BBC LEARNING ENGLISH
6 Minute English
Grime: Music from architecture
This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil
Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Sam
And I'm Sam.

Neil
In this 6 Minute English, we're talking about music. What sort of music do you like listening to, Sam?

Sam
Well, I wouldn't say I have one specific type. My taste in songs is more **eclectic** – a word that describes taste which includes a wide variety of styles.

Neil
Well, in this programme, we're talking all about grime – a style of music which originated in London – specifically in the tower blocks of east and southeast London.

Sam
Yes – the artists are predominantly young black men and often cite the decaying tower blocks they grew up in as an inspiration for the urban style of music.

Neil
Well, before we continue talking about grime music, I have a question for you, Sam. Stormzy is one of the most famous grime artists, but what is his real name? Is it:
    a) Michael Omari
    b) Martin Owusu
    c) Marvin Appiah

Sam
I think I might know this one – I'll say a) Michael Omari.

Neil
We can find out if you're right at the end of this programme. For many people, knowing the origin of a type of music helps them to understand more about the style and lyrics.

Sam
Here's writer Jude Yawson talking with BBC journalist Andrew Marr about his experience growing up on an estate in southeast London on the BBC Radio 4 programme, Start the Week…

Jude Yawson
Yes, so I lived like on an estate. It's, it's in Annerley, near Crystal Palace. And for me growing up with this experience was like literally acknowledging the different cultures and peoples that lived within, like this state. And it was around the age of about, say, seven or eight – that's when things for me and my particular estate started to get a bit more **contentious** with the other people that were moving in. Kids were **coming of age**, becoming more like free and venturing out and around the estate. And, you know, police kind of, like. harassing, but…

Andrew Marr
So you've got different cultures knocking into each other and the police knocking into everybody else.

Sam
So Jude Yawson describes his upbringing. He used the word **contentious** – likely to cause or create an argument – to describe life on the estate.

Neil
Yes, and he said the kids were **coming of age** – meaning transitioning from a child into an adult. In his interview, he goes on to say how a teacher gave him the advice that if he ever got stabbed, not to remove the knife - as he would bleed to death.

Sam
He says that at the age of 14 when he was told that, he felt grateful and that the teacher was looking out for him, but in hindsight questions why a teenager should receive that information.

Neil
What this does is give us an insight into life and the background that led to some people, like Stormzy, creating grime music. He says that it started off in the

bedrooms and basements of tower blocks and homes in these areas of London, with many artists' works being broadcast on pirate radio stations.

Sam
That said, for some people, this type of music represents something different. There are some who think the hard-hitting lyrics and strong beats glorify violence. They see it as an aggressive and violent form of music.

Neil
However, Jude Yawson, speaking with Andrew Marr on BBC Radio 4 programme Start the Week, has a different interpretation of what grime music is all about.

Jude Yawson
I describe grime as like a soulful shout… there's a necessity in literally getting all of this content out of yourself. And one of the most **predominant** grime artists, Wiley, was basically the first person that created this sound – it's like 140 beats per minute. Because that's such a raw tune, but the chorus literally **chants** like 'there are lots of signs in life, some that you may not realise'. And, for me, I was listening to that as like an 11- or 12-year-old and it's very **existential**.

Sam
He used the word **predominant**, which describes the strongest or most important thing, to describe the artist Wiley. That's who Jude Yawson says was the first person to create the grime sound.

Neil
He also used the verb **chants** – sings repeatedly over and over – to talk about the chorus from one of Wiley's songs.

Sam
And he described the experience of listening to it as being **existential** – relating to human existence.

Neil
Which inspires me to go and listen to some grime music after today's show, but before we do – I asked you a question about the real name of the grime artist Stormzy.

Sam
You did. And being a fan of many different music styles – I think I know this one! I said a) Michael Omari.

Neil
You really do know your music, Sam. You're right. In fact, his full name is Michael Ebenezer Kwadjo Omari Owuo Jr. I think that I'll have to make the next question much harder for you! So, before we leave today, let's recap the vocabulary, starting with **eclectic**, a word which describes taste which includes a wide variety of styles.

Sam
Contentious means creating or causing arguments.

Neil
We also had **coming of age** – transitioning from child to adult.

Sam
Predominant refers to something that is the strongest or most important.

Neil
Chants is a verb which means sing or repeat the same thing over and over again. And **existential** means relating to human existence.

Sam
Well, we certainty learnt a lot about grime music and its origin.

Neil
There are lots more 6 Minute English programmes to enjoy on our website at bbclearningenglish.com.

Sam
Thanks for listening and goodbye.

VOCABULARY

eclectic
describes taste which includes a wide variety of styles

contentious
creating or causing conflict

coming of age
becoming an adult

predominant
the strongest or most important

chants
sings the same thing over and over again

existential
relating to human existence