What is Britpop?

Britpop in the mid-1990s, according to journalist and cultural commentator John harris,1 rapidly came to represent a peculiarly English form of Britishness in UK contemporary popular music.

There were two reasons for this.

Firstly, Britpop despite its apparent openness to regional groups (oasis from Manchester and Pulp from Sheffield, for example) was, in reality, London-centric and deeply exclusivist, particularly as mainstream crossover success transformed alternative sounds into significant record sales.

Secondly, a combination of the ‘movement’ being mainstream and its overwhelming Englishness meant that indie scenes in Scotland and Wales were simply not interested in associating themselves with ‘Britpop’.

What’s the Background?

1. There has been a generational shift in which many of those who came of age from the 1980s onwards have significantly less attachment to notions of ‘Britishness’, and tend to emphasize their Welsh or Scottish identity. they identify several strands of evidence to support their argument, but perhaps of most relevance here is their suggestion that there was a stridently English version of Britishness espoused by both Thatcher and Major administrations (1979–1997). Scots felt excluded by this discourse, and there is a reflection of this sense of exclusion in the formation of the Englishness of Britpop and the rejection of Britpop sounds and styles by many Scottish bands. the situation, and the discourse of Britishness, changed little after the 1997 election victory of tony Blair’s New Labour, which briefly declared support for the rebranding of the UK as ‘cool Britannia’ (playing on the title of the eighteenth-century patriotic, nationbuilding song ‘Rule, Britannia!’). It was an attempt to represent British popular culture as capable of world-beating leadership in music, film, contemporary art and fashion. It was also a period of increased pride in the culture of the United Kingdom throughout most of the 1990s, inspired by 1960s pop culture. The success of Britpop and musical acts such as Spice Girls, Blur and Oasis led to a renewed feeling of optimism in the United Kingdom following the tumultuous years of the 1970s and 1980s.

What’s the Origins?

1. Music Hall and British Pop

Music hall was a form of commercial entertainment for the urban lower classes introduced in the mid-nineteenth century. The forerunner of the music hall was the ‘glee’ or singing night held in London taverns. It took its name from the specialist venues that were built or adapted to provide an evening’s show by up to a dozen separate acts, ranging from singers and dancers to trick cyclists, jugglers, magicians and animal acts. To this extent, it was similar to the contemporaneous vaudeville scene in the united states.

Since the First World War, in this context of the rise of new media and the encroachment of American music, music hall itself went into decline, to be succeeded by ‘variety’, which was superficially similar but less broad in its range of acts (no animal acts and fewer novelties).

The predominance of American songs meant that no individual British performer could lay claim to an imported composition, while the speed by which radio could disseminate a song nationally considerably shortened the period during which a star act could retain exclusivity

From the informed discussion of Colin MacInnes to the throwaway remark of Paul du Noyer, ‘music hall’ has been hailed as an innocent ancestor of contemporary pop music, an ancestor from an era before the Americanization (and for some the commercialization) of British popular culture in general and its music in particular.

1. Alternative Rock and Britpop：

Alternative rock acts from the [indie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independent_music) scene of the Eighties and early Nineties were the direct ancestors of the Britpop movement. The influence of [the Smiths](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Smiths) is common to the majority of Britpop artists.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Britpop#cite_note-Harris,_pg._385-13) The [Madchester](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madchester) scene, fronted by [the Stone Roses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Stone_Roses), [Happy Mondays](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Happy_Mondays) and [Inspiral Carpets](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inspiral_Carpets) (for whom Oasis's [Noel Gallagher](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noel_Gallagher) had worked as a roadie during the Madchester years), was an immediate root of Britpop since its emphasis on good times and catchy songs provided an alternative to the British-based [shoegazing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shoegazing) and American based [grunge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grunge) styles of music.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Britpop#cite_note-allmusic-21) Pre-dating Britpop by four years, Liverpool based group [The La's](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_La%27s) hit single "[There She Goes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/There_She_Goes_(The_La%27s_song))" was described by [*Rolling Stone*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rolling_Stone) as a "founding piece of Britpop's foundation."

[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Britpop#cite_note-22)

What’s the Style?

1. Britpop was implicated in the production of a nostalgic, hybridity-erasing and appealing form of Britishness (even if it was Englishness ‘writ large’)
2. Local identity and regional British accents are common to Britpop groups, as well as references to British places and culture in lyrics and image. Stylistically, Britpop bands use catchy hooks and lyrics that were relevant to young British people of their own generation. Britpop bands conversely denounced grunge as irrelevant and having nothing to say about their lives. Damon Albarn of Blur summed up the attitude in 1993 when after being asked if Blur were an "anti-grunge band" he said, "Well, that's good. If punk was about getting rid of hippies, then I'm getting rid of grunge." Despite the professed disdain for the genres, some elements of both crept into the more enduring facets of Britpop. Noel Gallagher has since championed Ride and once stated that Nirvana's Kurt Cobain was the only songwriter he had respect for in the last ten years, and that he felt their music was similar enough that Cobain could have written "Wonderwall". By 1996, Oasis's prominence was such that NME termed a number of Britpop bands (including The Boo Radleys, Ocean Colour Scene and Cast) "Noelrock", citing Gallagher's influence on their music. Journalist John Harris typified these bands, and Gallagher, of sharing "a dewy-eyed love of the 1960s, a spurning of much beyond rock's most basic ingredients, and a belief in the supremacy of 'real music'".

What are its Representatives

1. Blur

Blur are an English rock band, formed in London in 1988. The group consists of singer/keyboardist Damon Albarn, guitarist/singer Graham Coxon, bassist Alex James and drummer Dave Rowntree. Their debut album Leisure (1991) incorporated the sounds of Madchester and shoegazing. Following a stylistic change influenced by English guitar pop groups such as the Kinks, the Beatles and XTC, Blur released Modern Life Is Rubbish (1993), Parklife (1994) and The Great Escape (1995). In the process, the band became central to the Britpop music and culture movement, and achieved mass popularity in the UK, aided by a chart battle with rivals Oasis in 1995 dubbed the "Battle of Britpop".

1. Oasis

**Oasis** were an English [rock](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_music) band formed in [Manchester](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manchester) in 1991. Developed from an earlier group, the Rain, the band originally consisted of [Liam Gallagher](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liam_Gallagher) (vocals, tambourine), [Paul "Bonehead" Arthurs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Arthurs) (guitar), [Paul "Guigsy" McGuigan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_McGuigan_(musician)) (bass guitar) and [Tony McCarroll](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tony_McCarroll) (drums). Upon returning to Manchester, Liam's older brother, [Noel Gallagher](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noel_Gallagher) (lead guitar, vocals) joined as a fifth member, which formed the band's core and settled line-up. During the course of their existence, they had various line-up changes.

1. Suede

Suede (known in the United States as The London Suede) are an English rock band formed in London in 1989. The band is composed of singer Brett Anderson, guitarist Richard Oakes, bass player Mat Osman, drummer Simon Gilbert and keyboardist/rhythm guitarist Neil Codling.

1. Pulp

Pulp were an English rock band formed in Sheffield in 1978. Their best-known line-up from their heyday (1992–1997) consisted of Jarvis Cocker (vocals, guitar, keyboards), Candida Doyle (keyboards), Russell Senior (guitar, violin), Mark Webber (guitar, keyboards), Steve Mackey (bass) and Nick Banks (drums, percussion).

What’s “The Battle of Britpop

A chart battle between Blur and Oasis, dubbed "The Battle of Britpop", brought Britpop to the forefront of the British press in 1995. The bands had initially praised each other but over the course of the year antagonisms between the two increased. Spurred on by the media, the groups became engaged in what the NME dubbed on the cover of its 12 August issue the "British Heavyweight Championship" with the pending release of Oasis' single "Roll with It" and Blur's "Country House" on the same day. The battle pitted the two bands against each other, with the conflict as much about British class and regional divisions as it was about music. Oasis were taken as representing the North of England, while Blur represented the South. The event caught the public's imagination and gained mass media attention in national newspapers, tabloids, and television news. NME wrote about the phenomenon, "Yes, in a week where news leaked that Saddam Hussein was preparing nuclear weapons, everyday folks were still getting slaughtered in Bosnia and Mike Tyson was making his comeback, tabloids and broadsheets alike went Britpop crazy." "Country House" sold 274,000 copies to "Roll With Its 216,000 – the songs charting at number one and number two respectively. However, in the long run Oasis became more commercially successful than Blur, achieving sustained sales in the United States thanks to the singles "Wonderwall" and "Champagne Supernova". Oasis's second album, (What's the Story) Morning Glory? (1995), sold over four million copies in the UK, becoming the third best-selling album in British history.

Why is it claimed Declined?

Oasis' third album “Be Here Now” (1997) was highly anticipated. Despite initially attracting positive reviews and selling strongly, the record was soon subjected to strong criticism from music critics, record-buyers and even Noel Gallagher himself for its overproduced and bloated sound. Music critic Jon Savage pinpointed Be Here Now as the moment where Britpop ended; Savage said that while the album "isn't the great disaster that everybody says," he noted that "[I]t was supposed to be the big, big triumphal record" of the period. At the same time, Blur sought to distance themselves from Britpop with their self-titled fifth album, assimilating American lo-fi influences such as Pavement. Albarn explained to the NME in January 1997 that "We created a movement: as far as the lineage of British bands goes, there'll always be a place for us ... We genuinely started to see that world in a slightly different way."

As Britpop slowed, many acts began to falter and broke up. The sudden popularity of the pop group the Spice Girls has been seen as having "snatched the spirit of the age from those responsible for Britpop." While established acts struggled, attention began to turn to the likes of Radiohead and the Verve, who had been previously overlooked by the British media. These two bands—in particular Radiohead—showed considerably more esoteric influences from the 1960s and 1970s that were uncommon among earlier Britpop acts. In 1997, Radiohead and the Verve released their respective albums OK Computer and Urban Hymns, both widely acclaimed.[14] Post-Britpop bands such as Travis, Stereophonics and Coldplay, influenced by Britpop acts, particularly Oasis, with more introspective lyrics, were some of the most successful rock acts of the late 1990s and early 2000s.

What’s the Influence?

Pop-Englishness and Post-Britpop guitar Bands

1. Kaiser Chiefs: ‘What do you want for tea? I want crisps’

Kaiser Chiefs are an English indie rock band from Leeds who formed in 2000 as Parva, releasing one studio album, 22, in 2003, before renaming and establishing themselves in their current name that same year.

1. Arctic Monkeys: ‘Your name isn’t Rio, but I don’t care for sand’

Arctic Monkeys are an English rock band formed in 2002 in High Green, a suburb of Sheffield. The band consists of Alex Turner (lead vocals, guitar, piano), Matt Helders (drums, vocals), Jamie Cook (guitar, keyboards) and Nick O'Malley (bass guitar, backing vocals).

1. Bloc Party: ‘This tommyrot and flag waving is just getting me down’

Bloc Party are an English rock band, composed of Kele Okereke (lead vocals, rhythm guitar, keyboards, sampler), Russell Lissack (lead guitar, keyboards), Justin Harris (bass guitar, keyboards, saxophones, backing vocals) and Louise Bartle (drums, percussion).

Post-Britpop

After Britpop the media focused on bands that may have been established acts, but had been over-looked due to focus on the Britpop movement. Bands such as [Radiohead](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radiohead) and [The Verve](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Verve), and new acts such as [Travis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Travis_(band)), [Stereophonics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stereophonics), [Feeder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feeder_(band)) and particularly [Coldplay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coldplay), achieved wider international success than most of the Britpop groups that had preceded them, and were some of the most commercially successful acts of the late 1990s and early 2000s. These bands avoided the Britpop label while still producing music derived from it. Bands that had enjoyed some success during the mid-1990s, but were not really part of the Britpop scene, included [The Verve](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Verve) and [Radiohead](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radiohead). The music of most bands was guitar based, often mixing elements of British traditional rock (or British trad rock), particularly [The Beatles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Beatles), [The Rolling Stones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rolling_Stones) and [Small Faces](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Small_Faces) with American influences. Post-Britpop bands also used elements from 1970s British rock and pop music. Drawn from across the United Kingdom, the themes of their music tended to be less parochially centred on British, English and London life, and more introspective than had been the case with Britpop at its height. This, beside a greater willingness to woo the American press and fans, may have helped many of them in achieving international success. They have been seen as presenting the image of the rock star as an ordinary person, or "boy-next-door" and their increasingly melodic music was criticised for being bland or derivative.

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