

Hi, this is Ross from Learning without Borders and today we're going to learn about modern British music.

Throughout the twentieth century, the United Kingdom produced many influential artists such as The Beatles, Sex Pistols and Pink Floyd, and even entire genres such as Indie and Heavy Metal, which was first developed by the band Black Sabbath in Birmingham in the early 1970s. But what do the young people of Britain listen to today? Certainly, many of these older artists remain popular, even as the musicians themselves approach their eighties, but there are also a great number of younger artists carrying the torch for British musical innovation.

One genre which took the world by storm in the late 2000s was Dubstep. A fusion of reggae influenced rhythms and distorted, electronic sounds, Dubstep developed in East London in the early 2000s before coming to dominate club nights across the country. Its sound was raw and simple, with emphasis being placed on bass and distortion, meaning that it appealed to young people from a range of musical backgrounds from dance music, to hip hop, to heavy metal. By the early 2010s Dubstep had become mainstream enough that even Britney Spears was using dubstep breaks in her music and artists such as Chase & Status were capable of regularly producing top-ten hits and filling out stadiums. Such passionate love affairs rarely last forever, however, and interest in Dubstep began to drop off around the time that it looked like it was ready to conquer the world.

Meanwhile, though, in the same East London streets that had given birth to dubstep, a new genre had been quietly (or not so quietly) forming. This genre was called Grime and was generally brought to the attention of the music-listening public via schoolboys playing it at anti-social volume on their mobiles phones, usually on public transport. Grime combined the rhythms of Garage with the harsh atmosphere of dubstep and vocal style of the most aggressive hip-hop artists. Emcees rapped in strong London accents about the grim realities of life on the housing estates of Britain and it soon became an underground sensation. Eventually the genre reached the mainstream where it has developed and matured into a powerful vehicle for the ideas of a youth that might otherwise have remained voiceless in today's United Kingdom.

Finally, in case you were afraid that our island's rich heritage of guitar-based music had come to an end, don't panic; it's time to learn about folk revival. This popular style of music, famous for artists such as Mumford & Sons and Laura Marling developed from a fusion of Indie music (which itself experienced a second explosion of popularity in the mid-2000s) and traditional folk. As a result, the genre combines festival-friendly singalongs and introspective ballads with traditional instruments such as banjo, violin and accordion to give a charmingly old-fashioned yet modern sound that appeals to hipster baristas from Brighton to Edinburgh.

As for the future, it is always hard to tell where the next innovation will come from as explosive new genres are often found when and where the public least expects. One thing is for sure though, British innovation in popular music is a proud tradition that shows no sign of slowing down any time soon.