An NSA Resource

National Student Auditions
National Association of Teachers of Singing

Commercial Music
NSA Category Resources

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prepared by
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Introducing
Commercial Music
in your
chapter or region's NSA

NSA Commercial Music Goals

- Provide constructive, written feedback from a panel of impartial adjudicators who are informed in diverse styles and who are experienced and trained to offer students subjective feedback aligned with industry standards.
- Inspire and encourage students and teachers to learn and respect all styles and genres of music as art music worthy of advanced study.
- Encourage serious study of popular and commercial music in the voice studio to train commercially viable voices that maintain artistic authenticity.
- Create a collegial and supportive atmosphere that encourages, and values artistic singing deemed excellent in the context of the cultural expectations of each style.

Community Outreach

At the chapter level, compile a list of teachers who teach at least 50% in Commercial Music Styles/Genres to help with adjudicating CM Auditions. Adjudicators must bring some expertise to their adjudication. You may engage adjudicators who are qualified industry professionals, but not NATS members. Adjudicators may reside outside your chapter or region. Video auditions allow for a greater range of potential adjudicators. Voice teachers who specialize in Commercial Music may need your personal welcome with invitations to join NATS and enter their students in our NSA.

Online CM Rubric, Terminology, and Resources

NATS requires every NSA adjudicator in the CM categories to have reviewed the new CM rubrics, CM terminology, and to have watched the new CM specific adjudicator training video available in fall 2023 online. Teachers are encouraged to review all NATS CM resources online at www.nats.org.

Commercial Music in NATS NSA

Commercial Music Categories are designed to include varied styles of music including bluegrass, blues, calypso, contemporary Christian, country, electro-pop, folk, funk, gospel, jazz, pop, punk, rap, reggae, rhythm & blues (R&B), rock, soul, and more. Arrangements of musical theatre solos are accepted in the commercial music categories whenever the arrangements are interpreted in a specific commercial music style not performed as in the original musical theatre production. **CM repertoire cannot be vetted in advance**, but the specificity of style will be reflected in the adjudication using the standards defined in the CM rubric on page 6.

Live versus Virtual Auditions

The singer's microphone must be visible in all virtual CM auditions. We encourage chapters and regions to hold their preliminary CM Student Auditions online in a hybrid audition. This will limit the number of rooms needed and lower your equipment costs. Students must use the same audio equipment in live auditions. we recommend having a single room reserved for the CM semifinal and final auditions leveling any audio equipment-based advantages or disadvantages. If logistics are challenging, all levels of CM Auditions may be conducted virtually; however convenient, this option lessen the many benefits of auditioning live with all auditions performed using the same audio equipment. A collaborating pianist or instrumentalist may play from memory, from a lead sheet or from sheet music. Alternately, a student may sing with an instrumental track or accompany themselves as allowed with some limits in the NSA category regulations on the next page. Be sure to read the NSA Regulations: CM Terminology, which clearly defines terms used in the regulations. Each chapter and region are encouraged to choose the best path forward in offering these CM categories to meet the needs of their membership.

CM Categories Advancing to NSA National Rounds of Auditions
ALL AUDITION SELECTIONS TO BE PERFORMED FROM MEMORY

CM 1 **Children's Voices** ages 11 or younger in 5th grade or below, a 6-minute audition, performing **2** contrasting, age-appropriate selections performed in a CM style(s).

CM 2 **Youth Voices** ages 11–14 in 6th–8th grades, a 6-minute audition, performing **2** contrasting, age-appropriate selections performed in a CM style(s).

CM 3 **High School Treble Voices** ages 14–19, an 8–10-minute audition, performing **3** contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): one ballad + one up tempo selection. Only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative instrumentalist.

CM 4 **High School Tenor, Baritone & Bass Voices** ages 14–19, an 8–10-minute audition, performing **3** contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): one ballad + one up tempo selection. Only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative instrumentalist.

CM 5 **Lower Treble Voices** ages 22 or younger in their 1st or 2nd year of voice training post-High School, a 10-minute audition, performing **3** contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative instrumentalist.

CM 6 **Lower Tenor, Baritone & Bass Voices** ages 22 or younger in their 1st or 2nd year of voice training post-High School, a 10-minute audition, performing **3** contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): only one song may be an original song, instead of a cover. Only one song may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative instrumentalist.

CM 7 **Upper Treble Voices** ages 25 or younger in their 3rd–5th year of voice training post-High School, a 12-minute audition, performing **4** contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): up to 2 songs may be original songs, instead of a cover. Up to 2 songs may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative instrumentalist.

CM 8 **Upper Tenor, Baritone & Bass Voices** ages 25 or younger in their 3rd–5th year of voice training post-High School, a 12-minute audition, performing **4** contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): up to 2 songs may be original songs, instead of a cover. Up to 2 songs may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative instrumentalist.

CM 9 **Advanced Treble Voices** ages 30 or younger, post-baccalaureate, beyond their 4th year of voice training post-High School, a 15-minute audition, performing **5** contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s):
up to 3 songs may be original songs, instead of a cover. Up to 2 songs may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative instrumentalist.

CM 10 **Advanced Tenor, Baritone & Bass Voices** ages 30 or younger, post-baccalaureate, beyond their 4th year of voice training post-High School, a 15-minute audition, performing **5** contrasting full songs performed in a CM style(s): up to 3 songs may be original songs, instead of a cover. Up to 2 songs may be self-accompanied on an acoustic instrument, instead of performing with an instrumental track or a live collaborative instrumentalist.

NOTE: According to the number of participants, chapters & regions may choose to sub-divide these categories, *i.e.*, if CM 2 has a large number of entries, CM 2 could be subdivided into CM 2A for ages 11 and 12 with CM 2B for ages 13 and 14.

Recommended CM Auditions Audio Equipment

- JBL PRX ONE Powered Column PA with Mixer and DSP
- JBL Transporter Bag (to carry audio equipment, if desired)
- Two Shure SM58 Microphones
- Two 22 Gauge Performer XLR Cables 25'
- Two Tripod Mic Stands with Telescopic Boom
- Audio Auxillary 3.5 mm: to lightning AND to USB C dongles for playing tracks

Listed above is the audio equipment that NATS uses in the NSA Commercial Music national semifinals. If the audio equipment listed above proves cost prohibitive, a much smaller and less expensive karaoke machine with a microphone could suffice but with reduced sound quality. To support the purchase of audio equipment for NSA events as well as other regional NATS activities, NATS regions receive a national NATS allotment. Additionally, a NATS discretionary grant application is also available to each region's governor. This grant can support the purchase of audio equipment.

Terminology applying to ALL NSA Categories

CATEGORY	Categories are defined by voice type. Treble: Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Contralto, Countertenor Voices 1, 3, 5 ,7, 9, 13 TBB: Tenor, Baritone, Bass Voices 2, 4 ,6 ,8, 10, 12, 14
CATEGORY NUMBERS	Categories numbers also reflect the student's level of study. Children–Middle School Youth 1 & 2, High School (HS) 3 & 4, Lower: one–two years post-HS 5 & 6, Upper: three–five years post-HS 7 & 8, Advanced: post-undergraduate 9 & 10, Other Adults 11 & 12 Nontraditional Students 13 & 14
LENGTH OF STUDY	Length of voice study determines the selection of an appropriate Category of Entry. Total voice study with a voice teacher (NATS Member or Non-NATS Member) either in an independent studio or collegiate/conservatory program or with any number of voice teachers is a determining factor in NSA's post-high school categories only. Length of voice study is counted in years, not in semesters. **POST- HIGH SCHOOL STUDY** **Lower**: students 22 or younger, in their 1st or 2nd year of post-high school voice study **Upper:** students 24 or younger, in their 3rd, 4th, or 5th year of post-high school voice study and not enrolled in a graduate voice program **Advanced:** post-baccalaureate students aged 30 years or younger in their 4th or higher year of post-High School voice study Counting years of study begins with the first day of post-high school study—meaning the first year of voice study is in progress. For example, a student in their fifth undergraduate semester of voice study is in their third year of study. Any reasonable portion of a year will be counted as one year—even if the singer stops taking weekly lessons during a portion of that year, excepting if the singer is ill and unable or forbidden to sing during that time for medical reasons.
AGE LIMIT	Age limits are determined by the age of the entered student on September 1st, the first day of each NSA audition cycle. Singers above the age limit of a category may not compete in that category. When a singer is above or below the age limits for their level of study, that student may enter their level of study category for comments only OR enter any available Non-Traditional student category, which does not advance to national levels of NSA. A student will not change their level of category(s) of entry or entered repertoire in an audition cycle.
REPERTOIRE	High school-aged categories and younger in Chapter and District auditions may require two or three selections as best serves the needs and tradition of the Chapter or District. Regional and National Auditions will require three selections in all High School Categories.
AUDITIONING MEMBER-TEACHERS	NATS teacher-members who meet the requirements of a student audition category in terms of their age and years of study—may enter student auditions through the NATS member with whom they are currently studying, but they may not enter themselves in the audition. If they enter their students in the audition, they must be available to adjudicate a category in addition to auditioning.
OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE IN AUDITIONS	The National Association of Teachers of Singing requests that NATS members guide their students in selecting NSA audition repertoire that embraces our mission to be a welcoming and supportive community of members and students who celebrate the unique identities, varied backgrounds, and experiences of all individuals. NATS asks teachers to remain mindful of lyric/text content that respects the wide range of ages and identities of those participating in our NSA as well as those present in our audiences at NATS events. To honor the music's copyright owners, no lyric substitutions of offensive lyrics are allowed unless a clean version is published or legal permission for a change is obtained.
DOUBLE DIPPING REPERTOIRE	Singers entered in more than one NSA category (Classical, Commercial Music, Musical Theatre, and/or Spirituals) are allowed to enter the same selection in more than one category provided the repertoire requirements of each category are met. Teachers and students are reminded that the standards in each genre category are different. A successful audition in one category will not necessarily produce success in a second category—unless altered to address the different standards of performance. Standards are defined in each NSA adjudication rubric. If a singer advances in NATS Auditions (chapter, district, regional, or national rounds) in more than one category, they may not sing the same selection in multiple final auditions. Please see the NSA FAQ for additional information.

COMMERCIAL MUSIC CM AUDITION TERMINOLOGY

Accompaniment Options	Singers may perform with any or any combination of the following accompaniment options: 1. a pre-recorded instrumental track without backing vocals, 2. a live collaborative instrumentalist, or 3. in a limited capacity (*see CM categories of entry in Appendix A*), accompany themselves on an acoustic instrument.
Arrangements	Original or published arrangements of musical theatre selections are accepted in CM categories in NATS Student Auditions, ONLY when performed in a distinct commercial music style different from the musical or subsequent revival of the musical in which the song originated.
Commercial Music	Each CM audition may include one or more commercial music style(s). Commercial music includes all genres of vocal music performed by recording artists, not included in the classical and musical theatre NATS Student Auditions categories. Commercial music includes bluegrass, blues, contemporary Christian, country, folk, gospel, jazz, pop, rap, rock, rhythm and blues (R&B), soul, and all ethnic music, *etc.*
Cover Song	A cover song is a selection performed by someone other than the composer or original recording artist. Performing a cover does not imply an imitation of the original recording artist.
Diva Microphone	A smaller microphone worn on the singer's head.
Microphone Technique	Auditions are to be performed with amplification. In live auditions, all singers are required to use the amplification equipment provided. In video auditions, the use of a microphone off-camera or on-camera (on a stationary stand, diva microphone, and/or handheld microphone) is an artistic choice influencing interpretation. When using a microphone, the singer needs to make intentional choices of the microphone's placement (whether handheld, using a stationary mic stand, or diva microphone). When choosing to use a handheld microphone, the singer will make intentional choices in the distance of the microphone from their mouth to create stylized effects.
Rhythmic Groove	An organic embodiment of the beat that goes beyond specific notation or time signature, often referred to as the rhythmic feel of a song.
Vocal Stylisms*	In Commercial Music's genre-specific elements of vocal interpretation, vocal stylisms are often not notated in the music. • Appropriate ONSETS vary among fry, slide, yodel, growl, breathy, cry, creak, flip, scream, *etc.* • Appropriate RELEASES vary among abrupt glottal stops, breathy, fall-off, fall-up, shadow vowels, fry, creaky, gaspy, *etc.* • Appropriate NUANCES/EMBELLISHMENTS vary among riffs/runs, licks, flips, pitch slides, pop-appoggiatura, yodel/register shifts, pitch bends/scoops, *etc.* Visit NSA resources online at www.nats.org to hear specific examples.
Memorization	All selections must be performed from memory including self-accompaniments played.
Comments Only	Any registered student may elect to sing for comments only and participate in the preliminary audition. The judges will not score auditions entered for comments only.
Off-Camera	Not visible on video, placed beyond the edge of the camera's frame.
Full Song	An entire song, no internal cuts. Intros and outros may be abbreviated to accommodate audition's time limits.
Authentic Performance	A genuine tone unique to each singer for the purpose of sincere communication with no elements of vocal impersonation.

*Edrie Means Weekly coined the term Vocal Stylisms in her teaching of Commercial Music and Musical Theatre.

NATS Audition Rubric
COMMERCIAL MUSIC CATEGORIES

- Students may choose to sing all their selections in one CM style or vary their selections in multiple CM styles.
- Each singer's performance is adjudicated in comparison to the following standards as applied to the category of entry.

STANDARDS	DEVELOPING 70 – 79	ADVANCING 80 – 89	MASTERING 90 – 100
ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION • The performance is authentic. • The performance offers a unique, stylized interpretation of the music. • The performance is specific to the selected style of commercial music.	The singer needs an increased understanding of the stylistic elements of each selection. The interpretation lacks authenticity and is not unique to the singer.	The singer is advancing in the ability to communicate the stylistic elements of each selection. The interpretation has moments of authenticity unique to the singer.	The singer is mastering the ability to communicate the stylistic elements of each selection. The interpretation is authentic and unique to the singer.
LYRICS • The lyrics are articulated in the style appropriate to the selected style of commercial music. • Vocal tract shaping and diction enhance the individuality of the performance.	Articulation is incompatible with the style of the song. The singer is beginning to engage the lyrics to embody the essence of each style.	Articulation is often compatible with the style of each song. The singer is often engaging the lyrics to embody the essence of each style.	Articulation is compatible with the style of each song. The singer is consistently engaging the lyrics to embody the essence of each style.
VOCAL STYLISMS* • The song's artistic interpretation includes expressive vocal stylisms characteristic of the selected style. • Interpretive vocal stylisms may include varied vocal onsets, releases, nuances, and embellishments, which stylistically color the vocal tone with fry, cry, growl, breathiness, *etc. (See CM Terminology)*	Vocal interpretations lack the vocal stylisms characteristic of each genre. The singer is beginning to develop a facility with vocal stylisms.	Vocal interpretations include some vocal stylisms characteristic of each selection's style. The singer is developing a facility with artistic vocal stylisms.	Vocal interpretations include vocal stylisms characteristic of each genre. The singer has proficient facility with artistically effective vocal stylisms.
MUSICIANSHIP • Performance is in tune. • Rhythmic groove enhances the performance. • Memorization is secure and accurate.	Pitches need to be more accurate. The style and rhythmic groove require further study. Memorization is incomplete.	Most pitches are accurate. The style and rhythmic groove are developing. Memorization is organic and mostly accurate.	All pitches are accurate. The style and rhythmic groove enhance the performance. Memorization is organic and accurate.
TONE Singer shows mastery of the vocal demands of songs selected and makes subtle or dramatic adjustments appropriate to the style and emotional expression of each selection. • Each commercial style requires a variety of authentic vocal colors and sounds culturally viable for the chosen style of music performed. • Vocal tone may include some form of a mix of Mode I (Chest/TA) and Mode II (Head/CT) as well as varied organic, primal sounds born of raw emotion. • All CM styles are reliant on amplification. The microphone is used dynamically to facilitate vocal stylisms as well as projection.	The singer is beginning to show ability in meeting the demands of each song and is able to make some appropriate choices in keeping with the specific style of each song.	The singer shows advancing ability in meeting the demands of each song and is often able to make appropriate choices in keeping with the specific style of each song.	The singer is mastering the ability to meet the demands of each song and makes appropriate choices in keeping with the specific style of each song.
BREATHING • Inhalation is efficient to the style and may be noisy or silent in response to raw emotion. • Exhalation provides stability and vocal energy. The appearance of effort may be intrinsic to style.	The singer is beginning to inhale efficiently to meet the demands of each style. Exhalation needs to provide more stability and vocal energy.	The singer inconsistently inhales efficiently to meet the demands of each style. Exhalation inconsistently provides stability and vocal energy.	The singer is mastering efficient inhalation to meet the demands of each style. Exhalation provides stability and vocal energy.
ENSEMBLE (comments only) The singer coordinates with the accompaniment effectively to accomplish artistic goals.	The singer needs to coordinate more effectively with the accompaniment to accomplish artistic goals.	The singer is advancing in the ability to coordinate with the accompaniment to accomplish artistic goals.	The singer is mastering effective coordination with the accompaniment to accomplish artistic goals.

Edrie Means Weekly coined this term in her teaching of Commercial Music and Musical Theatre.

An NSA Resource

National Student Auditions

National Association of Teachers of Singing

A Glossary of Commercial Music Terminology

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2023

Break

1. In <u>popular music</u>, a break is an instrumental or percussion section or interlude during a song derived from or related to stop-time – being a break from the main parts of the song or piece. **2.** A solo break <u>in jazz</u> occurs when the rhythm section stops playing behind a soloist for a brief period, usually two or four bars leading into the soloist's first chorus. While the solo break is a break for the rhythm section, for the soloist, it is a flourish or cadenza meant to improvise an interesting and engaging melodic line. **3.** <u>In a DJ's art</u>, a break is where all elements of a song (*e.g.,* pads, basslines, vocals), except for percussion, disappear for a time. This is distinguished from a **breakdown**, a section where the composition is deliberately deconstructed to minimal elements (usually the percussion or rhythm section with the vocal re-introduced over the minimal backing), all other parts having been gradually or suddenly cut out. The distinction between breaks and breakdowns may be described as, breaks are for the drummer; breakdowns are for hands in the air. **4.** <u>In some hip hop and electronica</u>, a short break is also known as a **cut**, and the reintroduction of the full bass line and drums is known as a **drop**, which is sometimes accented by cutting off everything, even the percussion. **5.** <u>In general terms</u> a break may describe as when the song takes a breather, drops down to some exciting percussion, and then comes storming back again. In this use, a break may be compared to a song's fake ending. Breaks usually occur two-thirds to three-quarters of the way through a song. **6.** <u>In bluegrass and some traditional folk music</u>, a break is when an instrument plays the melody to a song idiomatically, *i.e.,* the back-up played on the banjo for a mandolin break may differ from that played for a dobro break in the same song. **7.** <u>In contemporary Hip Hop</u>, break refers to any segment of music (usually four measures or less) that could be sampled from a previous recording and repeated in a new song. An example would be using a sample of the drum track from a previous recording in a new recording. A break is basically any expanse of music that is thought of as a break/sample by a Hip Hop producer.

Bridge

A section of a song intended to provide contrast to the rest of the song. From The Beatles to Coldplay to Iron Maiden, songwriters use the bridge to change the mood of the song, shift the direction of the song and keep audiences on their toes.

Chord Chart

A shorthand form of musical notation that provides the basic chord changes and essential rhythmic information of a song. Most used by studio session players, rhythm sections or jazz bands to provide the skeletal structure of the song while allowing players room to create their own parts and improvise. While lead sheets typically focus on melody line and chord structure, chord charts display mainly chord changes and rhythm.

Common Pop Music Song Form

Verse-Chorus Form **or** Verse-Chorus Form with Bridge

Comp

1. as an abbreviation of <u>complimentary</u>, the gift of free tickets to a performance are often termed comps, **2**. as an abbreviation of the term <u>accompaniment</u>, comping is used

to describe the chords, rhythms, and countermelodies provided by a pianist or other instrumentalist to support a solo voice or instrument. Comping may be performed from a memory of knowing the chord changes that provide the harmonic structure of a familiar tune or performed from a lead sheet—both involving a level of improvisation, and **3**. as an abbreviation of <u>composite</u>, track comping is the process of editing audio recordings of multiple performances into a single performance, to create a composite audio recording, sometimes called a composite track, but often abbreviated and called a comp.

Cover
A cover is a song performed by someone other than the composer or original recording artist. Performing a cover does not imply an imitation of the original recording artist.

Drop
The arrival of the chorus section of a song form after being set up by the lift. *(See lift defined below)*

Front
Jazz slang for the introduction or opening bars of a song.

Genre
Sometimes used interchangeably with musical style, but includes other aspects such geographic origin, techniques, and cultural context.

Go Out
Take the final chorus, end the song.

Groove
A term that evokes the channeled flow of rhythms. An organic embodiment of the beat that goes beyond specific notation or time signature, often referred to as the rhythmic feel of a song. A rhythmic pattern or feel that creates a sense of movement and often makes people want to dance.

Head
The first (and last) chorus of a tune, in which the song or melody is stated without improvisation or with minimal improvisation.

Hook
A memorable and catchy musical phrase or segment that sticks in the listener's mind. This memorable musical phrase or riff may often be found in the Chorus of the song.

Lead Sheet
Lead sheets most commonly include a melody line written in music notation with chord changes above the staff, and lyrics below it. A shorthand form of music notation like a chord chart that displays the basic, essential elements of a song allowing musicians to follow along without reading the full notation of every note or expression. Lead sheets allow musicians to comp original, sometimes improvised, accompaniments for solos.

Lick
A short musical phrase or riff that is repeated throughout a song.

Lift
The pre-chorus, often called the lift, sets the listener up for the chorus. The lift is used to create anticipation and give the chorus more impact when it does finally arrive. The lift creates a separation between verse and chorus and uses musical devices to prepare

the listener for chorus. This is often also a section in a pop song where volume automation can be used to bring the level down by a small amount to accentuate the drop — meaning the chorus that follows.

Out
The last chorus of a song when the head is played for the last time. On the stand the gesture of a raised clenched fist or a finger pointing to the head indicates that the out chorus is coming up.

Outro
1. A musical coda, or 2. instrumental bars added to end a song after the soloist is finished.

Quote
A snatch of some other well-known tune thrown into an improvised solo.

Riff
A repeated pattern designed to generate rhythmic momentum. A riff, sometimes called a run, is a stylistic melodic pattern of descending or ascending notes usually on one syllable (a vowel) at a fast pace. Riffs in contemporary music have their origin in Gospel and Jazz and can be found in many contemporary genres.

Run
A vocal run is a long series of notes that are sung in quick succession and stand out from the music. *Unlike riffs*, **runs** are designed to call attention to the singer.

Scat
Scat singing is the art of vocal jazz improvisation; the voice is used as an instrument to create wordless phrases or phrases sung to emotive, overtly meaningless syllables in much the same way a saxophonist, trumpeter or other instrumentalist might improvise a solo. In a scat solo, the singer is freed from the constraints of the lyrics and improvises freely to the chord progression of the song. The choice of scat syllables influences the mood of the scat solo. Typically, scat syllables ending in percussive consonants create a different musical mood than scat syllables ending in vowels. Scat syllables also provide rhythmic articulation. Commonly used scat syllables include: Dwee, Shwee, Bee, Shu, Du, Dah, Bah, Yah, Vah, Dow, Yow, Doot, Dot, Dit, Bot, Bop, *etc.*

Style
A characteristic manner of composition or performance. Contains common features found in the music of that era or cultural origin.

Tag
A tag is a typically short coda providing a unique ending for a song. In jazz, this may involve simultaneous improvisation by several musicians or creating multiple tags when ending a song. A tag may also be created during a vamp to create a unique ending. A note can be held over a reprise of the hook as a tag. Tags come in many forms as created by ingenious artists, perhaps most famous in jazz is the Count Basie Tag.

Thirty-two bar form
Like verse-chorus but takes the form of AABA

Top
The beginning point of each chorus, the first beat of the first measure.

Turnaround
A sequence of chords, or the portion of a tune that they occupy, that forms a cadence at the end of a section of a tune, definitively establishes the tonic key and leads back to the opening chord of the next section, or to the top.

12 Bar Blues
AAB form that is 12 measures in length and is more defined by its chord progression (I-IV-V). Although this chord progression is common in other forms, it helped define the blues.

Vamp
1. A simple section like a riff, designed to be repeated as often as necessary, frequently occurring at the beginning of a tune as an intro, or 2. a vamp may reference a constantly repeated bass line (ostinato) over which a solo is played.

Contemporary Pop Music Slang Terms

A-Lister
A highly successful and well-known artist.

Bangin'
A highly energetic and exciting song

Blower
A song that blows you away with its exceptional quality, talent, or impact.

Buzzsaw
A song with a sharp and aggressive sound, often associated with heavy metal or punk genres.

Clubber
A song that is perfect for the club scene and gets people dancing.

Ear Candy
A song or music that is catchy and memorable.

Fire
A song that is exceptionally good, impressively sung, and exciting

Jam
A song that has great rhythm and is danceable and memorable.

Killer
An outstanding or exceptional song.

Lit
Music or anything/anyone in pop culture that is good, intense, fun, and exciting.

Melter
A song that is emotionally powerful and deeply touching

Poppin'
A catchy and upbeat pop song.

Rager
 A high-energy and wild party song.

Runner

A song that is gaining popularity and climbing the charts quickly

Screamer

A song with intense vocals that are powerful and full of emotion.

Slammer

A song with a heavy and hard-hitting sound.

Slapper

A song with a strong, heavy bassline that is perfect for dancing or partying.

Twister

A fast-paced and complex song, often with intricate melodies or lyrics. This term is used in Rap music.

Vibe

1. An ambiance conveying a sense of a style, a place, or a feeling, *etc.* **2**. To have a feeling that what your listening, feeling, or seeing is reaching your soul or more simply, to enjoy a sensory experience. **3**. To be in harmony, not necessarily musical harmony, but agreement.

Warbler

A song that is sung with a beautiful and melodious voice.

Wobbler

A song with a fluctuating or vibrating sound, often associated with electronic music.

Popular Music Styles and Genres

Acid Rock

Rock music with a repetitive beat and lyrics that suggest psychedelic experiences.

Alternative Rock

Alternative rock is a category of rock music that emerged from the independent music underground of the 1970s and became widely popular in the 1990s. Alternative refers to the genre's distinction from mainstream or commercial rock or pop music. Although this could be contested since some of the major alternative artists have achieved mainstream success or co-opted with the major labels from the 1990s onward, especially since the new millennium and beyond. i.e., Sonic Youth, R.E.M. and later bands that became mainstream*, i.e.,* Nirvana and Red Hot Chili Peppers.

Bluegrass

Bluegrass music is a genre of American roots music that developed in the 1940s in the Appalachian region of the United States. The genre derives its name from the band Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys. Bluegrass combines the gospel-inspired vocals of the Blue Ridge Mountain region with folk melodies. Instrumentation generally includes guitars, banjos, mandolins, and fiddles. *i.e.,* The Stanley Brothers or The Bluegrass Boys

Blues

A style of music that evolved from southern African American secular songs in the United States around the 1860s and is usually characterized by slow tempo and flatted thirds and sevenths. Blues incorporated spirituals, work songs, field hollers, shouts, chants, and rhymed simple narrative ballads. Blues influenced the development of rock, rhythm and blues and country music, *i.e.,* Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Lead Belly, John Lee Hooker, B.B. King.

Country Pop

A fusion genre of country music and pop music that was developed by members of the country genre out of a desire to reach a larger, mainstream audience. Shania Twain, Garth Brooks, Carrie Underwood, Maren Morris and Taylor Swift are contemporary examples.

Doo-Wop

Rhythm and Blues music that originated in the African American community during the 1940s in the large cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Baltimore, Newark, Detroit, Washington D.C., and Los Angeles. Sung in harmony with words and non-sensical syllables by small groups. *i.e.,* Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, The Ink Spots, The Moonglows

Funk

A type of popular music characterized by syncopated rhythm and a heavy, repetitive bass line. Funk originated in Black American communities in the mid-1960s when musicians created a rhythmic, danceable new form of music through a mixture of various music genres such as jazz, blues, and soul. *i.e.*, James Brown, Sly and the Family Stone, Parliament Funkadelic, and The Gap Band.

Gangsta Rap

Gangsta Rap or Gangster Rap, initially called Reality Rap, emerged in 1986 in Los Angeles as a controversial hip-hop subgenre whose lyrics assert the culture and values typical of urban American gangs and street hustlers. Gangsta Rap has been recurrently accused of promoting disorderly conduct and broad criminality, as well as misogyny, promiscuity, and materialism. Gangsta Rap's defenders have characterized it as artistic depictions not literal endorsements of real life among marginalized people of color in poor urban communities in America, and that some lyrics voice rage against social oppression or police brutality, *i.e.,* Schoolly D, NWA, Public Enemy, Tupac Shakur.

Heavy Metal

A ponderous rock form characterized by brittle, flashy guitar work, unnaturally high-pitched male vocals, and an adolescent fascination with the darker side of human experience. Born in the late 1960s of bands such as Deep Purple and Black Sabbath, heavy metal is currently associated with bands such as Metallica and Soundgarden. Also called **metal** and **speed metal**.

Hip-Hop

Hip-Hop is a culture and art movement created by African Americans and pioneered from Black American street culture that had been around for years prior to its more mainstream discovery. Hip Hop is a cultural movement that is dominated by African American males though female hip hop artists have contributed to the art form and culture as well including Queen Latifah, Sister Souljah, and MC Lyte. Hip hop culture is characterized by four key elements: Rapping, DJing and turntablism, breakdancing, and

graffiti. Other elements include historical knowledge of the movement, beatboxing, street entrepreneurship, hip hop language, and hip-hop fashion. Rap is the music that defines Hip-Hop Culture.

New Age
Modern music is characterized by quiet improvisation on the acoustic piano, guitar and synthesizer and a dreamy, relaxing sound.

New Wave
An emotionally detached style of rock music characterized by a synthesized sound and a repetitive beat.

Pop Rap
Pop rap is a genre of music fusing the rhythm-based lyricism of hip hop music with pop music's preference for melodious vocals and catchy tunes. This genre gained mainstream popularity during the 1990s, though the influences and roots of pop rap can trace back to late-1980s hip hop artists such as Run-DMC, LL Cool J, and the Beastie Boys. The lyrics are often lighthearted, with hooks (choruses) like those heard in pop music.

Pop Music
Pop refers to any form of a popular song that has mass appeal and can describe both the style and contents of this type of music. Pop is typically catchy, with simple lyrics, short songs, and easy-to-remember melodies. Art pop, dance-pop, orchestral pop, country pop, indie pop, bubblegum, Sunshine Pop, Surf Pop, Synthpop, Teen Pop, Traditional Pop Music, Turkish Pop, Vispop, Wonky Pop, Post-Disco, Progressive Pop are among the many **subgenres of pop music.** Examples of Pop Music in the 2000s:

- "Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)" by Beyoncé
- "Umbrella" by Rihanna featuring Jay-Z
- "Uptown Funk" by Mark Ronson and Bruno Mars
- "Toxic" by Britney Spears
- "Rolling in the Deep" by Adele
- "Firework" by Katy Perry
- "Rehab" by Amy Winehouse
- "Call Me Maybe" by Carly Rae Jepsen

Punk
A rock form characterized by aggressive volume, short, angry vocals and often bitter political or hopeless emotional content. It was born as a reaction to the bland, corporate rock of the 1970s. Early exponents of punk include the Sex Pistols, The Clash, Ramones and Buzzcocks. Punk's recent revival is attributed to the dominance of sound-alike alternative bands.

Reggae
Popular music of Jamaican origin having elements of Calypso, soul and rock and characterized by a strongly accentuated offbeat.

Rhythm and Blues (R&B)
The all-encompassing term used to describe the African American wellspring of postwar popular music. From rhythm and blues has come rock, soul, funk, rap, and regional and stylistic offshoots. Critics consider Rhythm and Blues' birth to coincide with the decline of big bands and jazz's turn toward the bop emphasis on soloing. Rhythm and blues

retained an emphasis on vocals while adding a more pronounced beat characteristic of the blues.

Rock
Perhaps the most popular form of 20th-century music, a combination of African American rhythms, urban blues, folk and country music of the rural South. It has developed since the early 1950s into hundreds of subgenres, each with its own audience, record labels and radio formats. Music features distorted guitars and screaming vocals. Popularized by and associated primarily with Seattle bands such as Nirvana and Alice in Chains.

Salsa
A popular form of Latin-American dance music, characterized by Afro-Caribbean rhythms, Cuban big-band dance melodies and elements of jazz and rock.

Soul
The name for a type of rhythm and blues built on elements of gospel and spiritual music. Often, practitioners such as Sam Cooke maintained two careers simultaneously in soul and popular music.

Concert & Touring Terminology

Backline
Refers to the non-instrumental sound-system equipment, like amps and speaker cabinets, that you need to play a gig. Can also include instruments like drums (often minus the breakables) and keyboards. You will most often hear the term backline during logistics conversations about a one-off festival date, where quick changes between acts are essential, so artists are not necessarily expected to have all their own gear with them. When that is the case, the organizer should give you a rundown of what elements of the backline the venue will supply—gear brands, the size and power of amps, the number of pieces in the drum kit, and any other relevant details.

Billing
The list of acts playing a show, and there are various kinds of billing. Headline billing refers to one act (the headliner) as the main feature of a show and is the reason most people have showed up; that band or artist will occupy the top slot of any advertising literature and is represented in larger font type than the supporting acts. Equal billing puts everyone on the same level. There is also festival billing, which happens when there is a high volume of performances stretching over multiple days or at least multiple stages, with more than one headliner. Acts are organized into tiers, the way you see it on a Coachella poster, for example.

Breakables
Breakables are the pricey or special parts of a drum kit—snare, cymbals, kick pedal, for example—that each drummer brings themselves. Shells refers to the other components of the kit—toms, kick drum, stands, that are often provided by the headliner.

Buyer
Usually referred to as a talent buyer, this person negotiates on behalf of the venue or event to determine how much you will be paid and works out any necessary contracts.

DI (Direct Input) Box
A DI Box creates a balanced signal. An unbalanced output can pick up unwanted noise, ruining the sound, so if you have an instrument that emits an unbalanced output (usually a keyboard, synth, or guitar), you can plug it into a DI Box, which balances the output. The DI Box plugs into a mixing console, which sends a noiseless signal through the speakers.

Front of House
The front of house **(or FOH)** is the area where the soundboard and lighting controls are located. This is often a good distance from the stage, usually close to the center of the room, where technicians can see and hear everything from the perspective of the audience.

Headliner
The top performer(s) on a bill. The headlining act is the big draw for a show, is paid the most, performs the longest, and performs last.

Load-in/Load-out
The performer(s) and their support transport all musical equipment into the venue and on stage. **Load-out** is the exact opposite.

Mains
The main speakers for the front-of-house sound system. These are the speakers that provide the sound for the audience at a show. This is usually not the sound system that you, as an artist, will hear most clearly while on stage.

Managers
A **tour manager** is the person responsible for keeping the show going. Their responsibilities are endless: they make sure that the artist gets where they need to go on time and is in decent shape to be on stage, and they track down whatever is needed in whatever town the show stops in. A **production manager** makes sure the production—stage, sound, lights, performance, catering, etc.—is set up at each show and ready to go, while also dealing with issues pertaining to equipment. They are involved with the production during the entire tour. The **stage manager** deals with all stage and backstage issues- checking backstage passes, supervising turnovers, and making technical adjustments as needed.

Monitors
The stage monitor system is what provides the sound for the performer(s) on stage. It is important to be aware that what performer(s) hear through the monitors (the speakers that face the performer(s) and the back of the stage) will not be the same mix that the audience is hearing through the mains. The monitor system is there so the performer(s) can hear only what they need to hear while performing. The Front of House (FOH) staff will watch the performer(s) for cues such as pointing to a mic or other band members, pointing up or down, indicating more or less of something in the monitor. There are also in-ear monitors.

Promoter
The person, company, or organization that is planning and spreading the word about an event. A promoter can be a single individual arranging and publicizing a one-off gig, or it can be a massive corporation (Goldenvoice is an example) putting on a festival—or it can fall somewhere in between.

Radius Clause

A radius clause dictates a geographical area where the performer(s) may not perform during a specified time surrounding an event. It is used to make the performer(s) appearance exclusive to that event so that interest is not diluted.

Rhythm Section

A rhythm section is a core group of instruments within an ensemble that together play a groove/accompaniment under a lead instrument or vocalist. Most commonly, particularly in contemporary groove-based popular music since the 1950s, these roles are the drumbeat, bass, and a chord comping parts, fulfilled by a drum set, electric bass, and guitar and/or piano/keyboard. Together, the players of these parts define the music's characteristic metric, rhythmic, and harmonic components, which evoke and define the style and unique character of a song or composition.

Rider

A rider is a part of your contract that stipulates what extras the promoter must provide. This is most often in the form of food and drink in the green room before and after the show, but it can be expanded to include anything at the performer(s) expense.

Roadie

An employee of a touring band who sets up and maintains equipment or to describe any employee who tours with the band. They load in and load out, drive tour vehicles, ensure the security of instruments and artists, and keep the show on the road.

Set/Setlist

A setlist is the list of songs the performer(s) plan to play during the show. Performer(s) do not need to plan and share the setlist before the show, however, if there is the same crew for several shows, a setlist becomes a great resource for the sound and lighting techs. Having a setlist makes it easier to keep the band and production crew up to date.

Soundcheck

Soundcheck includes determining all the mix levels for the mains and monitors such as how loud certain instruments should be or where a voice should be in the mix. This is the performer(s) opportunity to work out any audio problems. A **line check** is an expedited soundcheck. Audio levels are checked quickly right at the beginning of the show and then the sound tech adjusts accordingly during the performance.

Stage plot

A stage plot is a visual representation of the stage set-up. Indicating where amps, drums, keys, microphones, DIs, *etc.* will be located on stage. A stage plot is usually just a simple drawing of where things go on stage, most often a digital image file, and is provided to the venue's stage manager so they know how to prepare for the show.

Strike

To strike something is to take it down and off the stage. That could mean an amp, an instrument, or the entire set-up for a band.

Support

The opening act or acts for the headliners. Support acts get shorter set times and are usually there to warm up the crowd for the main event.

Turnover
The time between sets the bands and techs must shift the setup on stage from one band to the next. Turnovers are usually done as quickly as possible and could entail striking one stage plot completely and replacing it with another, simply replacing everything but the backline, or even just leaving everything as is and having the bands share all gear.

Audio Terminology

Absorption
In acoustics, absorption is what happens when sound waves are absorbed by a surface, as opposed to bouncing off the surface (reflection). Absorptive materials in a control room, for example, tend to deaden the sound of the room because the sound energy is absorbed rather than reflected. (*Also see Reflection.*)

Acoustics
The science of sound—more specifically, the science of the properties and behavior of sound waves. A good understanding of acoustics is essential to audio engineering and studio design.

ADSR
Abbreviation for Attack, Decay, Sustain and Release, the four stages of volume changes in a sound event. ADSR controls are particularly useful on synthesizer instruments.

AFL
After-Fade Listen refers to a special system generally used for mixing consoles. AFL allows the audio engineer to monitor different parameters and signals at a pre-set level (after the fading process); this allows the engineer to compare the result with the initial PFL (pre-fade listen) results.

Ambience
In most cases, this refers to the atmosphere of a certain place, like a restaurant. But in recording, it refers to the part of the sound that comes from the surrounding environment rather than directly from the sound source. For example, the sound waves coming into your ears from a cello being played are coming directly from the source, but the sound of the same cello coming to you after bouncing off the back wall is ambient sound.

Ambient Field
The area away from the sound source where the reverberation is louder than the direct sound.

Ambient Miking
This refers to placing a microphone in the ambient field of a room to record the ambient reverberations of the sound. The recording engineer often does this in addition to direct miking of the instrument(s) to create a blend or mix of direct and reverberant sound in the recording.

AMP
An abbreviation of Amplifier.

Analog Signal

Analog (or Analogue) is one of the broadest terms in the world of music, as it has numerous similar meanings and uses. Vaguely described, analog is a type of audio signal that is initial and original. Analog devices utilize the created electric signals as is and reproduce the audio without any modifications or tweaks. Analog signal is completely opposite to digital signal.

Attack

Refers to the time any sound needs before it reaches its peak (maximum amplitude). This time interval is measured in milliseconds, but it substantially affects the overall sounds of instruments on various levels.

Attenuation

The reduction of electrical or acoustic signal strength. In audio, attenuation is measured in decibels (dB) and is typically heard as a reduction in volume. Sound waves traveling through the air naturally *attenuate* as they travel away from the source of the sound. Engineers also purposefully *attenuate* signals in the studio through gain controls or pads to prevent overload.

Audio Frequency

Audio frequency is a scale of signals audible to human ears. Typically, humans can recognize sounds from 20 hertz to 20 kilohertz, with 20 Hz being the least and 20 kHz being the most audible sounds.

Audio Interface

Audio interface helps musicians and audio engineers utilize various programs and plug-ins, allowing for a substantially more digital approach. Most audio interfaces come supplied with various built-in features that can drastically change how the recording process functions. Audio interfaces are typically connected to PCs via USBs and often feature their own pre-amps. The main difference between audio interface models is in the number of channels they provide (ranging from two to thirty).

DNR (Dolby Noise-Reduction Technology)

Dolby is a pioneer of noise reduction technology. Noise reduction refers to specifically engineered isolation that retains all audio within the given device (microphone, headphones, and similar). Dolby's noise reduction systems are comprised of type B, type C, and type S for domestic machines and Type A and Type SR for more professional machines.

Baffles

Sound absorbing panels that are used to prevent sound waves from entering or leaving a space.

Balance

1) The relative level of two or more instruments in a mix, or the relative level of audio signals in the channels of a stereo recording. 2) To even out the relative levels of audio signals in the channels of stereo recording.

Barrier Miking

A microphone placement technique in which a microphone is placed close to a reflective surface. When done correctly, barrier miking ensures that both the direct and reflected

sounds reach the microphone simultaneously, preventing phase cancellation between the two.

Basic Session
The first audio recording session for recording the basic tracks that serve as the song's foundation (for example, the drums and bass).

Beaming
A phenomenon found in loudspeakers in which higher frequencies are projected straight out of the loudspeaker, rather than dispersing along with the lower frequencies. When you stand on-axis in front of the speaker, it sounds as though it is only reproducing the high frequencies, rather than the mids or lows. This phenomenon is alleviated by routing the high frequencies through horns in the loudspeaker.

Bi-Amplification
A technique in which high and low frequencies in a speaker or speaker system are driven by two separate amplifiers.

Blending
The mixing of multiple sounds or channels together to form one sound or mixing the left and right signals together.

Boom
A telescoping support arm attached to a microphone stand holding the microphone.

Boom Stand
A microphone stand equipped with a telescoping support arm to hold the microphone.

Boost
To increase gain at specific frequencies with an equalizer.

Bouncing
Also called **Ping-Ponging** or **Ponging**. The technique of combining and mixing multiple tracks onto one or two tracks (mono or stereo). This can be done in real-time or analog by playing the tracks through the console and recording them onto separate tracks, or digitally through a digital audio workstation. Bouncing was once used frequently by engineers to free up additional tracks for recording, but in digital workstations where tracks are virtually unlimited, this practice is basically obsolete. Today, engineers typically bounce tracks for the purpose of creating a preliminary or final mix of a song.

Carbon Microphone
A microphone that uses carbon granules to convert sound waves to electrical impulses. The carbon element sits between two plates; as sound waves hit the carbon granules, it generates changes in resistance between the plates, affecting the electrical signal.

Cardioid (Microphone)
Cardioid microphones are normally used when audio needs to be recorded from the front when ambient sounds from the rear could improve the overall atmosphere, and in situations when noise in the back needs to be excluded in total (all three conditions need to be met cumulatively). A perfect example is recording a band performing on stage – the microphone faces the core of the band, and it picks up the monitors and cabinets on the sides while ignoring the noise the audience makes.

Channel
1) An audio recording made on a portion of the width of a multitrack tape, or isolated within a digital audio workstation, usually for the purpose of combining with other channels. 2) A single path that an audio signal travels or can travel through a device from an input to an output.

Click
A metronome's click fed into headphone monitors for the purpose of helping the musicians play in time with the song.

Clipping
When a speaker is driven too hard, and the sound distorts. Clipping in recording can also refer to when the input volume to a microphone is too loud.

Close Miking
A microphone placement technique that places the mic close to the sound source to pick up the direct sound and reject ambient sound.

Coincident Miking
A stereo miking technique in which two microphones are placed with their heads as close to each other as possible. This prevents phase cancellation problems in the mix because the distance from the sound to either microphone is the same.

Comping
In digital audio workstations (DAWs), the process of blending portions of multiple recorded takes to create a compilation track.

Compression
Compression is a term used to describe reducing the dynamic range of a track or sound. Compression also reduces the overall amount of data needing to be transmitted and increases coder-decoder efficiency.

Compressor
A signal processor or plug-in that reduces the dynamic range of an audio signal by amplifying its quieter sections and attenuating its louder ones.

Condenser Microphone
Also known as **capacitor** microphones, condenser microphones have a small conductive membrane or diaphragm fixed in place close to a metal plate. When sound waves hit the diaphragm, this causes the distance between it and the metal plate to fluctuate, mirroring sound waves—turning the sound waves into an electric signal. Condenser mics require phantom power *(defined in P section of this glossary)* to work. The benefits of condenser microphones are: 1. excellent audio fidelity because the low mass of a condenser mic's diaphragm allows it to produce nuanced and high-quality audio, and 2. the sensitivity of the mic's delicate diaphragm functions well with the nuances of vocals and all sounds at higher frequencies. The downsides of condenser microphones are: 1. not as durable as dynamic mics because of the mic's delicate diaphragm, 2. some condenser mics suffer from self-noise, which could negatively impact a recording, 3. an external power supply/phantom power is needed for a condenser microphone, 4. condenser mics are less versatile and work best in a recording studio environment— not necessarily a downside, but a limitation.

Crossfade
An audio editing technique in which one sound is faded out as another sound is faded in, to create a seamless transition between the two. Audio engineers use crossfading, for example, to blend two takes or more takes of a recorded track into a composite take. Club DJs also use crossfading to transition from one song to the next with no stops.

Cue
In general terms, a cue is the starting point for a piece of music or section of music. Depending on the context, the word cue may describe: 1) The point at which a musician or vocalist is supposed to start playing or singing; 2) The audio fed to the musicians through headphones so they can determine when to start playing/singing; 3) A specific location point on the music timeline within a DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) A cue may also refer to an entire section of music being used for video production.

DAW
An abbreviation for Digital Audio Workstation, a device or software program designed for recording and mixing audio digitally.

Decay
The second stage of the four stages of a sound (Attack, Decay, Sustain, and Release—ADSR). The decay of the sound is its gradual reduction in volume after reaching its peak in the attack stage.

Demo
A preliminary recording that is intended to give the listener an idea of how a song could sound in a final production. A demo usually involves minimal tracking or production, almost like a rough draft of a recording.

Diaphragm
The part of a microphone that moves in response to sound waves, converting them to electrical signals.

Dry
Describes a sound that has no reverberation or ambience, or an audio without any signal processing. In mixing, many engineers prefer a blend of wet and dry versions of a signal.

Dub (Dubbing)
1. to copy a recording. 2. to record in real time with another recording with the intent of mixing the two recordings 3. dub is an abbreviation for dubstep — a style or subgenre of electronic music.

Dynamic Microphone
Come in two types. Generally, **ribbon mics** are seen to offer better and higher-fidelity sound reproduction than **coil microphones.** This is because the ribbon is comparatively lighter and therefore, more sensitive than a metal coil. **Moving coil mics** are typically used for on-stage recordings because of how durable they are. The benefits of dynamic microphones are: 1. Durable because of their sturdier construction, 2. often extremely easy with which to get started, 3. well-equipped for loud recording environments, 4. these mics don't require phantom or external power to function, 5. often, but not always, cheaper than condenser mics, 6. more forgiving when it comes to background noise—in contrast condenser mics tend to pick up every single detail, and

7. versatile and perform well in a variety of applications. The downsides of dynamic microphones are: A. not suitable for recording high-frequency sounds and B. offer a lower level of audio-sensitivity for vocal nuance than condenser mics.

Electret Microphone

A variation of condenser microphone that uses an electret instead of a capacitor. (Also called an Electret Condenser Microphone.) Because the electret is permanently polarized, an electret microphone does not require an external power source as a standard condenser microphone does.

Equalizer

An audio signal processor that uses one or more filters to boost or cut the amplitude (volume) of certain frequencies within the sound. The underlying principle is to balance or equalize the frequency response of the audio system, or to create balance between multiple signals in a sonic space. However, audio engineers may use equalizers to alter or color the sound in many ways.

Fader

A control which adjusts the level (gain or attenuation) of an incoming signal to a channel or grouping of channels on a console.

Feedback

The return of a portion of the output signal back into the input of a system. This can be done in a controlled manner through a feedback circuit to alter the sound of an instrument (most commonly electric guitars or analog synths). It can also describe the unwanted feedback loop created when an open microphone is picking up the sound from a nearby speaker, generating a loud, oscillating frequency that increases in intensity until the feedback loop is broken by turning off the mic or speaker, or by use of an equalizer to attenuate the frequency.

Filter

A device that removes or attenuates signals with frequencies above or below the specified cutoff frequency.

Fly In

To add sounds into a mix or recording that have no synchronization.

Formant

The term formant is a bit problematic, when discussing singing. The singer's formant is a
spectrum peak, whenever formant is defined as a peak in the spectrum envelope. This is useful for speech applications, but not in singing. In singing, a formant may be defined as each of the defined frequencies of harmonic resonance in the singing voice.

Gain

The amount of increase in audio signal strength, often expressed in dB *(Decibels)*

I/O

An abbreviation for Input/Output. In audio, it refers to any device, program or system involving the transferring of electrical/audio signals or data.

Isolation

The process of containing sound within a certain area so that it does not interact with other sounds. For example, acoustically treated isolation booths are often used to

record vocals or instruments in the studio to keep outside noises from bleeding into the recording microphone, or likewise to keep vocals or other sounds away from instrument mics during live recording sessions.

Layering

Refers to almost any blending of similar multiple musical parts or sounds at once, often combined on one channel or assigned to one controller. In audio recording, layering usually involves recording similar takes of the same instrument or vocal (or duplicating parts with slight delays or chorusing effects) to create a fuller, richer sound than the vocal/instrument by itself.

Live Room

The large, main room of the recording studio where most of the instruments and/or vocalists perform. So called, not just because there is room for live performances, but because the room has been acoustically treated to produce a pleasing amount of live reverberation.

Loop

Effectively, any piece of music or data that repeats endlessly. Loops are used in samples to sustain a sampled note for as long as the note is triggered, while drum loops and other music loops are common in modern music production.

Mastering

The final process of fine-tuning the mix on a song or collection of songs, from which the master will be created.

MIDI

Musical Instrument Digital Interface, a digital data protocol that communicates performance information between musical instruments, sequencers and/or computer programs, conveying data on up to sixteen channels at once over a single connection.

Monitor Mix

A mix of the live and/or recorded audio signals that is fed to the musicians so they can hear the music while performing, whether live onstage or in the studio. Monitor mixes are on a separate signal path from the main mix (often controlled by a separate, smaller console) and do not affect the FOH *(Front of House)* mix (in live audio) or the signal going into the multitrack recorder/DAW. In live performance settings, the monitor mix is often controlled by a separate audio engineer running a separate sound board.

Omni Mode

A setting that enables a MIDI device to recognize and respond to all MIDI channels at once.

Overdubbing

The process of recording an additional musical performance over an existing recording, usually on its own track. Overdubbing has become a common recording technique with the advent of multitrack recording, first on multitrack analog tape, and more recently via computers and Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs).

Patch

1) To route or reroute the signal in an audio system (such as a console) by using short cables with plugs inserted into jacks. 2) A sound setting or program on a synthesizer.

Phantom Power
A system used to supply DC voltage to condenser mics and other components through the audio cables, eliminating the need for external power supplies.

Playlist
A user-defined selection of songs; a feature available on most streaming and digital media players.

Pressure Microphone
A microphone whose diaphragm responds to incoming sound wave pressure as it works against the normal or controlled air pressure inside the microphone case. This design makes the diaphragm sensitive to pressure regardless of direction, giving it an omnidirectional pickup pattern.

Pressure-Gradient Microphone
A microphone whose diaphragm is exposed front and back, with diaphragm movement being caused by the pressure difference between its front and back. This creates a bi-directional or figure 8 pickup pattern.

Pro Tools
Trade name for digital audio workstation (DAW) that has become an industry standard in professional recording studios.

Pumping and Breathing
In studio jargon, an effect is created when a compressor is rapidly compressing and releasing the sound, creating audible changes in the signal level. Pumping generally refers to the audible increase of sound levels after compression has taken place; breathing refers to a similar effect with vocals, raising the signal volume just as the vocalist is inhaling. Pumping and breathing is a sign of cheap compression or over-compression, and is usually undesirable, although some engineers and musicians use it on purpose occasionally to create a particular effect.

Punch In/Out
The process of activating and/or deactivating the record function on the DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) during playback of a passage, usually as the performer sings along. This can be used either as a method of doing quick overdubs, or as a way of getting a better take on a certain passage without having to start the track from the beginning.

Scratch Vocal
A scratch vocal is a vocal done during a basic recording session to help the musicians play their parts. Later the final vocal track is overdubbed.

Sound Blanket
A thick blanket that can be put on floors or hung to add sound absorption to the room and help prevent sound reflections.

Stage Monitor
A speaker on the stage that enables performers to hear themselves and to hear what the other musicians are playing on stage.

Sweetening
A term referring to the fine-tuning of audio in the post-production stage of recording. Effectively, any small tweaks to ensure the audio sounds better.

Talkback

A microphone in the control room carried on a separate circuit from the recorded channels, allowing the engineer to communicate with the singer in the live room or sound booths through the monitoring system.

Three-to-One Rule

A principle of microphone placement that says when multiple mics are used at once, the distance between microphones should be at least three times the distance between each microphone and its respective sound source.

Track

One audio recording made on a portion of the width of a multitrack tape or created as a digital representation using a DAW 2) One set of control commands in a sequencer or DAW that is used to control one instrument over one MIDI channel.

Track Log

A sheet of paper kept with a multitrack tape which tells which instrument was recorded on each track.

Tracking

The act of recording the individual tracks of a multitrack recording.

Tweeter

A speaker designed to reproduce only the higher frequencies of the sound.

Vamp and Fade

A method of ending the recording of a song where a portion of the music repeats as the engineer reduces volume until the music fades out.

Vocal Booth

A room in the recording studio that is used for recording vocals in isolation. This practice prevents bleed-through of the sounds of other instruments into the vocal microphone and reduces natural ambience and reverberation in the vocal recording.

Wet

Refers to a signal that has the full amount of an effect like reverb applied to it, as opposed to **dry,** which refers to the sound without any effects applied. Many times, the preferred sound in mixing will be a blend of wet and dry signals.
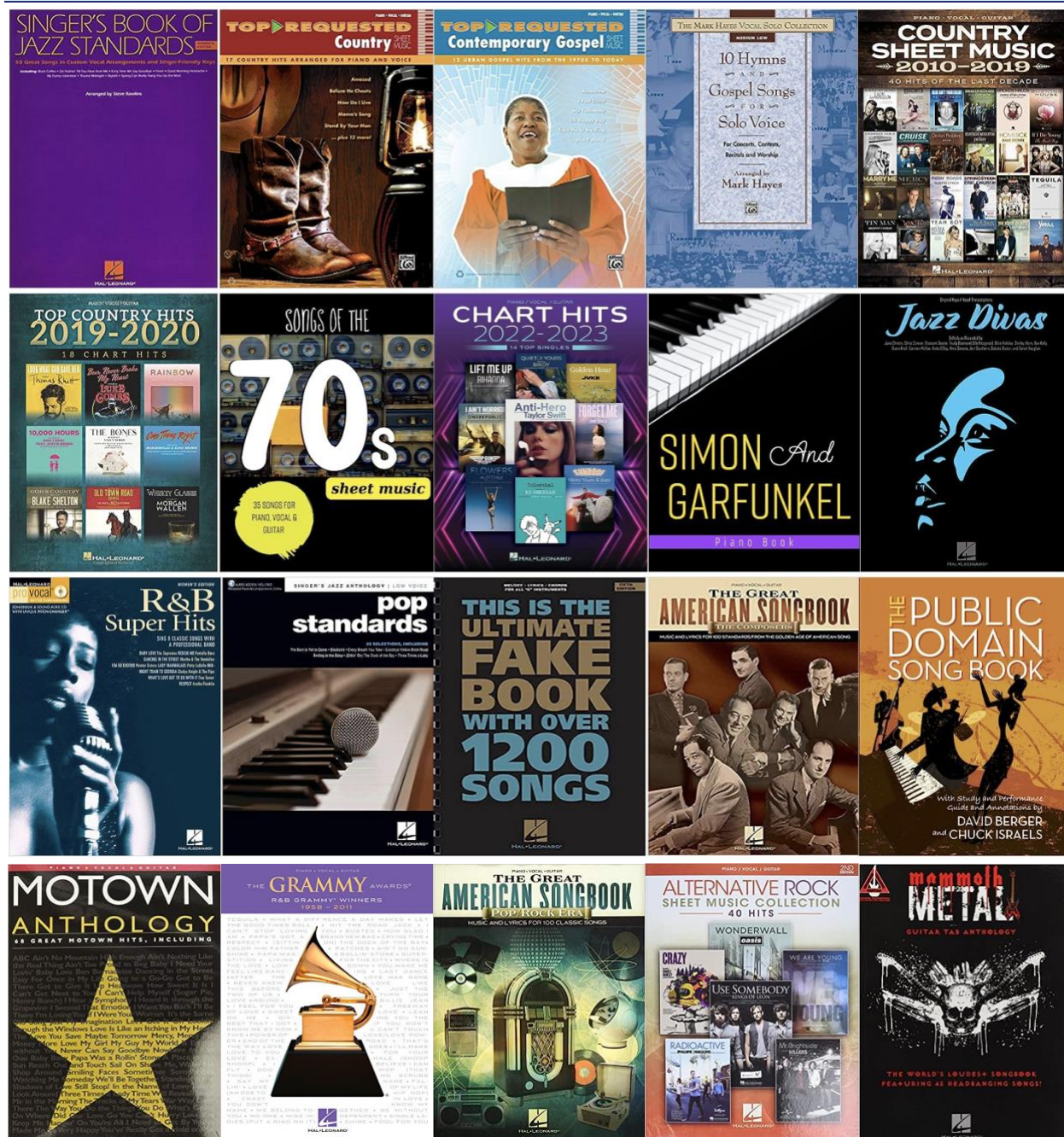
Woofer

A speaker that is designed to reproduce bass frequencies only.

Resources on Teaching Commercial Music

Songbooks & Anthologies

A Visual Sampler of the many available songbook anthologies published as anthologies with songs collected by style of music, decade/era, or celebrated performers.

The Public Domain Songbook: An essential reference for musicians, composers, and arrangers Paperback – April 24, 2023
by David Berger (Author), Chuck Israels (Author), Nina Schwartz (Editor)

Pop Standards - Singer's Jazz Anthology Low Voice Edition with Recorded Piano Accompaniments Paperback – January 1, 2020
by Hal Leonard Corp. (Author)

Classic Standards - Singer's Jazz Anthology Low Voice Edition with Recorded Piano Accompaniments Paperback – January 1, 2020
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Kim Chandelier

Rockschool, UK

 Singing Popular Music

Matt Edwards

Onstage Success

Dr. Dan

Backing Tracks & Practice Apps

iRealpro

Musicnotes

Karaoke-Version (particularly good for custom tracks option)

Fruition Music Store (Gospel Instrumental Tracks)

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