

Exam 2 - worth 20% : Abrar Shahriar

Question 3

Choose any group or solo artist from outside the Course. Discuss their main defining aspects, such as their ethos and musical style, and describe what in your view makes them distinctive and compelling.

Oasis is a band of British rock origin from Manchester formed in 1991 and has become one of the key groups in the modern musical panorama. As one of the most popular British bands Oasis makes use of elements of Britpop, punk, and indie; the band's unabashed style, undeniable talent, and energetic performances contributed to their distinctive appeal as performers.

Ethos and Cultural Impact

Oasis's ethos is deeply shaped by the spirit of the working city, where the band was from – Manchester. For instance, members of the band especially Gallagher brothers Liam and Noel portrayed themselves in an un-polished and crude nature that appealed many fans. This sign of authenticity, together with the very non-conformity of their character and constant efforts towards provoking the media, served as a base for building the principles of rebellion and truthfulness. This ethos may be largely personal but it is uniquely reflected in their approach to lifestyle, success, and the music business. They had an attitude which of course many of their fans associated them with; they embodied a spirit of rebellion, which is what made them stand out from bands like *NSYNC and The Backstreet Boys.

Musical Style

Oasis' musical style is characterized as rock / Britpop and bearing features of the British rock bands of the 1960s and 1970s with the references to The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and The Kinks. It features highly vocal and lyrical, often melodic and strong guitar lines with a striking chorus. Some examples of the band's singles include Wonderwall, Don't Look Back in Anger, and Champagne Supernova, highlighting their unique approach to creating melodies that were not only catchy but also deeply moving. The music of Noel Gallagher focuses on songwriting, and despite their Britpop sound, their lyrics consist of songs about hope, affection and self-reflection with the right portion of wistfulness.

The multi-layered guitars and vocals with many combinations also contribute to the hull and depth of the band's sound. This, along with Liam Gallagher's unmistakable, high-pitched voice, added to the group's sound is easily distinguishable, and identifiable. It is singable, or at least designed to be: their appeal has always been rooted in shared experiences at gigs, and on record they remain a band whose songs would sound just as relevant sung back at them by an audience.

Distinctive and Compelling Elements

The unparalleled passion of Oasis is complemented and balanced by the topical drive of their music. While at times their lyrics can be easily interpreted, their words resonate in the hearts of their fans because they're focused on essence of life. This is because, on one hand, you have Noel Gallagher, an intelligent songwriter who composes music that is complex at times and on the other side, you get Liam Gallagher who is a charismatic front-man for the group who at times can be very temperamental.

Furthermore, Oasis were instrumental in defining the Britpop scene of the 1990s and therefore contributed greatly to the developing music scene. Their competition with another British band, Blur, that was widely covered in the mass media, was another factor which contributed to making their story more dramatic, intense, and therefore – more appealing to the fans and future historians of British music.

Therefore, authentic ethos, one of a kind music, and cultural influence of Oasis all contribute to make this band one of the most unique and long-lived in the music world. This ability to combine wise words in music with great vocals and choruses, and all this spiced with real sincerity, guarantees the bands' eternal popularity among new generations of listeners.

Fine account of this band, and a well-constructed answer. Your points are concisely made and clearly set out. Factually accurate, well detailed, and insightful in your observations. You've done a thorough job here – well done. 100%

Question 6

Katy Perry and Taylor Swift are two contemporary artists who have chosen to explore themes of gender and sexuality in their material. Compare how they have done this, referring to songs discussed in the Course.

Katy Perry and Taylor Swift are two singers who are representative of modern music industry and both have touched sensitive issues regarding gender and sexuality in their songs. Songs by Katy Perry "I Kissed a Girl" and "Ur So Gay" and songs by Taylor Swift "The Man" and "Mad Woman" are good examples of how these divas express these themes in their respective ways because of personal style and beliefs.

As for the exploration of gender and sexuality, Perry has been unapologetically edgy. While

“I Kissed a Girl” was released in 2008, it covers important topics such as sexual promiscuity and bisexual tendencies. The cheerful tune, the refraining vocals and lyrics promote what can be referred to as homosexual desire as something one should not shy away from being interested in. That is why Perry’s unashamed promotion of this curiosity focused on bisexuality, although, in her song, it sounds frivolous and annoying, which critics considered to be the primary way sexual identity entered mainstream pop culture.

As to other early hit, “Ur So Gay”, released in 2008, the themes of gender expression are addressed in a more provocative and ironic manner. The song in question is about a man who turn to his former lover to find out her character is ‘too gay’ and this is supported by stereotypically feminine characteristics. As for the drawbacks of this track, they are in the unambiguous presentation of stereotypes regarding both homosexual men and sexually non-conforming individuals. Although the song seeks to call out specific actions while being a humorous song, the usage of outdated stereotype features diminishes the effectiveness of the song in contributing to the development of healthy discourse regarding gender and sexuality.

Compared to the other gender themes, Taylor Swift’s approach, especially in her recent songs, can be characterized as more sophisticated. ‘The Man’ from her albums Lover released in 2019 is quite clearly a song that speaks for women and their sufferings in the modern society and especially in the music industry. By way of sharp wordplay, Swift demonstrates how she would be received if she were male. The message of female emancipation and the nonsensical discrimination women face are conveyed in the lyrics and upbeat tune, attracting a great audience. [excellent observations](#)

The second song, ‘Mad Woman’ in Taylor Swift’s Folklore album published in 2020, also focuses on the repressive gender roles and the demonization of feminine wrath. The song itself focuses on the story of a woman who has been betrayed and angry because the man she loved has cheated on her, and the general social dislike of women standing up to be angry about something a man has done to them. Swift’s voice and lyrics in this song are chilling, and her lyrics offer a striking commentary on the social response to female anger.

In conclusion, both Katy Perry and Taylor Swift have significantly contributed to the dialogue on gender and sexuality through their music, albeit in different ways. Perry's provocative and sometimes controversial songs challenge traditional notions of sexuality and gender expression, while Swift's more nuanced and mature approach critiques societal double standards and the stigmatization of female anger. Together, their works provide a rich tapestry of perspectives on these crucial themes, reflecting their individual artistry and evolving understanding of gender and sexuality.

[This is outstanding. A particularly effective comparison between these two artists. Insightful, factually well supported, and well expressed. Good to see such excellent work from you, Abrar, in this exam. Well done. 100%](#)

Question 7

Despite its radical outlook, punk rock has been accused of having “shamelessly ignored women”: see link below. Discuss this proposition and the contribution Bikini Kill and the Riot grrrl movement in the later 1990s US punk and alternative rock scene.

Punk rock, a music genre that has always been associated with rebellion and the rebel against the (unjust) society, was accused of doing exactly that to women. Even though punk rock emerged as a provocative counterculture protesting against social and political systems, its early representation was quite sexist, stripping female musicians of their potential. This exclusion paved way for the Riot Grrrl movement in the early 1990s with an emphasis on the general reclamation of the punk and the rock music for it was majorly headed by men. Perhaps, the most influential band in this movement was Bikini Kill whose efforts were instrumental in breaking down traditional practices and female emancipation within music.

While Punk rock's inclusivity was rooted in its first wave that began in the 1970s/ 1980s, it was not entirely inclusive in its practice. The punk bands such as The Clash and The Sex Pistols may have been propelled but the members were mostly male and the songs, the stage performances were cavalier and often insensitive to the plight of women. The absence of women as active agents in postmodernism was thus not an oversight but a representation of the pervading norms of the society that also applied within counterculture. Punk had a propensity for diminishing the female gender, limiting them to mere fan appreciation or objectifying them as muses; hence, female input was scarce in the punk movement's starting period. [excellent discussion](#)

This is why the Riot Grrrl movement came to be, as the female voices were excluded from mainstream media. It began in the early 1990s bringing punk DIY ethics as well as feminism of its early stages for which women got a platform. The leading band of the Bikini Kill helped the movement in making the deliveries like the one illustrated above. Kathleen Hanna was the singer of Bikini Kill, they rock and roll that put emphasis on women liberation, sexual assault, and sexism.

Songs like 'Rebel Girl' and 'Double Dare Ya' became empowering songs to spite men and tell women that they are welcome to rebel in the punk scene and in other music scenes as well. Many of the band's shows were protests — sharing zines and engaging in discussions about the issues were as much a part of the show as the music. "Bikini Killism" continued to transcend into bands run by women and also created a unified feel of sisterhood among punk women.

In conclusion, although punk rock has had an unpalatable gender exclusion at the beginning, the Riot Grrrl movement witnessed by Bikini Kill has helped reshape the movement and redeem it of the deficits in that area. Thus they transformed punk injecting it with feminism, which gave the genre a new, more progressive element thus returning it to its original standby of defiance.

Total points: 300
=100%

20 out of 20

[Wonderful essay on this topic. A spot-on analysis and well interpreted. You make many perceptive observations. Again well done. 100%](#)