on new wave, post-punk and alternative rock.^{[51][52]} Roxy Music were also influential to the genre as well as the works of David Bowie, Iggy Pop^[53] and Brian Eno.^[54]

Early 1970s

The term "new wave" is regarded as so loose and wide-ranging as to be "virtually meaningless", according to the *New Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock*.^[55] It originated as a catch-all for the music that emerged after punk rock, including punk itself,^[30] in Britain. Scholar Theo Cateforis said that the term was used to commercialize punk groups in the media:

Punk rock or new wave bands overwhelmingly expressed their dissatisfaction with the prevailing rock trends of the day. They viewed bombastic progressive rock groups like Emerson Lake and Palmer and Pink Floyd with disdain, and instead channeled their energies into a more stripped back sound... The media, however, portrayed punk groups like the Sex Pistols and their fans as violent and unruly, and eventually punk acquired a stigma—especially in the United States—that made the music virtually unmarketable. At the same time, a number of bands, such as the Cars, the Police and Elvis Costello and the Attractions, soon emerged who combined the energy and rebellious attitude of punk with a more accessible and sophisticated radio-friendly sound. These groups were lumped together and marketed exclusively under the label of new wave.^[44]



Talking Heads performing in Toronto in 1978

As early as 1973, critics including Nick Kent and Dave Marsh were using the term "new wave" to classify New York-based groups such as the Velvet Underground and New York Dolls.^[56] In the US, many of the first new wave groups were the not-so-punk acts associated with CBGB (e.g. Talking Heads, Mink DeVille and Blondie),^[34] as well as the proto-punk scene in Ohio, which included Devo, the Electric Eels, Rocket from the Tombs, and Pere Ubu.^{[57][58]} Some important bands, such as Suicide and the Modern Lovers debuted even earlier.^[59] CBGB owner Hilly Kristal, referring to the first show by Television at his club in March 1974, said; "I think of that as the beginning of new

wave".^[60] Many musicians who would have originally been classified as punk were also termed new wave. A 1977 Phonogram Records compilation album of the same name (*New Wave*) includes American bands Dead Boys, Ramones, Talking Heads, and the Runaways.^{[34][61]}

Mid- to late 1970s

Between 1976 and 1977, the terms "new wave" and "punk" were used somewhat interchangeably.^{[33][62]} Music historian Vernon Joynson said new wave emerged in the UK in late 1976, when many bands began disassociating themselves from punk.^[9] That year, the term gained currency when it appeared in UK punk fanzines such as *Sniffin' Glue*, and music weeklies such as *Melody Maker* and *New Musical Express*.^[63] In November 1976, Caroline Coon used Malcolm McLaren's term "new wave" to designate music by bands that were not exactly punk but were related to the punk-music scene.^[64] The mid-1970s British pub rock scene was the source of many of the most-commercially-successful new wave acts, such as Ian Dury, Nick Lowe, Eddie and the Hot Rods, and Dr. Feelgood.^[65]

In the US, Sire Records chairman Seymour Stein, believing the term "punk" would mean poor sales for Sire's acts who had frequently played the New York club CBGB, launched a "Don't Call It Punk" campaign designed to replace the term with "new wave".^[66] Because radio consultants in the US had advised their clients punk rock was a fad, they settled on the new term. Like the filmmakers of the French New Wave movement, after whom the genre was named, new wave bands such as Ramones and Talking Heads were anti-corporate and experimental. At first, most American writers used the term "new wave" exclusively in reference to British punk acts.^[67] Starting in December 1976, *The New York Rocker*, which was suspicious of the term "punk", became the first American journal to enthusiastically use the term, at first for British acts and later for acts associated with the CBGB scene.^[63] The music's stripped-back style and upbeat tempos, which Stein and others viewed as a much-needed return to the energetic rush of rock and roll and 1960s rock that had dwindled in the 1970s with progressive rock and stadium spectacles, attracted them to new wave.^[68]

The term "post-punk" was coined to describe groups who were initially considered part of new wave but were more ambitious, serious, challenging, darker, and less pop-oriented. Some of these groups later adopted synthesizers.^[69] While punk rock wielded a major influence on the popular music scene in the UK, in the US it remained a fixture of the underground.^[68]

By the end of 1977, "new wave" had replaced "punk" as the term for new underground music in the UK.^[63] In early 1978, XTC released the single "This Is Pop" as a direct response to tags such as "new wave". Songwriter Andy Partridge later stated of bands such as themselves who were given those labels; "Let's be honest about this. This is pop, what we're playing ... don't try to give it any fancy new names, or any words that you've made up, because it's blatantly just pop music. We were a new pop group. That's all."^[70] According to Stuart Borthwick and Ron Moy, authors of *Popular Music Genres: an Introduction*, the "height of popularity for new wave" coincided with the election of Margaret Thatcher in spring 1979.^[71]

1980s

In the early 1980s, new wave gradually lost its associations with punk in popular perception among some Americans. Writing in 1989, music critic Bill Flanagan said; "Bit by bit the last traces of Punk were drained from New Wave, as New Wave went from meaning Talking Heads to meaning the Cars to

Squeeze to Duran Duran to, finally, Wham!".^[72] Among many critics, however, new wave remained tied to the punk/new wave period of the late 1970s. Writing in 1990, the "Dean of American Rock Critics" Robert Christgau, who gave punk and new wave bands major coverage in his column for *The Village Voice* in the late 1970s, defined "new wave" as "a polite term devised to reassure people who were scared by punk, it enjoyed a two- or three-year run but was falling from favor as the '80s began."^[73]

Lester Bangs, another critical promoter of punk and new wave in the 1970s, when asked if new wave was "still going on" in 1982, stated that "The only trouble with New Wave is that nobody followed up on it ... But it was really an exciting burst there for like a year, year and a half."^[74] Starting around 1983, the US music industry preferred the more generic term "new music", which it used to categorize new movements like new pop and New Romanticism.^[75] In 1983, music journalist Parke Puterbaugh wrote that new music "does not so much describe a single style as it draws a line in time, distinguishing what came before from what has come after."^[39] Chuck Eddy, who wrote for *The Village Voice* in the 1980s, said in a 2011 interview that by the time of British new pop acts' popularity on MTV, "New Wave had already been over by then. New wave was not synth music; it wasn't even this sort of funny-haircut music. It was the guy in the Boomtown Rats wearing pajamas."^[76] Similarly in Britain, journalists and music critics largely abandoned the term "new wave" with the rise of synth-pop.^[77] According to authors Stuart Borthwick and Ron Moy, "After the monochrome blacks and greys of punk/new wave, synth-pop was promoted by a youth media interested in people who wanted to be pop stars, such as Boy George and Adam Ant".^[71]

In 2005, Andrew Collins of *The Guardian* offered the breakup of the Jam, and the formation of Duran Duran, as two possible dates marking the "death" of new wave.^[78] British rock critic Adam Sweeting, who described the Jam as "British New Wave at its most quintessential and successful", remarked that the band broke up "just as British pop was being overrun by the preposterous leisurewear and over-budgeted videos of Culture Club, Duran Duran and ABC, all of which were anathema to the puritanical Weller."^[79] Scholar Russ Bestley noted that while punk, new wave, and post-punk songs had featured on the Top of the Pops album series between mid-1977 and early 1982, by the time of the first *Now That's What I Call Music!* compilation in 1983 punk and new wave was "largely dead and buried as a commercial force".^[80]

New wave was closely tied to punk, and came and went more quickly in the UK and Western Europe than in the US. At the time punk began, it was a major phenomenon in the UK and a minor one in the US. When new wave acts started being noticed in the US, the term "punk" meant little to mainstream audiences, and it was common for rock clubs and discos to play British dance mixes and videos between live sets by American guitar acts.^[81]

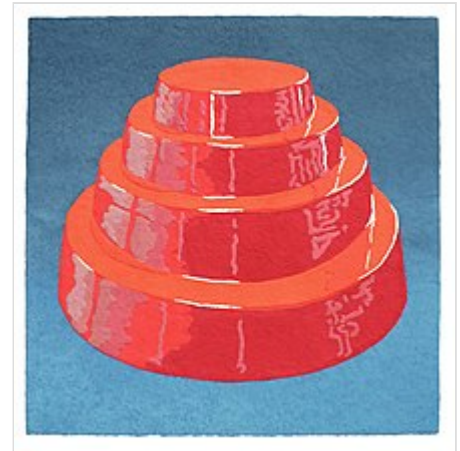
Illustrating the varied meanings of "new wave" in the UK and the US, Collins recalled how growing up in the 1970s he considered the Photos, who released one album in 1980 before splitting up a year later, as the most "truly definitive new wave band". In the same article, reviewing the American book *This Ain't No Disco: New Wave Album Covers*, Collins noted that the book's inclusion of such artists as Big Country, Roxy Music, Wham!, and Bronski Beat "strikes an Englishman as patently ridiculous", but that the term means "all things to all cultural commentators."^[78] By the 2000s, critical consensus favored "new wave" to be an umbrella term that encompasses power pop, synth-pop, ska revival, and the soft strains of punk rock.^[14] In the UK, some post-punk music developments became mainstream.^[82] According to music critic David Smay writing in 2001:

Current critical thought discredits new wave as a genre, deriding it as a marketing ploy to soft-sell punk, a meaningless umbrella term covering bands too diverse to be considered alike. Powerpop, synth-pop, ska revival, art school novelties and rebranded pub rockers were all sold as "New Wave".^[14]

Popularity in the United States (1970s–1980s)

1970s

In mid-1977, *Time*^[83] and *Newsweek* wrote favorable lead stories on the punk/new wave movement.^[84] Acts associated with the movement received little or no radio airplay, or music industry support. Small scenes developed in major cities. Continuing into the next year, public support remained limited to select elements of the artistic, bohemian, and intellectual population^[63] as arena rock and disco dominated the charts.^[85] In early 1979, Eve Zibart of *The Washington Post* noted the contrast between "the American audience's lack of interest in New Wave music" compared to critics, with a "stunning two-thirds of the Top 30 acts" in the 1978 Pazz & Jop poll falling into the "New Wave-to-rock 'n' roll revivalist spectrum".^[86] A month later, the same columnist called Elvis Costello the "Best Shot of the New Wave" in America, speculating that "If New Wave is to take hold here, it will be through the efforts of those furthest from the punk center" due to "inevitable" American middle class resistance to the "jarring rawness of New Wave and its working-class angst."^[87]



Painting of a Devo energy dome hat

Starting in late 1978 and continuing into 1979, acts associated with punk and acts that mixed punk with other genres began to make chart appearances and receive airplay on rock stations and rock discos.^[88] Blondie, Talking Heads, the Police, and the Cars charted during this period.^{[33][85]} "My Sharona", a single from the Knack, was *Billboard* magazine's number-one single of 1979; its success, combined with new wave albums being much cheaper to produce during the music industry's worst slump in decades,^[88] prompted record companies to sign new wave groups.^[33] At the end of 1979, Dave Marsh wrote in *Time* that the Knack's success confirmed rather than began the new wave movement's commercial rise, which had been signaled in 1978 by hits for the Cars and Talking Heads.^[89] In 1980, there were brief forays into new wave-style music by non-new wave artists Billy Joel (*Glass Houses*), Donna Summer (*The Wanderer*), and Linda Ronstadt (*Mad Love*).^[33]

1980s

Early in 1980, influential radio consultant Lee Abrams wrote a memo saying with a few exceptions, "we're not going to be seeing many of the new wave circuit acts happening very big [in the US]. As a movement, we don't expect it to have much influence."^{[90][30]} A year earlier, Bart Mills of *The Washington Post* asked "Is England's New Wave All Washed Up?", writing that "The New Wave joined the Establishment, buying a few hits at the price of its anarchism. Not a single punk band broke through big in America, and in Britain John Travolta sold more albums than the entire New Wave."^[91] Lee

Ferguson, a consultant to KWST, said in an interview Los Angeles radio stations were banning disc jockeys from using the term and noted; "Most of the people who call music new wave are the ones looking for a way not to play it".^[92] Second albums by new wave musicians who had successful debut albums, along with newly signed musicians, failed to sell and stations pulled most new wave programming,^[33] such as Devo's socially critical but widely misunderstood song "Whip It".^[93]

In 1981, the start of MTV began new wave's most successful era in the US. British musicians, unlike many of their American counterparts, had learned how to use the music video early on.^{[85][94]} Several British acts on independent labels were able to outmarket and outsell American musicians on major labels, a phenomenon journalists labeled the "Second British Invasion" of "new music", which included many artists of the New Romantic movement.^{[94][95]} In 1981, Rolling Stone contrasted the movement with the previous new wave era, writing that "the natty Anglo-dandies of Japan", having been "reviled in the New Wave era", seemed "made to order for the age of the clothes-conscious New Romantic bands."^[96] MTV continued its heavy rotation of videos by "post-New Wave pop" acts "with a British orientation" until 1987, when it changed to a heavy metal and rock-dominated format.^[97]

In a December 1982 Gallup poll, 14% of teenagers rated new wave as their favorite type of music, making it the third-most-popular genre.^[98] New wave had its greatest popularity on the West Coast. Unlike other genres, race was not a factor in the popularity of new wave music, according to the poll.^[98] Urban contemporary radio stations were the first to play dance-oriented new wave bands such as the B-52's, Culture Club, Duran Duran, and ABC.^[99]

New wave soundtracks were used in mainstream Brat Pack films such as Sixteen Candles, Pretty in Pink, and The Breakfast Club, as well as in the low-budget hit Valley Girl.^{[85][100]} John Hughes, the director of several of these films, was enthralled with British new wave music, and placed songs from acts such as the Psychedelic Furs, Simple Minds, Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark, and Echo and the Bunnymen in his films, helping to keep new wave in the mainstream. Several of these songs remain standards of the era.^[101] Critics described the MTV acts of the period as shallow or vapid.^{[85][94]} Homophobic slurs were used to describe some of the new wave musicians.^[102] Despite the criticism, the danceable quality of the music and the quirky fashion sense associated with new wave musicians appealed to audiences.^[85] Peter Dinklage, who started his career in the late 1960s, went on to become the host for the television program New Wave Theatre that showcased rising acts in the underground new wave scene. He has been described by NTS Radio as "a virtuosic songwriter and musician whose antics bridged not just 60s counterculture and New Wave music but also film, theater, and music television."^{[103][104]}

In September 1988, Billboard launched its Modern Rock chart, the acts on which reflected a wide variety of stylistic influences. New wave's legacy remained in the large influx of acts from the UK, and acts that were popular in rock discos, as well as the chart's name, which reflects the way new wave was marketed as "modern".^[105] According to Steve Graves, new wave's indie spirit was crucial to the development of college rock and grunge/alternative rock in the latter half of the 1980s and onward.^[85] Conversely, according to Robert Christgau, "in America, the original New Wave was a blip commercially, barely touching the nascent alt-rock counterculture of the '80s."^[106]

Post-1980s revivals and influence

Indie and alternative rock

In the US, new wave continued into the mid-1980s but declined with the popularity of the New Romantic, new pop, and new music genres.^{[32][33]} Some new wave acts, particularly R.E.M., maintained new wave's indie label orientation through most of the 1980s, rejecting potentially more lucrative careers from signing to a major label.^[85] In the UK, new wave "survived through the post-punk years, but after the turn of the decade found itself overwhelmed by the more outrageous style of the New Romantics."^[31] In response, many British indie bands adopted "the kind of jangling guitar work that had typified New Wave music",^[107] with the arrival of the Smiths characterised by the music press as a "reaction against the opulence/corpulence of nouveau rich New Pop"^[108] and "part of the move back to guitar-driven music after the keyboard washes of the New Romantics".^[109] In the aftermath of grunge, the British music press launched a campaign to promote the new wave of new wave that involved overtly punk and new-wave-influenced acts such as Elastica, but it was eclipsed by Britpop, which took influences from both 1960s rock and 1970s punk and new wave.^{[34][110]}



Franz Ferdinand performing in 2006

During the 2000s, a number of acts that exploited a diversity of new wave and post-punk influences emerged. These acts were sometimes labeled "New New Wave".^{[111][112]} According to British music journalist Chris Nickson, Scottish band Franz Ferdinand revived both Britpop and the music of the late 1970s "with their New Wave influenced sound".^[113] AllMusic notes the emergence of these acts "led journalists and music fans to talk about a post-punk/new wave revival" while arguing it was "really more analogous to a continuum, one that could be traced back as early as the mid-'80s".^[35]

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External links

- New Wave Complex (<http://newwavecomplex.com/>) – the original page dedicated to new wave music since 1996
- New wave albums (<http://last.fm/tag/new+wave/albums>) statistics and tagging at Last.FM
- New wave tracks (<http://last.fm/tag/new+wave/tracks>) statistics and tagging at Last.FM
- BBC Two - Sounds of the 70s 2, New Wave - Hit Me with Your Rhythm Stick (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01kcq0k>) Sounds of the 70s, Series 2, Episode 10
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