

Welcome to Week 6

- Average score on Unit 1 test was 94 %

New Wave

- Originally, "new wave" referred to the music being made immediately after 1970s punk by fans of 1970s punk
- There were two successors to 1970s punk:
 - ① Post-punk : NYC, guitar-heavy
 - ② New-wave : England, synth-heavy

- New wave bands were reacting negatively to norms of corporate rock and were embracing **pop** music business.
- Bands included the Police, New Order, the Cure, Talking Heads, etc.
- "New wave" came to mean music made by big-name bands that **weren't part of corporate rock**. Corporate rock included bands like Boston, Nazareth, etc.
- New wave bands like Talking Heads and Joy Division named Bowie as one of their major influences (specifically "Berlin-period" Bowie)
- Bowie was among the **vanguard** that developed ideas for new wave

Welcome to the Video Age

- In North America, radio networks were connected across the whole continent. Not so in Europe.
- Video began to be used as promotional tool in Europe because it was difficult for bands to travel throughout Europe.
- Artsy videos started to become popular in 60s.
- In North America, it was easier to promote singles using radio network. Video wasn't as popular.

- Former member of Monkees starts T.V. show in NYC in 1978 called "Pop Clip" because he was getting all these cool music videos from England.
 - You couldn't hear these songs on radio
 - Bowie sees potential of music videos, creates three videos for "Lodger" album, pays for them himself in 1979.
 - "Pop Clip" is sold in 1981 and is renamed "MTV".

- Videos were integral to songs
- Led to the second "British invasion" in music.
 - First: 1965
 - Second: 1983
- Radio networks soon start to broadcast the same songs MTV is broadcasting

New York

- Bowie moves back to NYC in 1979, gets into new wave and punk scenes
- NYC was broke and crime-ridden by 1977
 - Rent was cheap so artists could thrive there.
 - Bowie gets into new wave themes around urban decay and rejection of money as a motivation

- Bowie performs on **SNL** in 1980, does "conceptual art" performance
 - o Plays "Man Who Sold the World"
 - o Starts habit of playing old material, reinterprets it through lens of present
- Art arises from rubble of **urban despair**
 - o In 1970's in NYC, artists first start to graffiti subways, then rap for money
 - o Living through ruin can make you more human

Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps)

- Bowie's contract w/ RCA is up for renegotiation in 1980.
- Bowie is unpredictable but marketable artist
- Bowie's next album "Scary Monsters" featured **traditional** verse/chorus songs, much like songs from albums "Man Who Sold the World" and "Hunky Dory"
 - Used piano + cool melodies
- "Scary Monsters" was **big hit**

- Video produced for "Ashes to Ashes" single is most **expensive** music video ever produced
(\$ 500,000 in 1979)
 - o Bowie is two years ahead of MTV craze
- After contract w/ RCA is ended, Bowie devotes his time to becoming an **actor**

Elephant Man

- Bowie was big fan of the play "Elephant Man", later acts in it.
 - o Plays **star role** of John Merrick in touring company from NYC, does great job

- Fans of Bowie start harassing him after shows and at his hotel in Chicago in Sept 1980
- Lennon is assassinated in December 1980
- Idea of crazed fan killing Bowie really scared Bowie, decides to quit acting role and move to Switzerland

An Actor's Life For Me

- Bowie hides in his country house in Switzerland and hangs out w/ son all day
- meets w/ psychologists to help him deal w/ fame

- Records song w/ Queen in 1981
 - It's Bowie's only widely available recording from '80-'83
 - Bowie improvises lyrics, uses floating melodies reminiscent of "Hunky Dory" period
- Stars in movies "The Hunger" and "Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence"
 - Bowie acted well, movies were positively reviewed

I Want A Hit

- By 1980, Bowie had run out of artistic steam
 - Tried to go out on high note w/ "Scary Monsters"
 - Scared about being murdered by crazed fan, paranoid about appearing in public

- Acting was a nice break from the music, plus he was good at it, but it provided unstable income
- In October 1982, w/ prior music contract ending soon, Bowie announced return to music world
- Bowie negotiated contract w/ EMI for \$17 million. Most money ever for a record contract.
 - Bowie had no manager, controlled all the money
 - Some \$\$ was used for expenses, Bowie pocketed the rest
 - Bowie goes to Nile Rodgers for help w/ producing record
 - Rodgers was struggling professionally as producer; at this time, black artists were pushed out of MTV world

- Bowie and Rodgers loved the same kind of music
- Resulting album "Let's Dance" became biggest hit of Bowie's career, released in April 1983

Let's Dance

- "Let's Dance" signals the intro of mainstream David Bowie
- Bowie kind of one ups the other pop stars of the time (e.g. REM, Talking Heads, etc.)
- "Making a lot of \$\$ is the best kind of art" (idea from Andy Warhol)

- Bowie claims that by doing the unexpected he's being an artist.
(Selling out is form of art)
- Some fans accused Bowie of selling out
- Bowie assumed persona "Rich GQ guy", a kind of plastic rock star for MTV generation
- Bowie made impeccably directed videos to fit the era
- Style was "black pop music done by white artist", which was very popular at that time (in contrast to situation in 1970s)
- With "China Girl", Bowie reproduces improvised lyrics and repackages song for mass market resale

I Want My MTV

- By 1983, MTV was center of popular music
- Black artists, w/ some exceptions like Michael Jackson and Prince, were excluded from MTV
- No one except for Bowie publicly called out people in charge at MTV for this behavior. And, he did it on MTV.
- Public agreed w/ Bowie.
- Bowie wasn't afraid to put his career on the line by speaking his mind