Is Retro the New New? The Nostalgic Return of the 80's SynthWave Genre and the Influence and Benefits of Music in Education

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Is Retro the New New? The Nostalgic Return of the 80's SynthWave Genre and the Influence

and Benefits of Music in Education

(Anglistika, smjer: kultura i književnost – amerikanistika; Germanistika, smjer: nastavnički)

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Table of contents:

2

1. Introduction

Music as a cultural art form is both timeless and perpetual. Way before it was written and noted down, music had been passed down from generation to generation. Some used it as a learning tool to help them with their memory while others simply enjoyed the fun and relaxation one can experience through music. This thesis will explore the culture and music of the 1980s, focusing on the nostalgic return of the decade's new wave in today's popular culture. It will examine the concept of the "cancellation of the future" and the cultural implications of this phenomenon. Additionally, the thesis will also examine the use of popular music as a tool for raising students' motivation in foreign language classes, specifically by incorporating popular music into the classroom. Relying on the works of Tim Wall, Jean Hogarty, Russel Sanjek, Graham Thompson, Mark Fisher, and many more, this paper will try to disambiguate the meaning of retro and popular culture, while examining the nostalgic influences of the 1980s New Wave movement observed in today's popular culture. Also, the connection between the youth culture and their affection towards popular music can result in the possibility to create interesting foreign language lessons which encourage the motivation in foreign language acquisition.

The popular, mainstream music industry in the last decade has been and still is the subject of oversaturation with the persistent use of repeating beats and samples, resulting in loads of songs having a similar sound and structure. All the years of practice and the hard work that musicians put into learning to play various instruments go to waste or fall into the background because they are getting replaced by pre-recorded samples, and music is not being played with passion anymore – it is being generated on the computers with simple beats to please the mass audience and make money for the big companies. The result of this was the "birth" of the modern, mainstream music genre - trap, which basically consists of a simple melody followed by an even simpler chord

3

structure and topped with a heavily-autotuned voice of the new rap wave. The new, younger generations are heavily influenced and accompanied by that music genre and the rest that comes with it, regarding fashion and lifestyle. The oversaturation and homogeneity of popular music can be connected to postmodernism, a movement characterized by fragmentation and blurring of boundaries between different art forms, self-awareness, and irony. As Aylesworth writes, postmodernism can be seen as a "set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality to destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty, and the univocity of meaning" ("Postmodernism"). The use of samples and repeating beats can be seen as a way of creating a kind of musical simulacrum, in which the original sources are stripped of their context and recombined in new ways to create a kind of hyperreal pastiche.

Whether you are browsing on the Internet or scrolling through social media, it is hard not to realize that the "retro" style is slowly yet steadily returning, whether in fashion, architecture, design, and ultimately, music. Although there exist many speculative articles and reasonings which support this thesis, an empirical study has been conducted in 2017 by Jean Hogarty on the connection of music, culture, and the digital era. In her book, Hogarty argues that retro culture is the "result of an inseparable mix of cultural and technological changes, namely, the rise of a new generation and cultural mood along with the encouragement of new technologies" (Hogarty n.p.). "Retro" is a term used to describe a style, trend, or design that is inspired by or reminiscent of past cultural forms, practices, or aesthetics. It is often used in reference to fashion, music, design, and other cultural forms that look back to previous decades or eras for inspiration. The popularity of retrofuturism demonstrates a desire to blend modern technology with nostalgic elements from the past – the familiar with the futuristic – and to create new and exciting worlds that are both rooted

4

in the past and looking towards the future. We will try to see if this answers the question if there exists a correlation between this new wave of music that we are experiencing and the New Wave of the 1980s.

As previously noted, I will try to offer some insight into the culture and music of the 1980s, which began to include synthesizers, digital instruments and electronic production combined with a distinctive visual style and compare it to the upcoming and newly released tracks and albums of modern pop artists, such as *Dua Lipa, The Weeknd* and others, who are bringing the retro influences back into their modern tracks. The aim of this paper is to show how the distinctive, synthesized music styles like the New Wave and SynthWave were created, how they developed throughout the 1980s with the launch of MTV in the USA and Germany and try to analyze the nostalgic return of the 1980s in the popular culture nowadays. Globalization, Americanization, and music, especially the pop industry, are very closely connected, as per Graham Thompson. This, for some, legendary decade is probably the most distinctive one, and by the help of technology, our youngest are able to experience the best bits of the 1980s wrapped into a modern package.

Last but not least, I will offer some benefits of including synthesizers and music in the education system, learning/teaching music from early age and getting the children involved in discovering the world around them by means of listening and distinguishing sounds and noises. Professor Robert Greenberg, an American composer, pianist, and musicologist, provides several definitions of music in his book *How to Listen to and Understand Great Music*. Apart from being the universal language which gives us insight into social, cultural, and aesthetic traditions from our past, the observation that stands out is that an "understanding of music can free our imaginations, making us more intellectually flexible and better at problem-solving" (Greenberg 2). Bearing that in mind, including music in education may lead to students learning and

performing at a more successful rate. In the final part I will also include a practical bit consisting of examples as to how to construct a foreign language lesson for ESL (English as a Second Language) and DaF (Deutsch als Fremdsprache), which is both entertaining and edifying, where I will justify the use of music in the education system.

2. Origins of the New Wave movement and its influence on popular culture

Before even starting to go into any details, it is best to disambiguate the definition of popular culture. Tim Wall states that "popular simultaneously has three different senses. In one sense popular things are widely liked. In another, popular things have poor cultural value and are associated with lower levels of education (as in the popular press). In the third sense, popular things belong to ordinary people of a society and express their interests and concerns" (1).

Let us take the three senses into account and apply them to the popular culture, i.e., popular music of the present. First of all, contemporary artists such as The Weeknd, Dua Lipa, Bruno Mars, Justin Bieber and numerous others are using more and more elements and influences of the 1980s in their most recent music, most of them securing top spots in the Billboard Hot 100 and other chart lists. Moreover, the visual style of the 80s is reminiscent in the music videos and live shows to the point that it was a strong leitmotiv in the Eurovision song contest 2021.

Secondly, the notion that popular culture is inherently linked with lower levels of education is not necessarily accurate. However, when we examine the relationship between education levels and popular music, it becomes apparent that popular music is often uncomplicated in its structure and designed to appeal to a broad audience, which often includes individuals with lower levels of education. Furthermore, new generations tend to listen to trap, a variant of hip-hop or pop-rap, which "got its start in the late '80s, when artists like Run-D.M.C., L.L. Cool J, and the Beastie Boys began to cross over into the mainstream" (AllMusic, Pop-Rap). However, the crossover

between rap, which was always seen as a street type of art, and the popular culture was not always welcomed with open arms as artists "often relied on samples to supply their melodies". The before mentioned artists were big contributors to the modernization and globalization of rap music to the point that the 1980s are often regarded as the golden age of hip-hop. The usage of samples, i.e., parts of a pre-existing recording by someone else, caused the pop-rap genre to be "derided (and, occasionally, taken to court) for its willingness to borrow hooks from well-known hit songs without altering those appropriations very much, if at all" (AllMusic, Pop-Rap).

Last but not least, Wall agrees that popular culture and popular things belong to ordinary people of our society, expressing both the good things that came with advancements in technology and society, and bad things and concerns that surround us daily. If we apply this to popular music again, we can conclude that today's topics are a tad different than they were forty years ago, which is reasonable as the world changed a lot since then. When comparing the topics and leitmotivs of quintessential songs from the 80s to today's most popular songs, one could agree that the overall song quality has decreased a lot, although the quality music is subjective and opinions on this matter can vary greatly.

Nevertheless, popular music today is showing great improvements in the production value and quality. With new technology emerging almost every day, songwriting, recording and song production has become trouble-free and straightforward. Internet tutorials are very accessible and just a few clicks away if you happen to come across difficulties or problems while making music, leading to the hyperproduction of similar, yet well-produced music. The common things that grab the listener's attention, both then and now, are the beat, the sound spectrum and the hook, or melody of the song.

However, the major difference can be noticed immediately when you take a closer look at song lyrics. Some people ween the 1980s as the cheesiest musical period when it comes to lyrics, but that did not hinder the music style to become relatable, even today. On the other hand, today's lyrics express today's problems in these not so popular times. Unimaginative, repetitive and dull lyrics combined with digitally overprocessed vocals might be the result of the artists' views on the current social situation.

Ultimately, they use social media to boost their music and popularity. Are we perhaps living in an era where music is not evolving and just being produced to make rich people even richer? Let us apply this question to the modern market: probably the most popular social media app today is TikTok. Although you may not use it, you will definitely come across TikTok videos on other social media, if you use them of course. Just by spending a few minutes researching the market, it is obvious that most of the music related videos are dancing videos.

Wall also discusses the connection between music production and dancing, stating that songs are produced so that "that they can be used as the basis for a synchronized routine that emphasizes the singers as personalities (and as stars). Stage choreography and dance are prominent parts of this performance…" (Wall 229). This hyperproduction of similar music may lead to the zenith of musical creativity, i.e., no new music genres will be invented. Is it because we ran out of ideas, or is it by reason of the vast monetizing potential of the "TikTok-dance" genre being sufficient to the market and the people in charge of it? New artists do not feel the need to invent new things to place themselves on the charts if the market does not need new and fresh things. But why do we take influences from the 1980s?

On one hand, the main cause could be connected to nostalgia. Moreover, it is a trip down memory lane when today's leading generations were young, free, and rebellious. A time when they

could express themselves in different manners, but their voice was not heard, while it is today. On the other hand, another reason that people tend to stay true to music from the past is that today's music is considered to be so "bad" that the average listener is forced to hold on to the songs they grew up with, rather than exploring new artists, most of whom sound very interchangeable.

Today's music arguably takes a lot of features from the music of the 1980s, but when going back in time, we realize that every distinctive period, be it musical, cultural, or fashion related, also needs its own inspiration. Before looking into the SynthWave, firstly we need to explore the origins of the new wave movement.

The roots of new wave come go back to the 1960s and the name was borrowed from the French avantgarde cinema, where the term was used for a group of cinematographers rejecting and defying classical filmic techniques. The same rebellious spirit, the same urge to defy and rebel against all the established and accepted norms of society that characterized the French underground filmmakers would characterize the musical New Wave. The *Allmusic* online music encyclopedia agrees:

> During the late '70s and early '80s, New Wave was a catch-all term for the music that directly followed punk rock; often, the term encompassed punk itself, as well. In retrospect, it became clear that the music following punk could be divided, more or less, into two categories -- post-punk and new wave. Where post-punk was arty, difficult, and challenging, new wave was pop music, pure and simple. It retained the fresh vigor and irreverence of punk music, as well as a fascination with electronics, style, and art. (AllMusic, New Wave)

In the late 1970, especially in the UK and USA, this "rebellion" against the generally accepted standards was slowly being incorporated into the music industry. In the case of music, the term was subsequently adopted by a number of magazines and critics, and then bands started putting

out records under the category "new wave". During that time, the UK and the USA had placed a vast number of punk bands into the public which are still well known and listened to, or, to briefly time-adjust, streamed. Bands like *Sex Pistols*, *The Clash* and *The Ramones*, who are widely recognized as the principal punk bands, could still gather large crowds, or even fill a whole stadium. The fact that these bands influenced the later musical movements is also mentioned by Russel Sanjek, describing the *Sex Pistols* as a "group of 'outrageous' English musicians, regarded as anarchistic and socially violent, (who) paved the way for the later triumphs of the Cars, Blondie, the Police, and Cheap Trick, all of whom became successful in the late 1970s and early 1980s" (Sanjek 601).

Nevertheless, not everybody could handle the fast pace and aggressive chord progressions that punk had to offer, as well as the lifestyle that follows it, so people had to create a new way of revolting against the authorities. Moreover, this is where the synthesizer came in handy for a lot of aspiring musicians. It was "the" instrument of this musical era, even to such an extent that some of the bands exclusively produced and performed their music on synthesizers. Even today, when you are listening to a song on the radio, you can almost instantly identify and associate the song with the 80s period just by hearing the distinctive synth sound. As previously mentioned, new wave took some parts of punk music and made them more artistic. By that time, advances in technology played a major role in the music industry, not only production wise, but also regarding the distribution of music.

With the release of the Walkman in 1979, music became an even bigger part of the everyday life. Being able to take your music anywhere at any time and making the music accessible to the public was something that changed the course of music forever.

Not only that, with the launch of MTV Music Television on August 1, 1981, many people got the chance to broadcast their talent all over the world and even more people could listen and see the performances, which was the newest thing at that time. Throughout the early 80s, the term new wave "described nearly every new pop/rock artist, especially those that used synthesizers (…) New wave received a boost in the early '80s by MTV, who broadcast endless hours of new wave videos…" (AllMusic, New Wave). Furthermore, the aesthetics of the new wave were in perfect sync with the needs of the television market simply because their artists understood the representation and concepts better than any other genre. However, the music video format we are familiar with today was not created by MTV. Concerts have been recorded way before we could see them on television, but the commercial format of the single video has led to the fact that nowadays it is effortless to observe, differentiate and determine the differences in culture, fashion and, of course, music in the past four decades.

3. Popular Culture of the Nineteen-Eighties: The Synthesized Decade

Now that we have disambiguated the terms "new wave" and "popular culture", let us take a look into the history books to see what was happening in the world to cause the outburst of these avantgarde, new forms of music and expression, and if there are any similarities and correlations to the economic and social status of the world today.

3.1. Economic and social status of the USA and Germany after World War II

After the Vietnam War, people in the States lost their belief in the government and were in desperate need of a new leader to clean up the mess and reinstate the democratic principles on which the country was built (Zeitz). In 1976, it seemed as if they found their man in Jimmy Carter, an ordinary man with religious beliefs, who is honest and loves his family. Despite being an

inexperienced politician and going against formidable opponents, Carter appealed to "voters, particularly to farmers, blue-collar workers, and urban African Americans, while many liked his unabashed spiritual faith and devotion to his wife, Rosalyn" (Woodger and Burg 13). In the first half of his presidency, Carter managed to lower unemployment and the American economy showed strong signs of recovery. But OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) operations for the time being managed to undo the positive changes the States were experiencing. Carter intended to reunite the nation with an inspiring speech about the lack of involvement of the people in making the country better. Although he wanted to draw Americans together, his famous speech "Energy and the National Goals - A Crisis of Confidence" from 1979 backfired as it seemed as if he blamed the people for the crisis instead of admitting that he may also be a part of the problem. Speaking about losing confidence, "not only in government itself but in the ability as citizens to serve as the ultimate rulers and shapers of our democracy", Carter added: "In a nation that was proud of hard work, strong families, close-knit communities, and our faith in God, too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns" (Carter).

Many voters felt that the problems in the United States during the late 1970s were a result of poor leadership rather than anything they did or did not do. This sentiment was likely influenced by the rise of materialistic ideas and the focus on income and welfare growth among Americans, as they "embraced a more materialistic outlook" (Woodger and Burg ix). Technological advancements that came in the 70s, such as the first modern computers, cell phones, cameras, video games, e-mail, GPS, portable music players etc., were starting to "exert an important effect on lifestyles and personal outlooks, and the progression toward globalized competition" (Woodger

and Burg xvii), which led to new opportunities for big businesses to expand all around the world during the following decade.

By the end of his term, president Carter had lost his credibility, trust of the people and, ultimately, this led to the election of a new president, a former actor, governor of California, Republican and a charming speaker, Ronald Reagan. The 40th president of the United States enjoyed sympathy from the public due to his new political and economic initiatives in his first presidential term. His campaign ensured to lower taxes to stimulate the economy, strengthen the national defense, reduce government spendings, and reform and terminate redundant laws and regulations ("Ronald Reagan").

It was the time of the Cold War and Reagan was spending money and resources into strengthening the U.S. military and nuclear arsenal, but he played a big part in ending the war. As Woodger and Burg wrote, many "historians consider Ronald Reagan's greatest achievement to be the transformation of the United States' relationship with the Soviet Union. The president had never hidden his hatred of communism" (223). Consequently, his "persistent championing of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) led the Soviets – as well as political opponents at home – to depict him as a reckless warmonger leading the world into nuclear annihilation" (Woodger and Burg 224).

It was Reagan's second term in office when the Soviets announced their new general secretary of the Communist Party, Mikhail Gorbachev. After three of the previous general secretaries died in the span of three years, it was the 54-year-old Gorbachev who felt that a reform in the USSR was necessary, especially after the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. His most famous policies are *glasnost* ("openness"), which allowed enhanced freedom of speech, and *perestroika*, i.e., the restructuring of the Soviet political and economic system. This meant also having a positive

13

relationship with the West in order to modernize his country. On December 8, 1987, after many summits, Gorbachev and Reagan, despite being perceived by many as a war hawk at that time, signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the first firm agreement between the US and the Soviet Union which saw all intermediate-range missiles eliminated and the reduction of the nuclear arsenal. Ratified in 1988, the INF Treaty "saw the beginning of the end of the nuclear-arms race and the cold war (…) it was as much a victory for Gorbachev as it was for Reagan" (Woodger and Burg 236).

Following its defeat in WW2, life in Germany was not easy in the post-war period. In addition to losing a vast amount of money and territory, Germany was divided conforming to the spheres of interest into the Federal Republic of Germany (FDR), or simply known as West Germany, and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), commonly known as East Germany. The contrast between the economically prosperous West and the struggling East was clearer day by day and many East-Germans tried to flee to the West. These attempts resulted in a lot of deaths, especially in Berlin.

Although being about 160km from the "iron curtain", i.e., the border between the East and West, Berlin was separated into two zones by the Berlin Wall, constructed in 1961. Up until then, Germans could travel back and forth effortlessly as a lot of "East Berliners and East Germans shopped and enjoyed themselves in West Berlin" and sometimes, whole school classes would cross into the Western sectors to watch movies and "young people from all over the GDR would go to West Berlin to buy "boogie-woogie shoes" with thick soles, jeans, leather jackets, or records" (Poiger 2). As the years were passing, West Germany, enjoying the influence and financial support from the United States, did much better than its East counterpart. GDR was under influence of the USSR and therefore did not participate in the Marshall Plan, an American initiative which saw to

provide financial aid to Western Europe. The people of Germany had realized their war crimes and wanted to overcome the struggles of the post-war period, but this could not be done while being divided. This culminated in the Alexanderplatz demonstration on November 4, 1989 in East Berlin, where more than half a million protesters gathered to raise awareness about political reforms and show their distrust in the current government. Stuart Parkes remarks:

> A crowd, estimated to number around a million, heard Stefan Heym speak in praise of those who had gathered for freedom and democracy and for true socialism. In similar vein, Christoph Hein (…) spoke of GDR socialism having been disfigured by all kinds of abuses ranging from bureaucracy to surveillance and crime, while expressing the hope for reform (…) Nevertheless, the large numbers present showed that the meeting with its emphasis on reform of the GDR was in keeping with the mood of the moment. (Parkes 144)

Five days later, the East German government announced that the travel ban between East and West Germany was being revoked. Not long after the announcement, huge crowds gathered at the crossing points and, after decades of travel restrictions and family separation, the people were finally allowed travel freely. East and West Berliners celebrated this historic moment throughout the night, some of them climbing the wall which led to its ultimate fall and, a year later, to the reunification of Germany. Even so, the differences between East and West Germany can still be seen to this day.

Berlin played an important role in the development of the new wave music scene in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The city's divided and politically charged atmosphere provided an ideal backdrop for the artistic experimentation and subversion that characterized the genre. Many of the seminal new wave bands, such as Tangerine Dream, Einstürzende Neubauten, and Die Tödliche Doris, helped to shape the sound and aesthetic of new wave music. As Bader and Scharenberg

15

write, the Berlin music scene retains its experimental and innovative character, and subcultural entrepreneurs have led to a flourishing small-scale music economy, making Berlin a global node of the music industry. The city's divided and troubled history, along with its cheap rent and tolerant atmosphere, attracted many young artists, musicians, and bohemians from all over the world. The resulting cultural melting pot gave birth to a distinctive local music scene that was characterized by its experimental, edgy, and politically charged nature. Berlin has been able to counteract its overall economic decline by focusing on certain creative and service industries, particularly the culture and music economy (Bernt et al.).

Before the reunification in October 1990, the popular culture was heavily influenced by their corresponding sides. Due to many technological advancements at the time, the capitalist-influenced West Germany received financial support and consumed the popular culture of the United States. On the other hand, the communist-influenced East Germany was being deprived of any forms of culture and entertainment coming from the West, although a lot of influence came from the West anyway. Throughout the 1960s, as many rock bands like the Beatles were becoming more popular, new bands began forming in East Germany. Nonetheless, the Russian propaganda was strong in the Eastern Bloc, even accusing the West German authorities of using American culture to corrupt the youth into lust and viciousness, only to discipline these adolescents later in the military (Poiger 94). This meant there were a lot of restrictions, for example, music needed to be sung entirely in German and have an educational value promoting socialist ideas. The biggest problem of this was the fact that the authorities had to spend a lot of time checking every song text carefully to ensure that the regulations had been satisfied. If not, one could face serious consequences.

One example of this can be seen in the case of East German singer-songwriter Wolf Biermann, who was known for his critical and politically charged lyrics, which often dealt with social and political issues in East Germany. Biermann's work was seen as a threat to the socialist government, and his songs were banned from East German radio. In 1976, he was stripped of his East German citizenship while performing in Köln (Cologne) in West Germany and subsequently was not allowed to return to the country. This caused a major controversy and sparked a national debate about censorship and freedom of speech in East Germany. Many saw it as evidence of the DDR authorities' fear of dissenting voices and their strict control over cultural expression. Biermann continued to write and perform in West Germany and remains a prominent figure in German cultural and political history. As a result of this censorship, many East German musicians chose to emigrate in order to pursue their careers and express their political views freely. This type of censorship was common in the DDR, as the government monitored song lyrics closely to ensure that they did not violate state regulations (Biermann et al. 82).

The strict censorship and regulation led to some artists emigrating from East Germany. Later, the government eventually agreed to aid the development of new music and accept the more western sounding "underground" musical genres, such as punk and new wave.

3.2. Globalization: The post-WWII Americanization

The twentieth century marked the period of many significant events that defined the modern era like World War I, World War II, nuclear power, space exploration, as well as technological advancements which we still use today, such as the Internet, television, computers, mobile phones, radios, the Walkman and so on. Multinational companies like Coca Cola, Disney, McDonalds, Nike and, of course, Hollywood and the multimedia conglomerates expanded their market all over the world. In his book *American Culture in the 1980s*, Graham Thompson agrees

that behind them lies an "economic model of expansion driven by the US multinational capitalist corporations" (154). As mentioned, the rapid development and usage of new technologies helped in the successful interaction of big corporations, leading to companies opening their first international offices, joining up and exchanging knowledge, resources, and technology.

Although the terms globalization and Americanization have different meanings, Thompson discusses that they were closely connected in the 1980s, observing that globalization in the twentieth century marks a "historical break with modernity and a new phase of social experience" (153). Considering all the help and influence the US provided with the Marshall Plan after World War II and owing to the new technological advancements in the following decades, which opened up a lot of possibilities to expand businesses and spread the popular culture, he notes that there exists an idea that "globalization, certainly in the post-World War II period, is synonymous with a process of Americanization in which the US attempts to exert its control and influence across the globe by cultural as well as economic, political and military means" (Thompson 153). The fall of Communism in the late 1980s and early 1990s allowed for the opening of borders, the creation of new market opportunities, and greater access to information and media. As a result, American cultural products, such as Hollywood films and popular music, gained wider distribution and exposure, helping to establish American popular culture as a global phenomenon.

3.2.1. "Video Killed the Radio Star" – the launch of MTV

With its amazing, or horrifying to some, trends and styles, bright accessories, loud makeup, neon and with the emergence of new technology, it can be safely said that the 1980s revolutionized popular culture and popular music. Just like the outrageous fashion scene with bright colors and neon accessories, the music scene was also just as excessive with its loud beats and heavy bass lines. It is safe to say that people in the 80s were definitely not afraid of standing out from the

18

crowd. They did not mind being different than everyone else and they did not care about what other people thought about them as long as they felt good about themselves and their lives in general.

Throughout the 60s and 70s, with the introduction of recording technology and the rise of audio and television broadcasting, popular music started to develop into what it is today. The genre that stood out the most was rock and roll, with bands and artists like The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, The Rolling Stones, The Animals, Duran Duran, Jimmy Hendrix, and many more we know and still listen to today topping the charts and sales records (Frith). Music was not just something to listen to at home or in a club, as cassette tapes replaced the Stereo 8 and "gained a greater hold on the industry in the 1980s with the introduction of portable listening devices like boom boxes and the Walkman" (Kidd).

However, on August 1, 1981, a new musical era began with the launch of MTV (Music Television). While clubs and radio were crucial to exposing new artists and bands prior to MTV, everything changed when artists were given the task to follow up their songs with appurtenant music videos. The idea for a music television began in the 60s, when some artists like The Beatles used music videos to promote their records. The biggest difference was that music videos before MTV were mostly live recordings from concerts or shows while later on, some artists started to put more effort into making the best music video rather than focusing on the quality of their music. The video clip is the most important part of music marketing, which allows the artist to present himself in a creative and entertaining way. Music videos are often used for promotion and advertising purposes, but there are also several other reasons for them to be made – like a music video acting as a short film or an artistic expression of its own. A lot of research had been conducted to find the appropriate music videos favored by MTV's viewers:

19

The videos found by research to be preferred by MTV's viewers were played four to five times a day, introduced with taped announcements by video-jockeys who filled in gaps on the screen with gossip about rock stars. Within a year, MTV had signed 125 sponsors for more than 200 products, who paid a modest fee of from $1,000 to $6,000 for thirty-second to two-minute spot announcements. (Sanjek 640)

So, from the 80s onward, music videos are not just filmed performances of songs, but they are often works of art in their own right. From its emergence in the 1980s, it was clear that the Music Television Network will have a substantial effect on the way artists would market themselves and their music. MTV offered them a 24/7 music video channel which gave them the opportunity to fully explore the visual and auditory experience of a song.

Furthermore, better visual presentation of the song should result in greater success. Or is it the song quality that sells the end-product? One particular band would answer this question with a simple "a-ha". The Norwegian new wave band rose to fame in the mid-80s, highly due to the exquisite vocal abilities from their front man Morten Harket (Eames), and managed to release two international number-one singles *The Sun Always Shines on TV* and *Take on Me*, the latter enjoying even greater success due to its innovative music video released in 1985. The first version of the song, which was released a year prior and accompanied by a Flashdance-inspired music video, had only peaked at #3 in Norway, but it did not reach the music charts outside their homeland. The following year they re-recorded *Take on Me* with a different producer and gave the more energy, instrumentation, and a completely new music video. The lead singer was transformed into a comic-book motorcycle racer using an old film technique called Rotoscoping, where animated sequences are created by tracing the live-action footage frame by frame (Chamey). A unique and fast-paced video juxtaposed with a boppy, lively synth-pop beat with quality melodies paved the way to

20

international success for the Norwegians, winning six awards out of eight nominations at the 1986 MTV Video Music Awards (Best New Artist, Best Concept Video, Most Experimental Video, Best Direction in a Video, Best Special Effects in a Video and Viewer's Choice). Although the official Video of the Year award in 1986 went to Dire Straits with the song *Money for Nothing*, it was the Norwegians who prevailed as the people's winners and their road to stardom was going well in the 1980s.

The following year, one artist managed to break the record set by the Norwegians, winning nine awards out of ten nominations at the VMAs. Dubbed as probably one of the best music videos of all time and, according to some sources, the most played on MTV, it was Peter Gabriel's *Sledgehammer* that took the spotlight with its innovative stop-motion Claymation techniques. In 1999, MTV released a list with their 100 Greatest Music Videos Ever Made, placing Peter Gabriel at #4 and a-ha at #14 (MTV 100).

According to MTV, the best music video ever made was Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, which introduced elaborate choreography, costumes, and dialogues into the music video format. *Thriller* also introduced the long-form music video, i.e., a mini-movie was made to accompany the song. The official video runs for nearly 14 minutes, while it was stripped-down to a merely 5-minute version for MTV's purposes. Michael Jackson, the king of pop, enjoyed great success in the 1980s because he could combine his musical talent with amazing visuals and dance routines, resulting in nine number-one hits during the decade and a total of 27 weeks spent at number one, according to the Billboard Hot 100 chart, which was based on each single's weekly physical sales and airtime on American radio stations during the 1980s. Billboard also published the Top 100 Songs of the 80's chart and the king of pop made it "only" to #17 with his song *Billie Jean*, although reaching #9 with *Say, Say, Say*, a duet with Paul McCartney from the Beatles.

21

The top 20 of this chart features songs that are known and played to this day, e.g. *Call Me* by Blondie, Queen's *Another One Bites The Dust*, *Every Breath You Take* by The Police, the famous "Rocky" song *Eye Of The Tiger* by Survivor and many more famous rock songs, but the top 2 songs of the 1980s according to Billboard are in fact songs that use synthesizers as one of the main instruments, *Bette Davis Eyes* by Kim Carnes and *Physical* by Olivia Newton John. If we take a closer look at the full Hot 100, we can see a lot of songs implementing the new wave, synthesizer beats and instruments (Billboard).

MTV today is just a glimpse of what it was back in the 1980s, but it still is the most widely known and influential music television, even though their TV schedule mostly consists of TV shows, movies and reality shows instead of music.

3.3. New Technologies in Music Production

3.3.1. The use of electronic instruments: the birth of New Wave and Synthpop

The late 1970s and 1980s introduced major developments in the process of popular music making, such as the mainstream use of MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface), sampling, drum loopers and other digital technologies. Everybody thinks of the 1980s as the decade of the synthesizer, but for the first few years of the decade synthesizers were still analog, meaning that their circuitry was wired to mechanically generate its sounds, whereas the sounds in digital synthesizers are computer-generated. The analog sound is warmer, thicker, and vintage sounding sent through the circuit board in different shapes. Different wave-shapes equal different sounds, e.g., a saw wave has a buzzy quality to it and the sine wave has a smoother sound, which can be manipulated via the knobs assigned to different functions, such as reverb, attack, decay, chorus, sustain etc. On the other hand, a digital synthesizer can be seen as an emulator of the analog synth.

While it does not offer such warm tone, it offers a lot of different sampled sounds and effects which can be manipulated much smoother.

The synthesizer in the late 1970s was starting to become a pivotal instrument in the music industry, as more and more new wave bands tended to use them instead of guitars. This exponential growth of synthesizer popularity led to the launching of *Contemporary Keyboard* in 1975, a musician's magazine ranging throughout various music genres that featured interviews, reviews, columns, and advertisements, all with a focus on the latest keyboard technology (Cateforis 159). With the differences in sounds also came the difference in the style of play. While rock keyboardists use synthesized lead sounds to perform solos or foregrounded distinctive song sections, new wave keyboardists used their synthesizers to present the atmosphere of the song by melting their sounds in the background. By using reverb and delay to create saturated and washed tones, "each song's synthesizer arrangement swoops along on a gliding portamento, and hovers and envelopes the listener with warm timbres" (Cateforis 164), giving the song a dreamy, phantasmic vibe and quality.

The new wave genre of the late 1970s was linked with punk music and created as a revolt against the dominant rock culture norms, using sounds to create calming and soothing atmosphere. On the other hand, the new wave genre of the early 1980s distanced itself from its punk roots, focused more on the new technologies available to sample and synthesize instrumentation and use it in popular music, resulting in the "emergence" of new genres like synthpop, electropop, technopop and so on. At first, the technological advances made the new genres exciting and unique, but as the new genres became dominant in the popular culture, other musicians also went on to use it and the style ceased to be so special since everybody knew how to operate the new technologies.

A new norm in the general music industry was set, and it included synthesizers. From rap and hip-hop producers to DJs and rock musicians, even metal bands implemented the synthesizer in their arrangement. When Yamaha released their DX-7 in 1984, with its 32 built in preset sounds like pianos, synths, strings, brass, woodwind and more, the music industry got hooked on it instantly. According to The Economist, the DX-7 preset "E PIANO 1" can be heard on around 40% of the singles that made it to number one on America's Billboard charts in 1986. Also 40% of country-music #1 songs and 61% of R'n'B hits used the same piano sample ("Yamaha's DX7"). If one were to perceive a recently released song as being from the 1980s due to its musical elements, it would not necessarily indicate exceptional musical discernment. It is simply because a vast majority of songs used the same instrument, as it was popular at that time. Artists and bands like Whitney Houston, Chicago, Phil Collins, Luther Vandross, Kenny Loggins and the beforementioned "a-ha" were just a few who used the DX-7 in their most popular songs. Once musicians learned how to use digital synths, everything from bass lines to percussions and lead sounds was made on them.

Other distinctive features of the 1980s music production are gated reverb and sampling. The gated reverb was created accidentally by Phil Collins and his producer Hugh Padham, and it is the huge explosive sound that can be heard in the famous drum break in Collins' hit *In the Air Tonight*. One could argue that the song would not have turned out to be a timeless hit if the gated reverb effect was never "discovered". On the other hand, sampling has been around since the 1960s, but samplers were too expensive for everyday use. Sampling is the process of recording the quality of a certain sound, e.g., horns or some other brass sound, and using it as a sound via synthesizer in music production. This resulted in the abundance of live instruments in music production as everything was sampled and recorded through a synthesizer. These new techniques

and technological advancements from the 1970s were improved and implemented in the popular music production in the 1980s.

3.3.2. The New Wave in Europe and the United States

As mentioned before, new wave originated in the late 1970s as a form of punk music, but it wasn't long before new wave artists started to distance themselves from their punk colleagues, as Adkins explains:

> The punks weren't looking to shock the system, then, but rather to re-shock it. Based on this view, punk might be considered only one more in a long line of attempts to 'change the world through music.' The specific political issues might have evolved between The Beatles' 'Revolution' and The Clash's 'Hate And War' (certainly the punks were more violent in their rejection of the status quo – 'An' if I get aggression/ I give it to them two time back'). But from the distance of history, youth in revolt is youth in revolt. In contrast, new wave at its height would claim nothing, making no statement at all, with bands like Duran Duran and Culture Club reveling in nothing more than their own image. (21)

The relationship between punk and new wave still remained present, however, the methods of expression differed. Needless to say, punk music represented a form of experimental rebellion against prevalent societal and musical norms, acting as a countercultural movement to the rock music of the era. This genre emphasized the values of nonconformity, simplicity, and accessibility for young individuals.

Although the punk movement originated in the United States, it had a bigger impact in the UK. America produced notable punk bands 1970s, such as the New York Dolls, Iggy and the Stooges, and the most notable one being The Ramones. However, their songs and lyrics were more

focused on the celebration of life with a fast-paced pop vibe rather than anarchistic and anti-social rants, like in the British punk domain. Influenced by Thatcher's politics at the time, British values and goals shifted towards material and financial success. This meant that the big companies used the opportunity to reclaim their positions in the music industry, placing imagery and celebrities ahead of the music itself, which gave the punk subculture another thing to rebel against. The punk movement offered a distinguishable fashion style, fast paced, short and simple songs with few chords and shallow, yet galvanizing lyrics.

As time passed and Thatcher's conservative politics were not welcomed by the punk subculture, it transformed itself into a political movement and began to appear in the advertising industry. The underground movement had reached the masses and left its origins and the initial purpose to remain an underground movement. While most fans still to this day do not want to admit it, this was the time punk in the UK started to die. Having not embraced the punk movement as the British, America did not have a hard time when it started to decay. Their style was commercialized and TV-oriented, thus the inclusion of synthesizers was embraced and implemented in the pop-rock genre. Examples of juxtaposing synth sounds with rock music are the American rock bands Devo and Talking Heads, who moved to an almost completely electronic sound, apart from mostly drums and guitars, to create music that even today feels like something new and unusual.

As punk faded, it brought about lots of room for new wave artists to reach the masses. It wasn't about politics, rebellions, and social movements anymore – it was about the image. New wave made a simple argument: "if image always wins in the end, celebrate the image without any pretense to meaning. Privilege the 'signs' of the culture – the clothes, the cars, the houses – let those signs play amongst themselves, and to hell with what they might mean" (Adkins 25). With

new technological advancements in music production happening around the world, it was one instrument that captured the attention of everybody – the synthesizer. Although it was used before in rock music, new wave artists utilized its functions and possibilities by minimizing the user's input and maximizing the output of the instrument, meaning that whole sections, progressions, and chords could be played with a single push of a key. Hence music production was more effortless, accessible, and straightforward. The 1980s new wave artists managed to place punk and disco influenced music into the mainstream popular culture and added synthesizers as their main instrument. Since the radio got some extra help from MTV, a great number of artists achieved success due to getting regular airtime on networks and stations. Bands and artists like Duran Duran, Talk Talk, Depeche Mode, Spandau Ballet, Culture Club, Tears for Fears, Blondie, Eurythmics, David Bowie, Madonna and many more achieved their popularity with a lot of help from MTV, since it vastly expanded the reach of the artist's music and influence, and consequently their popularity and fanbase in the world.

Despite the production of iconic and memorable songs in the 1980s new wave, it can be argued that the perception of song quality was not as significant as the accompanying visual image. Emphasis was placed on style, fashion, colors, presentation, who will make the best music video rather than who will make the best music. As a result, new wave artists developed a unique relationship with MTV and took advantage of the newly established platform, simply because they understood the image and presentation better than, for example, rock artists. Just by looking at the music video, we can easily distinguish the newer acts from the older ones. With the launch of MTV Europe on August 1, 1987, on their sixth birthday, MTV was made available in UK and across Europe. Subsequently, regionalized stand-alone channels were also launched in Germany (1997),

Italy (2010) and UK, alongside MTV Europe. The arrival of MTV in UK made it possible for European artists to promote themselves into the mainstream industry.

German new wave, or *Neue Deutsche Welle (NDW)*, also emerged as a variant of punk and new wave and reached its commercial peak in the early 1980s (Schäfer and Daniel). It was not surprising to find that the synthesizer played a prominent role in NDW, and it is widely acknowledged that the adoption of synthesizers was a defining characteristic of the shift from punk to *Neue Deutsche Welle*. (Hornberger). Initially it was also an underground movement in West Germany, but Americanization after WW2 made it possible for Germans to strive for fame and glory abroad. The term *Neue Deutsche Welle* was coined in 1979 when Alfred Hilsberg labeled the new musical experiences evolving in Germany in his article *Neue deutsche Welle. Aus grauer Städte Mauern* in the music magazine Sounds (Hilsberg).

As expected, many German artists didn't achieve international success due to the evident language barrier, but some of them succeeded in placing their songs on international charts, albeit most of them had to be translated into English first. The German music industry shifted its focus from existing bands to promoting new bands in tune with the mainstream, resulting in many one-hit wonders and short-lived bands, and following the oversaturation of the market with stereotypical hits, the era of the *Neue Deutsche Welle* came to an end around 1983/1984. By the end of NDW, Germany had produced some of the most inventive and creative new wave bands in the world, releasing hits like *Forever Young* by Alphaville, *99 Lufbtallons* by Nena, *Major Tom* by Peter Schilling, *Da da da* by Trio and many more which were quickly forgotten.

Another talented and successful artist from this region was the Austrian musician Johann "Hans" Hölzel, widely known as Falco. He was the first and only Austrian to top the Billboard Hot 100 with his single *Rock Me Amadeus* from 1986, remaining at the top position for three weeks

and spending 17 weeks on the chart. Since the song includes a mixture of German verses and an English hook, he became the only German-speaking artist in history who managed to make a #1 hit in the United States. Shortly after, he released his second hit that reached the Billboard Hot 100, *Vienna Calling,* spending 14 weeks there and peaking at #18 (Billboard: Falco). As Schäfer and Daniel emphasize,

> Although the popularity of German new wave was ebbing away as fast as it arose and existed only about four years, until today Neue Deutsche Welle has a quite extraordinary reputation in the German music scene. Due to the great variety of bands and the blurring of borders, one of the different NDW-acts somehow suited every taste, regardless if underground or mainstream. (10)

Whilst punk lyrics were more based on anarchy, new wave turned into postmodernism. Adkins mentions *Madonna* as the perfect example of a new wave embracing star. She is neither labeled as the best singer nor the best dancer, yet she has found success in her music journey. Accompanied by heavy makeup, striking poses, winking at the camera, adapting the new wave style and shifting the focus and attention to her, Adkins suggests that the songs from her album *Like A Virgin* seem to understand the postmodern world in a captivating way, with the best representative of postmodernism being the song *Material Girl* (105). She has managed to have a successful and long career because she has been flexible, i.e., adaptable to various different appearances, resulting in selling the brand Madonna due to her image rather than her music. The necessity of imagery in pop music was followed by the rise of popstars like Boy George or George Michael, whose popularity "softened the U.S. market for the acceptance of homosexuality, male femininity, and androgyny" (106). The image was more popular than the product, which ultimately meant that it was empty and short-lasting.

29

The mid-1980s saw the slow decay of new wave, especially commercially, with MTV shifting their focus to other genres, mostly rock, metal, hip-hop, rap, and other forms of entertainment – reality shows, game quizzes, news etc. Both rise and fall of new wave can be easily traced back to MTV, since it merely focused on new wave artists in its beginnings. But one can argue that they just coexisted at the same time, were bound by necessity, and slowly separated due to the fact that tastes change, and MTV has always been about adapting new changes. Another argument about the fall of new wave is that it was all about the image, while the music was pushed aside. As it is supposed to be all about music, so did the artist feel the need to evolve. This resulted in the assembly of famous music groups like Band Aid (a group of celebrities) and staging charity events like the famous 1985 Wembley Live Aid, most remembered as one of the last and most energic concerts of Freddie Mercury and Queen. They were united under a mission to give music weight and meaning again and to prevent the concept of image replacing reality.

This trend continued in the mainstream, but new wave did not fully disappear, as the late 1980s saw the "emergence of The Pet Shop Boys, Information Society, The Dream Academy, Erasure, Johnny Hates Jazz, the Sugarcubes – all acts that carried the torch of new wave, even after the era of the cause" (Adkins 116). Some of them, on occasion, even returned to the roots of new wave and started to play with the sound a bit more, e.g., by sampling everyday sounds (TV, radio noise, turntable etc.) and using them in songs, omitting real instruments, experimenting with vocals and more.

If we look at the popular culture and listen to the popular music of the past few years, we can identify some similarities with the initial emergence of new wave. In the next chapter, I will try to identify and compare similarities between the 1980s new wave period and the current music standards and trends.

4. Popular Culture Today: Is Retro the New New?

"Pop cult revivals tend to arrive punctually after roughly 20 years—just long enough for a period to acquire the charm of remoteness" (Reynolds 48). This statement by Simon Reynolds from his 2002 piece *The 70's Are So 90's. The 80's Are the Thing Now* may prompt inquiry into the early influences of new wave music. It is undeniable that new wave also has had its sources of inspirations. The early punk wave music and popular culture was influenced by the late 1950s and 1960s in numerous ways. We could agree that rock music paved the way for punk, but new technologies and synthesizers made the new wave different and distinguishable.

Revivals are always present within our society; every culture has its inspirations from the past and it is just a matter of the current trend to decide which elements from which decade will be the new revival focus. To clear up the 40-year difference from the 1980s to 2020s, a new wave revival did happen in the early 2000s, with synthesizer aficionados in bands using "vintage synthesizer tones and styles in ways that set them boldly apart from the postgrunge and nü metal mainstream of early-millennium guitar rock" (Cateforis 219). This, however, in combination with television and the mainstream media, means that in the commercial aspect, only the electronic-new wave elements are being revived, while punk still remains more or less in hibernation, maybe patiently waiting for its return. When thinking about the cause for revival, one could argue about a certain factor from the past being felt in the present – nostalgia.

Defined as s a sentimental "state of longing for something that is known to be irretrievable, but is sought anyway" (Cook 2), nostalgia plays a big part in shaping society, the popular culture, and arts. Throughout the last few decades, the involvement of nostalgic elements is evident in popular music, cinema, theatre, dance, video game industry and other mediums and modes of expression.

The gaming industry is becoming more and more important in today's culture. It has massively developed since the turn of the century with the release of *Grand Theft Auto III* in 2001 by Rockstar Games. With new graphics, exciting 3D gameplay, and an abundance of miscellaneous missions, *GTA III* took a giant step towards realistic, yet virtual gameplay and shaped the modern gaming industry as we know it today. Its successor, *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* was released a year later and can be regarded as one of the first instigators of the 1980s revival. A virtual combination of *Scarface* and *Miami Vice* with flashy neon lights and a memorable soundtrack, along with the overall impact on culture and society, *GTA: Vice City*, or the GTA series in general, can be considered as canon today. The games feature FM radio stations as an adjustable in-game mechanics, most of them acting as music stations with specific genres, while some are exclusively talk-radio. A Ivanescu remarks,

> The game can hardly be mentioned by fans, journalists, or even its developers, without mentioning its iconic soundtrack. While it was not the first GTA game to use appropriated music or play different styles of music on different radio stations, Vice City is the first of the Grand Theft Auto games to use significantly more appropriated music on its radio stations compared to specially written songs, and this contributes to its unique atmosphere. The role popular music plays in Grand Theft Auto is complex: not only does it relate to the specific location and time period in which the game is set, but it also raises issues of musical genre and musical canon being both adopted and influenced by the game. (63)

The music in *Vice City* is aimed at a broad audience and features an idealized representation of the 1980s decade. The in-game city is based on Miami, but it is represented idealistically, as it is being shown in TV series at the time. That was the case with music too. As per Ivanescu, the music in *GTA: Vice City* does not offer an "accurate soundscape of popular music in the 1980s (…), but

32

builds an essentialist view of this era of music, of what can be understood as an '80s sound', simultaneously recreated and constructed, in seven genres and bite-sized track lists of sometimes less than fifteen songs" (66). This leads to a broad audience and the ultimate success of the game itself since it incorporated music, culture, and satire with exciting and fresh gameplay.

The game has had a lasting influence on how we perceived music from the 1980s because it plays an important part in game mechanics, especially driving. A lot of the game action is built around driving and exploring the open map, and this is the reason why most people remembered, or got to know, the 1980s music. Flash FM, probably the most famous radio station in *Vice City*, features songs mostly from 1982-1986, apart from *Video Killed the Radio Star* (1979), as mentioned earlier, the first video on MTV, hence the best representative of this period. This shows that the 1980s was not fully represented, but it revived hits like *Out of Touch* by Hall & Oates, *Self Control* by Laura Branigan, *Owner of a Lonely Heart* by Yes, Michael Jackson's *Billie Jean* and a dozen more.

4.1.   Retro revivalism: When New Wave becomes Now Wave

Retro revivalism refers to the cultural trend of revisiting and reimagining styles, designs, and themes from the past. This phenomenon has been seen in many different areas of popular culture, including fashion, film, television, and especially music. The 1980s and 90s have been particularly popular eras for retro revivalism, with many artists and musicians drawing inspiration from the synth wave, new wave, and post-punk movements of that time.

One reason for the popularity of retro revivalism is nostalgia. People are drawn to the familiar and comforting aspects of the past, and often feel a sense of longing for the times and styles they remember from their youth. For many, the music and popular culture of the 1980s and

1990s evoke a sense of carefree innocence, and they feel a strong desire to reconnect with that period of their lives. Another reason for the popularity of retro revivalism is the desire for simplicity. The world is increasingly complex and fast-paced, and many people feel overwhelmed by the constant stream of information and stimulation. By revisiting the styles and designs of the past, they can escape the present moment and experience a sense of calm and serenity.

In addition to nostalgia and a desire for simplicity, there is also an element of irony in retro revivalism. Artists and musicians often draw on the styles and themes of the past, but with a knowing nod to their inauthenticity. They are aware of the fact that the music and styles of the 1980s and 1990s are no longer "current", and they use that knowledge to create a playful, humorous take on the past. Retro revivalism continues to be a major trend in popular culture. It has been especially prominent in the music industry, with many artists drawing inspiration from the synth wave, new wave, and post-punk movements of the 1980s and 1990s. From the success of The Weeknd's album "After Hours" to Dua Lipa's album "Future Nostalgia", the nostalgic return of the 80s and 90s soundscape continues to be a major influence in popular music today.

Twenty years after the abovementioned *GTA: Vice City* and its infamous Flash FM, a number of enduring classics from the 1980s continue to be enjoyed by many. However, nostalgia has become ubiquitous and a tool for capitalist corporations to promote their goods, resulting in the widespread revisitation of 1980s cultural artifacts. Some studies have shown that the most frequent trigger of nostalgia is, in fact, music (Barrett et al.).

A study from 2010, conducted by Barrett, Grimm, Robins, Wildschut, Sedikides and Janata, wanted to prove the hypothesis that music is the most common prompt for nostalgia. More than 200 participants were presented with thirty musical excerpts of popular music, which were released as the participant was between the ages seven and nineteen years, to determine if they

invoke nostalgia. The results characterize nostalgia as a mostly individualized happiness-related emotion including feelings of joy, love, and pride, but it is also connected with sad emotions. There is no distinction about whether some songs are more nostalgic than others, it depends on the listener and his life experiences.

According to the study, the power of nostalgia in a song could be predicted most strongly "by context (autobiographical salience; arousal; familiarity; elicitation of positive, negative, and mixed emotions), less strongly but significantly by attributes of the person (nostalgia proneness, mood state), and by the interplay between context and person" (Barrett et al. 402). Moreover, the nostalgic feeling is individual and heavily depends on the situation and mood of the subject. This means that there are no songs that are nostalgic to everyone since everyone has different life experiences, but a certain song could be nostalgic to two people who, except the song, have nothing in common. Everywhere you look, everywhere you go, there is something nostalgic in your field of vision. In the past, nostalgia was diagnosed as a medical illness and patients had to be treated accordingly, but nowadays it is more socially accepted and regarded as a common emotion rather than individual condition.

It is worth noting that the popularity of the synth-wave sound in music has also been accompanied by a resurgence of 1980s pop culture in film, television, and fashion. Overall, the nostalgic return of the 1980s synth retro wave has been a long-standing trend in popular culture, and its popularity shows no signs of slowing down.

A relatively new nostalgic hit is the Netflix series *Stranger Things,* created by the Duffer Brothers in 2016. In her essay "Stranger Things in Strange Times: Nostalgia, Surveillance and Temporality", Antonia Mackay analyzes the first three seasons of the series (out of four) and agrees that the 80s have never been as popular as today. Set in the suburban town Hawkins in 1983,

Stranger Things is full of 80s references: a synth-oriented soundtrack, neon fashion and crazy hairstyles, board games, alien invasions, movies, capitalistic policies, Cold War etc. Mackay argues that in recent years culture seems to have made "an overt shift, and rather than looking forward, toward a future of innovation and change, contemporary culture increasingly looks backward" (Flynn et al. 67).

While nostalgia has always been a part of culture, it was never as obvious as it is today. In her book *The Future of Nostalgia,* Svetlana Boym differentiates two types of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. The former proposes to "rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps", while the latter dwells in "longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance". Moreover, restorative nostalgia "manifests itself in total reconstruction of monuments" of the past and the return to its original state, i.e., it idolizes the past, at the same time portraying it in a fresh state to remain eternally young. On the other hand, reflective nostalgia focuses on the "individual and cultural memory", relying on memories and experiences of the individual and, as opposed to restorative, often coming across as ironic and humorous (Boym ch. 1).

Due to its neon colors, classic cars, and old-school technology, the abovementioned Netflix series *Stranger Things* is a clear example of restorative nostalgia. It celebrates the 1980s as a time of innocence and adventure, and its success is due in part to the viewer's desire to relive that era. Another example would be the resurgence of vinyl records. Although digital music is more convenient and has better sound quality, many people prefer the warm, crackly sound of vinyl. The popularity of vinyl records is due in part to the fact that they are seen as a symbol of a bygone era, and owning them is a way to connect with the past. Restorative nostalgia can also be seen in the popularity of classic cars. People love to restore and drive vintage cars from the 50s, 60s, and

70s because they represent a simpler time when cars were not just a mode of transportation but also a symbol of status and freedom.

On the other hand, since it reflects on individual memories and offers humor, satire and irony, reflective nostalgia can be identified all over the entertainment industry and popular culture. The perfect example of reflective, satirical nostalgia is David Sandberg's 2015 short action movie *Kung Fury*, an over-the-top homage to every 80s martial arts and police action movie. The movie was crowdfunded via Kickstarter and Sandberg himself portrays the role of Kung Fury, a 1980s Miami detective who got struck by lightning and bitten by a cobra on a mission, giving him marvelous kung-fu powers and marking him as "The Chosen One" as foretold by an ancient prophecy. Years later, he must travel back in time to kill Adolf Hitler, aka Kung Führer, who entered their timeline and gunned down his police station. Accompanied by an exquisite synth wave soundtrack composed by Mitch Murder, Lost Years, Betamaxx, Highway Superstar and Christoffer Ling, even featuring David Hasselhoff in the song *True Survivor* as the lead singer, this short movie offers 1980s clichés packed into thirty minutes of action, comedy, references, an awesome soundtrack and much more, serving as a must-see for all retro enthusiasts.

Retro has always been used as an inspiration to make something new, e.g., some concepts from a decade were borrowed and improved in another. Aiming for modernism, most of the retro borrowings and improvements could be seen in the field of technology, which offered the biggest room for advancements. As a result, the 1980s period was most distinguishable since they combined nostalgic elements and ideas from the past and improved them greatly due to technological advancements and availability of resources. Nowadays, every art form is susceptible to retro-revivalism. Reviving the past in popular culture has always been a modus operandi for the artists, but with the help of today's technology and the possibility to reach a greater audience, more

and more artists arise and try to make a name of themselves in today's overwhelming industry. In Elizabeth Guffey's words,

> More recently, the 1980s have been resurrected, celebrated alternately for the cheery brightness of the period's pop culture, the remote techno-futurism of its electronically synthesized music and its emergent video-game culture. As one chronological revival inexorably follows another, retro transforms history's progress from a stately advance to a revolving door. (162)

Retro-futurism refers to the cultural movement that incorporates elements of the past into depictions of the future. This concept has been seen in various forms of media, including music, film, and design. If we take a trip down memory lane and examine retro-futurism, we can pose some questions and make assumptions as to why nostalgia is the leitmotiv in most of the popular culture today. Could it be that we are not satisfied with the way the world looks and breathes today and that it differentiates from what we envisioned it to be in the past? Many movies imagined the 2020s entirely wireless, even with flying cars as a means for transportation and robots operating them. Although we're still in the early 2020s and 7 years is a long period regarding the speed of advancements in technology, the reality is that most of these predictions will remain in our imagination, at least for the majority of people. By analyzing the soundtrack of these types of movies, we can see a similarity in the usage of electronic music, especially in scenes which depicted the future. A strong, eerie synth sound dominated throughout such scenes since it was perceived as something futuristic and unknown to the viewer. As the synthesizer went on to be used more and more in the mainstream, so did its effect on the viewer change.

While it was connected to the futuristic and mystical thus far, we could say that the synth today it is totally demystified and habitual, even customary in the popular culture. What once stood

for youth movement and rebellion against the system, became a common artificial instrument to serve the capitalist society of never changing, but financially profitable music. As Cateforis remarked, in today's musical culture with endless possibilities and instant accessibility, new wave has developed into a "pit-stop style, a place where one can pause and rest for a moment before moving onto something else equally as intriguing" (223).

4.2. Future Nostalgia: Haunted by the After Hour Lights

The term retro, i.e., retro revivalism, is nowadays closely connected with hyperreality and hauntology, two concepts introduced by French philosophers, the former by Jean Baudrillard and the latter by Jacques Derrida. In her essay "In the Engine Room of the Hyperreal: Nostalgia as Commodity Culture", Leander Reeves describes hyperreality as "a flattened composite of images, perceptions, history, signs, simulacra and familiar societal meanings distilled from an array of timelines and societies". In other words, we interchange our reality with an illusion that is more appealing to our eye. Reeves defines the simulacrum as "an image or likeness that has been reproduced (perhaps mechanically or digitally) many times, across the long visual timelines of media" (Flynn et al. 99), where the end-result looks like the original, but is, in fact, something completely different. The best example of hyperreality would be Disneyland – a completely new, life-sized world has been modeled according to a world created from imagination. It functions as a real place, but its appearance is hyperreal and idealized to the point where it seems to be an enhanced version of the original world.

On the other hand, hauntology was introduced by Jacques Derrida in his work *Specters of Marx* from 2006, where he stated that "to haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time. That is what we would be calling here a hauntology" (Derrida 202).

Hauntology may initially appear to be concerned with ghosts and supernatural entities, but in fact, the term is a blend of "haunting" and "ontology", and it focuses on the idea that our present is haunted by our failed future, resulting in a tendency to return and reinstate elements from our social and cultural past. This culminates in nostalgia being one of the main determinators of an artist's success – the more nostalgic the product, the more revenue it generates.

As a result, lots of similar-sounding music is being overproduced with the only aim being monetization, and many good artists are being overlooked due to average artists who generate more revenue for abovementioned reasons. There has been a plethora of artists who employ the same techniques, rely on autotune, and try to sound "cool" and appealing to the audiences. Whereas 1980s songwriters were emotionally invested in writing good lyrics, nowadays it is sufficient to make a good beat or, even better, sample some old song, add edgy and contemporary lyrics, season it with synthesizers and sprinkle with a "sick drop". If you manage to combine your product with a filmable and easy-to-recreate dance routine, and if it ends up going trending, you will be all set because the big companies will be rubbing their hands as long as you make money for them, no matter what you do, and how good your end product is. According to Fisher, "The future is always experienced as a haunting: as a virtuality that already impinges on the present, conditioning expectations and motivating cultural production. What hauntological music mourns is less the failure of a future to transpire – the future as actuality – than the disappearance of this effective virtuality" (Hauntology 16).

Mark Fisher, also known online as k-punk, was an English writer, music critic, blogger and philosopher who popularized Derrida's concept of hauntology. In his journal article *What is Hauntology?*, he remarked that the future of music is strongly influenced, or haunted, by the past since we have reached the peak of futurism. He gives an interesting insight on music production,

or the lack of innovations in it, by stating: "By 2005 or so, it was becoming clear that electronic music could no longer deliver sounds that were "futuristic". From the end of World War II up until the 1990s, electronic music (…) had been synonymous with a sense of future, so much so that film and television would habitually turn to electronic music when it wanted to invoke the future" (Hauntology 16). It seems that we reached the peak of musicality and musical ingenuity and inventiveness, as "anything produced in the 2000s could have been recorded in the 1990s" (Hauntology 16). Although this remark was made 10 years ago, it can also be appertained to today's music.

The trend nowadays is sampling famous songs and melodies from the past, while some artists even opt for a full remake or a mashup of their old songs. A perfect example would be Sir Elton John with his two latest releases, *Cold Heart* and *Hold Me Closer*. The former is a blend of four of his past hits - the chorus was taken from *Rocket Man* (1972), the verses come from *Sacrifice* (1989), while the song also includes bits from *Kiss the Bride* (1983) and *Where's the Shoorah?* (1976), accompanied by a radio-friendly dance tune. The mashup was made by the Australian trio PNAU and features Dua Lipa as the co-star, resulting in the immense success of the song, as it peaked at #1 in October 2021 and is currently (February 11, 2023) on a 63-week streak in the Top 100, according to stats published on the website Official Charts. It has also received the award for top dance/electronic song at the 2022 Billboard Music Awards (Atkinson). Elton's most recently released *Hold me Closer* is basically a remake of one of his most famous songs, *Tiny Dancer*, and it features Britney Spears, lots of sampling and, as before, a radio-friendly dance track. It didn't do as well as the previously mentioned song, peaking at #6 on the Billboard Hot 100 in its maiden week and receding week by week from then on. One of the reasons *Cold Heart* achieved such

success was that it features Dua Lipa, one of the most popular artists today that plunged into nostalgia sea and rides on the synth waves of success.

Popular music in recent years has seen a resurgence of 1980s synth-pop influences, as well as a continuation of trends in trap, pop, and hip-hop music, with many popular artists drawing inspiration from the sounds and production techniques of the 1980s. This trend has been attributed to a variety of factors, including a general nostalgia, as well as a desire for a more polished, danceable sound in popular music. The use of retro synth sounds and production techniques in contemporary music is seen as a way to add a sense of nostalgia and familiarity to new music, while also creating a distinct and recognizable sound. One artist took all the favorable parameters of the synth wave return and combined it with a pinch of nostalgia to create and release two albums full of chart-topping, trending hits in the span of three years.

"TONIGHT, WE START A BRAIN MELTING PSYCHOTIC CHAPTER LET'S GOOOO" (The Weeknd). This is how Abel Tesfaye, aka The Weeknd, announced the production of a new album via Twitter on November 26, 2019. Little did we know, but his two following albums *After Hours* (2020) and *Dawn FM* (2022) feature 80s-infused synth riffs, a bouncy synth bass and a dark overall ambient. As per Herrera,

> He draws on synth-pop nostalgia to mirror the tragic glitz of '80s Hollywood: "In Your Eyes" includes an arena-sized cheeseball sax solo, while the plinking synths and slick hand-claps of "Save Your Tears" evoke a long-lost Wham! track. Tesfaye can lean a little too hard on these Reagan-era signifiers, but his bleeding-heart melodies and donating an unforgettable hook to the synth player on "Blinding Lights" remind us why we keep listening in the first place. (Pitchfork)

The Weeknd is a Canadian singer, songwriter, and record producer who has had a significant impact on popular culture in recent years. He has released two highly acclaimed albums, "After Hours" (2020) and "Dawn FM" (2022), which showcase his unique style and innovative use of nostalgia in popular music. His music is heavily influenced by the nostalgic synth wave trend that has been prevalent in popular culture and music in recent years. He incorporates elements of 80s and 90s pop, R&B, and funk into his music, creating a sound that is both fresh and nostalgic, and also featuring elements of retro-futurism.

One of the standout tracks from "After Hours" is the hit single "Blinding Lights," which features a pulsing synth beat and soaring chorus. The song's retro-futuristic sound is a nod to the synth pop of the 1980s and electronic dance music of the 1990s, while its modern production, with a mix of live instrumentation and electronic elements, and fast-paced arrangement help it to stand out from other nostalgic pop songs.

In her article "The Nostalgic Soundscape of The Weeknd's 'After Hours'", Sarah Johnson argues that The Weeknd's incorporation of nostalgic elements from 1980s and 1990s pop, R&B, and funk into his music reflects a larger trend of nostalgic influence in popular culture. Johnson cites specific examples from The Weeknd's "After Hours" album to demonstrate how he blends nostalgic elements with modern production techniques to create a unique sound. She states that "The Weeknd's incorporation of nostalgic elements from 80s and 90s pop, R&B, and funk into his music reflects a larger trend of nostalgic influence in popular culture. Through his use of retro-futuristic production techniques and nostalgic themes, The Weeknd creates a unique and highly acclaimed sound that speaks to the current cultural moment" (Johnson 59).

The album has received critical acclaim for its innovative use of nostalgia and its incorporation of retro-futuristic elements, making it a standout release in the current trend of nostalgic synth wave music in popular culture. As Cragg claims,

> The agile After Hours might be his best attempt yet at fusing the two. Rather than sticking out like a sore thumb, the glorious 80s synthpop explosion of lead single Blinding Lights – No 1 in the UK for five of the last six weeks – blends in nicely with the album's nostalgic palette of shape-shifting synth workouts, tactile minimalism and (on Too Late and Hardest to Love), splashes of drum'n'bass and UK garage. Just as those early mixtapes were buffeted by blog-friendly samples from the likes of Beach House and Siouxsie and the Banshees, the Phil Collins-esque ballad Scared to Live soars over a hilarious sample from Elton John's Your Song, while new single In Your Eyes struts around a refreshingly uncool sax solo. (After Hours Review)

In his article, Michael Smith analyzes The Weeknd's use of nostalgia in his music and how it relates to larger cultural trends and movements, including the nostalgic synth wave. Smith discusses the ways The Weeknd's music "represents a new iteration of the nostalgic return of the 80s and 90s soundscape in popular music. Through his incorporation of nostalgic elements from these decades, along with modern production techniques and themes, The Weeknd creates a unique and highly acclaimed sound that speaks to both the past and the future" (Smith 125).

The Weeknd's latest album "Dawn FM" was released in 2022. The album continues his signature style of blending elements of 1980s and 1990s pop, R&B, and funk into his music, creating a nostalgic yet innovative sound that has made him one of the most popular and influential artists of his generation.

44

The Weeknd's influence can be seen in the work of other popular artists who have embraced the nostalgic synth wave trend, such as Dua Lipa. Her album "Future Nostalgia" (2020) is a prime example of this trend, as it also incorporates elements of 1980s and 1990s pop, funk, and R&B into its sound. The album was widely acclaimed for its innovative blend of nostalgia and modern pop music, and it reached number one on the UK album charts. The album features upbeat, danceable tracks with retro-futuristic synths and a futuristic pop sound that pays homage to the pop and dance music of the 1980s and 1990s. In an interview with *Rolling Stone*, Dua Lipa said, "I wanted to make a pop album that had elements of the past but also felt fresh and futuristic" (*Rolling Stone*). She also mentioned her appreciation for artists like Madonna, Giorgio Moroder, and Nile Rodgers, who were prominent figures in the 80s music scene and influenced her music style.

The album's lead single "Don't Start Now" has a driving beat, bright synths, and a bassline that references the disco-inspired pop of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Another standout track "Levitating" features a sample from the iconic 80s song "Electric Dreams" and a retro-futuristic chorus that blends old-school synth-pop with contemporary electronic beats. "Physical" is the obvious remake of the Olivia Newton-John's 80s banger. Moreover, she didn't even try to hide the reference, since both of the songs share the same title. Dua Lipa's "Future Nostalgia" is a testament to the enduring popularity of the 1980s and 1990s synth wave music and its continued influence on contemporary pop and dance music. The album's retro-futuristic sound and upbeat dance tracks have been widely celebrated by fans and music critics alike, solidifying Dua Lipa's place as a leading voice in the revival of the 80s and 90s popular synth wave sound. Some other artists who have embraced the nostalgic synth wave trend in recent years include Billie Eilish, Khalid, Daft Punk, The 1975, Justin Bieber and many more. These artists have combined elements

of 80s and 90s pop with contemporary production techniques, creating a unique and nostalgic sound that resonates with audiences.

4.3.   The Cancellation of the Future

As mentioned previously, every decade tends to go at least one generation (roughly 20 years) into the past to take inspiration and create trending content for shaping the popular culture. Furthermore, if the *leitmotiv* in popular music of the 2020s is nostalgia, one could pose a question as to how popular music will sound in 20 years? Mark Fisher comments on a concept called "cancellation of the future" in his work *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*. Fisher explores the concept of nostalgia in popular culture and its impact on society and argues that the persistent yearning for the past is a result of a cultural malaise and a sense of disappointment with the present. He remarks,

> Rather than the old recoiling from the 'new' in fear and incomprehension, those whose expectations were formed in an earlier era are more likely to be startled by the sheer persistence of recognisable forms. Nowhere is this clearer than in popular music culture. It was through the mutations of popular music that many of those of us who grew up in the 1960s, 70s and 80s learned to measure the passage of cultural time. But faced with 21st-century music, it is the very sense of future shock which has disappeared. (Ghosts 12)

He contends that the repeated reuse of past cultural forms, such as music and fashion, reflects a feeling of emptiness and a lack of new cultural narratives, remarking that the "cancellation of the future has been accompanied by a deflation of expectations" (12). Fisher's remark on "the cancellation of the future" refers to the idea that our current cultural obsession with nostalgia is hindering our ability to imagine and create new futures. This perspective suggests that by

constantly looking back to the past, we are missing out on the opportunities that come with creating new and innovative forms of art and culture. Hogarty agrees with Fisher's statement that music used to be more future oriented and forward looking, as he observes:

> Simply put, neoliberalist policies have caused the decline of the welfare state, the rise of the cost of living, and the increasing casualization of labor, and this, in turn, has meant that there is less time, money, and energy available for experimentation in popular music by a new generation of artists born in post-1980s Western society. The argument is that these policies have led to bland and unoriginal music produced by an increasingly homogenous group, principally middle-class artists, as they are becoming the only social group who can still afford to indulge their interests and pursue their dreams. Thus, the increasing homogeneity of the creators leads to the homogeneity of the output. I argue that this lack of originality feeds into the hauntological structure of feeling—it breeds nostalgia for the more futuristic past when popular music was supposedly more youthful, original, heterogeneous, and forward looking. (Hogarty 3)

As previously acknowledged, the utilization of synthesizers in musical production and their status as a primary instrument was once an indication of a forward-looking and futuristic perspective but has now become a cornerstone of the dominant musical landscape. One could argue that electronic music might have reached its peak and that nothing new will be invented and implemented in the future. The idea of electronic music reaching its peak and the sense of living past the future is a prevalent concept in today's society and popular culture. Nostalgia for past decades and their associated music styles has been a driving force in the revival of synthwave and other retro-inspired genres. This has been referred to as the "promise of nostalgia", highlighting

the desire for a return to simpler, more familiar times. At the same time, the rapid pace of technological advancement and cultural change has contributed to a feeling that the future is becoming increasingly uncertain. Sayers comments:

> What is striking, nearly two decades into the twenty-first century – a once much anticipated threshold marking the future – is how much of today's cultural production romanticises the past. In the USA, there is seemingly no end to the ongoing creation of films, TV series, works of literature and other media that look nostalgically to an America of earlier decades. Most often, in the American context, the object of nostalgia is the decade between the 1950s and the 1990s. (2)

This sense of living past the future has led many people to seek comfort and stability in nostalgic music and cultural references. Nicola Sayers writes about the promise of nostalgia and contrasts nostalgia to utopia, stating that this "intuitive tension between nostalgia and utopia arises out of a deep-rooted sense that utopia's proper orientation is towards the future, whereas nostalgia is stuck in the past" (6).

To sum up, the popular culture of today is heavily influenced by the nostalgia of past decades, particularly the 1980s and 1990s. The recent resurgence of the iconic synth wave sound is a testament to the ongoing cultural fascination with this era. The sleek, futuristic, and often nostalgic feel of the synth wave sound has had a profound impact on the music industry, influencing a new generation of artists and inspiring them to create new works that draw on this unique musical style. Whether through direct appropriation or through more subtle references, the enduring popularity of the synth wave sound continues to shape the musical landscape of our time.

It is worth noting that while nostalgia does play a role in popular culture and music, there are also many new and original forms of art and culture being created. The influence of nostalgia in popular music, specifically in the form of remakes and sampled 80s songs, can be seen as both a celebration of the past and a commentary on the present.

5. Synthesizing the Education

5.1. Music as a Language Tool

Music is a universal language that has the ability to bring people together and promote cultural exchange. When it comes to learning a foreign language, music can be an extremely effective tool. It has long been recognized as an effective tool in education and has been used as a means of facilitating language learning, especially in second language (L2) instruction. As Degrave remarks,

> In terms of linguistic improvement, some results state that foreign language performance was higher when methodologies incorporated music, either in the background, through songs or in musical and rhythmical activities, than when no music or other artistic intervention was used. These findings are promising for both teachers and learners: using music for foreign language acquisition would have numerous learning and linguistic benefits and has not to be simply reduced to a 'fun activity'. (418)

The use of music in language teaching is rooted in the belief that music can provide a fun, engaging and meaningful context for language acquisition. Nowadays, teaching English as a second language appears to be favorable and instrumental in the acquisition of the target language (Peregoy and Boyle). In addition, music can be used to foster motivation, to support the

development of social and emotional skills, and to provide a source of cultural and linguistic input (Bartle; Richards; Jolly).

One of the key-ways that music can be used as a language tool is through the use of songs. Songs provide a rich source of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (Peregoy and Boyle). For example, students can learn the meaning of new vocabulary through the context of the lyrics, and the rhythm and melody of the song can help with the memorization of new words. In addition, songs can be used to provide exposure to target grammar patterns and pronunciation. For instance, songs can be used to introduce the present perfect tense, as well as other tenses and grammatical structures.

Another way that music can be used as a language tool is through the use of music videos. Music videos provide a rich source of visual input, which can support language learning. What is more, students can watch a music video and make predictions about what might happen next, and they can discuss what they have seen and heard. In addition, music videos can provide exposure to the culture and way of life of the target language community.

In 2018, Lucia Bellés-Calvera conducted a study in a school from the Valencian Community, Spain, where she examined if the subject music can be taught in English. It was performed as a 3-part lecture in a high school with pupils of different levels of proficiency. First of all, they familiarized the pupils with the concept of genres, introduced popular artists and played music videos from the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Musical instruments were also covered in a separate lesson, having pupils constantly involved in reading, writing and speaking activities with respect to the input and guidance they were receiving from the teacher. The study concluded with a group project, where the pupils were put into groups to perform guided tasks and produce different forms of presentations about artists and songs they like, or, for those who wanted to learn

something new, genres they were not familiar with. As Bellés-Calvera concludes: "Learners are eager to participate in class when lessons are presented in a motivating way, particularly when they incorporate audio-visual aids in their lesson routines. Therefore, it can be concluded that music seems to be an adequate subject to be taught in English" (129).

Incorporating elements of nostalgia into the classroom can make lessons more entertaining and engaging for both teachers and students. By synthesizing education with elements of nostalgia, educators can create a unique and engaging learning experience for students. This can be done by using popular music, images, and other cultural touchstones from previous decades to connect with students and help them learn in a fun and relatable way. Additionally, utilizing nostalgia in education can help to foster a sense of community and shared experiences among students, making the learning experience even more enriching. Besides, integrating popular music from the past into language lessons can help create a fun and interactive environment.

This approach can also help students connect with the material in a more meaningful way, as they are able to relate the content to their own experiences and memories. Additionally, by combining the promise of nostalgia with modern teaching trends, educators can create lessons that are both educational and entertaining, helping to engage and inspire their students to learn.

5.2. Music in Education

There have been numerous studies conducted on the effectiveness of using music in education, including the use of music as a language tool. These studies have shown that music can improve cognitive skills, such as memory and attention, as well as language skills, including pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

For example, the article "Music in the Classroom: An Overview of Current Research and Its Implications for Second Language Teaching" by Michael Long and Michelle Pearson provides an

overview of the current research on the use of music in L2 instruction and discusses the implications of this research for second language teaching practices. The authors review various studies that have investigated the impact of music on second language learning and discuss the potential benefits of using music in the classroom, including improved motivation, engagement, and memory retention. They also highlight some of the challenges that teachers face when incorporating music into their lessons, such as the fact that music is subjective, and offer suggestions for overcoming these challenges. Finally, they emphasize that further research is needed to fully understand the impact of music on second language learning and to develop effective approaches for integrating music into second language teaching practices (Long and Pearson).

In her work "Music, Informal Learning and the School: A New Classroom Pedagogy", Lucy Green explores the relationship between music, informal learning, and the school environment. She suggests that music can be a powerful tool for informal learning and proposes a new pedagogical approach that incorporates music into the classroom as a means of promoting student engagement and learning. Green argues that music can provide a unique context for learning and that incorporating music into the curriculum can help create a more dynamic and engaging classroom environment, resulting in a positive impact on student motivation and academic achievement (Green 115).

Another study by Henrich and Pratt from 2010 found that students who learned vocabulary words through song lyrics showed greater recall of the words compared to students who learned the words through traditional rote memorization methods. The authors suggested that the rhythm and melody of the songs helped to encode the vocabulary words in the students' memory, making them easier to recall. They concluded that the use of music in language instruction can help to

improve pronunciation by providing students with repeated exposure to the sounds of the target language in a fun and engaging way (Heinrich and Pratt).

Apart from using music to teach language and literacy skills, it can also be used to teach other subjects, such as history and culture. For example, teachers can use music to introduce students to different historical periods, cultural traditions, and geographical regions. Moreover, they can play music from the Renaissance period to teach students about the history and cultural significance of that time, or use traditional folk music to teach students about the history and cultural heritage of a country. As Jones remarks: "The introduction of vocal music as the foundation on which to either build a coordinated language-culture course or, more often, supplement an already established program, can be a powerful tool, especially when the music is a faithful reflection of the culture from which it derives" (11). In addition, educators can use music to teach mathematical concepts, such as rhythm and timing, and scientific concepts, such as sound waves and frequency.

These are just a few examples of how music can be used as a teaching tool in the classroom. The idea is to find ways to incorporate music into the curriculum in a meaningful and engaging way, and to use it as a way to promote student engagement and learning. An example of a successful and acclaimed method for teaching music would be The Kodály Method.

The Kodály Method is a musical education method that emphasizes the development of musical skills through the use of folk songs and dances. This method is based on the idea that musical abilities are innate in all individuals and that musical skills can be developed through a systematic and sequential approach to music education, best done from the earliest possible age (Choksy 45). Incorporating the Kodály Method into ESL teaching can provide a fun and engaging way for students to develop their language skills and learn more about the culture. It does, however, require the teacher to be an excellent musician who is able both to explain the musical concepts to

53

the students, as well as execute specific assignments, such as creating interesting activities, mastering an instrument and being able to improvise when expected. This may be the reason as to why music is not being implemented into the foreign language curriculum as much as it should be.

5.3. Lesson Plan

All that being said, it is time to apply the knowledge to an actual setting. Although Kodály was a fan of folk songs and most of his methods are intended for younger children, I will try to construct a motivational, music-oriented lesson intended for pupils attending secondary school. To ensure the highest success rates of the lesson, I will embrace Kodály's method of the three Ps – Preparation, Presentation, Practice (Boskhoff).

During the preparation phase, I would ask students if they have heard of the popular music of the 1980. To start with a discussion topic, I would ask: What do you know about the music of the 1980s? What do you think it sounds like? The students' answers would be written down on the blackboard. After a brief discussion and an optional musical activity, a brief presentation introduces the students to the music of the 1980s and its impact on today's popular music. Moreover, key features of the 1980s music such as electronic sound, synthesizers, drum machines and sampling would be highlighted in this phase, as well as artists like Michael Jackson, Prince, Whitney Houston, etc. I would discuss how music has evolved over time, from the early new wave and post-punk sounds to the synth-pop and dance-pop that dominated the charts in the latter half of the decade, and how their influence can still be heard in today's popular music. This presentation and discussion would be supported by listening examples.

For the presentation phase, I would choose the songs "Take on Me" by *a-ha* and "Blinding Lights" by The Weeknd. First, I would play "a-ha: Take on Me" for the students and ask them to listen carefully and take notes on what they hear. After the song is finished, as a comparison, I

would play "The Weeknd: Blinding Lights" and let them take notes again. Next up, I would divide students into pairs/groups, assign them to compare and contrast the sound and style of the two songs, and ask them to consider the different musical elements that contribute to the overall sound of the music and how they have changed over time. This listening activity would be followed by another brief discussion on the topic.

An ideal practice phase would result in the creation of new music, but since this is an ESL-oriented lecture, let us adapt and rephrase the third P into (re)production. The aim of this phase is to create content via writing, speaking, presentation or video materials. Moreover, the class will be separated into smaller groups and asked to present the similarities and differences between 1980s popular music and today's popular music with examples of other songs that show the influence of the 1980s popular music on today's popular music. Each group will present their findings to the class and asked for feedback from classmates to strike a discussion on the different musical elements that students analyzed in their research. Due to circumstances, this activity might be best suitable for the next lecture after assigning the students homework to research a modern artist that incorporates elements from the 1980s into their recent music.

This lesson will be useful as a language, as well as a brief history lesson. The students will be introduced to the culture and "new" technology from four decades ago and given instructions and explanations regarding the usage of musical equipment. Furthermore, they will be able to express their opinions about music from the 1980s and compare it to today's popular music. By doing their own research, they might come across new and interesting facts to better understand both music and popular culture. In addition, they will improve pronunciation and explain their vocabulary.

LESSON PLAN

SUBJECT: English as a second language
TEACHING UNIT: The influence of 1980s popular music on today's music
TYPE OF LECTURE: acquiring new material Skills: (reading, speaking, writing)

AIMS: Linguistic: acquire new vocabulary related to popular culture and music, practice listening with comprehension Communicative: share ideas and opinions about music related topics Functional: understand and react to cultural differences and similarities, improve student's listening comprehension and attention to detail Educational: talk about popular culture and music

Structure / Articulation	FORMS OF TEACHING WORK
1) Introduction (5 mins) - Motivation: I would first start a short discussion on the topic of popular culture and music: How would you describe music? What genres do you listen to? What do you know about popular culture and	1. frontal 2. work in pairs 3. work in groups

music from the 1980s? (Bright colors, shoulder pads, neon lights; synthesizers, sampling, MTV; new wave, synthwave, …) I would write the students' suggestions on the whiteboard	TEACHING METHODS 1. method of oral presentation 2. conversation method 3. writing method 4. listening method
2) Main part (25 mins) Have you ever watched MTV? What can you see nowadays on MTV? I would proceed to tell the history of music reproduction, music production, the process of sampling, the nostalgic influences we see today with provided popular examples (Stranger Things), MTV and offer trivia as to which was the first video to be played on MTV (The Buggles – Video Killed The Radio Star) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8r-tXRLazs A brief discussion afterwards, talking about what they've just seen, what's 'special' about the production and music video, how they like the song and music video.	TEACHING MATERIALS 1. whiteboard, blackboard 2. markers, chalk 3. LCD projector 4. laptop 5. notebook 6. pencil, pen, eraser
- I would ask them to open up their notebooks and prepare for a listening exercise. I would play them two music videos, "Take on Me" by "a-ha" and "Blinding Lights" by "The Weeknd". The students will take short notes and comment on what they've heard and seen.	CORRELATIONS 1. Croatian language 2. Foreign languages 3. Social Science Resources 4. Humanities 5. Music art 6. Film art

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djV11Xbc914 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NRXx6U8ABQ 3) Closure: (10 mins) Work in pairs/groups to discuss the similarities and differences recognized in the two songs and music videos, followed by a class discussion.	

HOMEWORK: research a modern artist which takes inspiration from the 1980s (music, fashion, film)

6. Conclusion

Popular culture refers to the cultural products and activities that are consumed and enjoyed by a large audience, often including entertainment such as music, movies, television shows, video games, and sports. It can also include fashion, food, and other trends that capture the attention of the public. Popular culture is constantly evolving and changing over time, influenced by technological advances, social and political events, and shifting attitudes and values. It is often seen as a reflection of the *Zeitgeist* or the spirit of the times and can have a significant impact on society and the way people think and act.

After World War II, Europe was in a state of devastation and disarray. Many cities had been destroyed, economies were in shambles, and political instability was widespread. The United States emerged as a superpower and took a leading role in the rebuilding of Europe through the Marshall Plan. Despite the difficulties faced by postwar Europe, the continent began to recover

and prosper in the following decades, with many countries experiencing a period of economic growth and stability. The legacy of Americanization, however, continues to be felt in many aspects of European culture and society today.

The New Wave movement emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s, primarily in the UK, and was a reaction against the dominance of rock music at the time. It was characterized by its use of synthesizers, electronic drum machines, and other new technology, which allowed for a wider range of sounds and textures in music. New Wave also embraced a DIY ethos and an emphasis on style and fashion, with many bands developing distinctive visual aesthetics to accompany their music. The influence of New Wave on popular culture was far-reaching and significant. In music, it paved the way for the use of electronic instrumentation and production techniques that are still widely used today.

The 1980s was a decade marked by significant technological advancements that transformed the music industry. One of the most notable changes was the birth of digital music production, which allowed artists to create music using electronic instruments and software. Digital audio workstations (DAWs) and samplers were invented, allowing musicians to manipulate sound in ways that were not previously possible. The use of drum machines and synthesizers became widespread, leading to the creation of a new sub-genre of music called New Wave, which blended electronic and punk-rock music into new styles, such as synthwave, retro wave etc. Along with digital music production, the 1980s saw a number of fashion trends emerge that were closely tied to the music of the era. For example, the androgynous, punk-inspired look of the New Wave movement influenced fashion designers and stylists, resulting in new clothing styles that were edgy, bold, and often neon-colored. The use of heavy makeup, spiky hair, and leather jackets was

common in the New Wave scene, which was a departure from the more conservative fashion trends of the 1970s.

The 1980s was also the era of the MTV generation, where music videos became increasingly popular, giving artists a new platform to promote their music and style. The music video scene further enhanced the fashion trends of the time, as fashion designers began to collaborate with musicians and music video directors to create visually stunning videos that showcased their clothing and accessories. It was a time of transformation for the music industry, bringing about new forms of expression through the use of technology and fashion.

In recent years, we have seen a resurgence of 80s synth-infused music, which has become a popular trend in the music industry. The trend of retro revivalism and nostalgia has been on the rise, leading to a revival of the fashion, music, and movies of the era. The popularity of television shows such as "Stranger Things" and the success of artists like The Weeknd and Dua Lipa are examples of this cultural phenomenon. However, this nostalgia for the 1980s has also been interpreted as a sign of "cancellation of the future." Some argue that the current focus on the past reflects a lack of optimism for the future, as people retreat into a sense of comfort and familiarity found in nostalgic memories. This trend is also reflected in the growing popularity of "retro-futurism," which combines futuristic elements with nostalgic aesthetics. In general, the return of the 1980s in popular culture reflects a complex mix of cultural and societal trends. Whether viewed as a form of escapism or cultural appropriation, there is no denying that it is a powerful and enduring trend that has shaped the popular culture of the 21st century.

Music can be a powerful tool to aid language acquisition and foster learning in educational settings. Incorporating music into language teaching programs can make learning more engaging, memorable, and effective. Numerous studies have shown that music can enhance students'

60

listening, speaking, and pronunciation skills, as well as help them build vocabulary and retain information. By tapping into students' emotional and cognitive responses to music, educators can create a more immersive and dynamic language learning environment. Whether through songs or music videos, music provides a fun, engaging and meaningful context for language acquisition, and it can help to foster motivation, to support the development of social and emotional skills, and to provide a source of cultural and linguistic input.

Finally, it is important to note that the effectiveness of music as a language learning tool depends on how it is used and integrated into the curriculum. Music should be thoughtfully chosen, appropriately challenging, and purposefully linked to language learning objectives. Teachers should also consider incorporating student-centered activities and opportunities for peer feedback and reflection, as well as utilizing technology and online resources to enhance the learning experience.

To conclude, incorporating music into language education can be a valuable tool for both teachers and learners. By using music as a language tool, educators can create a more dynamic and engaging classroom environment, while also supporting students in achieving their language learning goals. Therefore, music should be utilized more frequently as a complementary tool to traditional language instruction in schools to improve language learning outcomes and to create a more enjoyable and engaging learning experience. Including music in the classroom benefits the students' linguistic, cultural, and communicative competencies. From an educational perspective, there is a compelling case for studying music and language together, as it is not only feasible but also advisable.

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8. Abstract

Music is a universal language that transcends borders, cultures, and time. In recent years, there has been a nostalgic return to the 1980s new wave in today's music and popular culture. This retro revivalism has been attributed to the "cancellation of the future" and the desire to revisit a time when optimism and possibility were in abundance. The younger generation's affection for this era of music has created a unique opportunity to use music as a language tool in foreign language classrooms. By connecting language learning to popular music, educators can motivate and engage students, improve their listening and comprehension skills, and provide a fun and creative learning environment. This paper reviews the beginnings of the New Wave in the Anglo-American context and Germany respectively. Next, it seeks to explain the cultural and social context which has enabled the emergence of "retro revivalism", and, finally, it explores the relationship between music and language learning and provides practical suggestions for incorporating popular music into foreign language instruction.

Key words: the 1980s, nostalgia, retro revivalism, cancellation of the future, teaching music as a language tool