

The logo features a central dark blue circle with the letters 'UIC' in light blue. This circle is surrounded by a yellow ring, which is further enclosed by a red ring. Four thick lines radiate from the center: a yellow line pointing up and right, a red line pointing up and left, a yellow line pointing down and left, and a red line pointing down and right. The background is a solid light blue.

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# The Beat Goes On

## Music, Culture and Creativity During Crisis

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- My Background
  - B.S., Biology
  - M.S., Journalism
  - Ph.D., Communication
  - Experimental Music Studios & Digital Computing Lab (UIUC)
  - Musician, recording engineer, producer, record label owner
  - Currently faculty member in Communication and Computer Science and research associate in Electronic Visualization Laboratory at UIC



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1. General thoughts about popular music in times of crisis
  - a. Memory & Meaning
  - b. Creativity
  - c. History
  - d. Audiences & Economics
2. Conversation with musicians about the music and the pandemic
3. Q & A

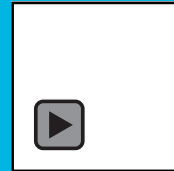




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# Memory & Meaning

1. Music and sound are very strong memory triggers
  - a. Sound as mnemonic device
  - b. Why do we remember song lyrics so well?
  - c. Epic poems were set to music
  - d. Homer, sung:





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# Memory & Meaning

1. Music and sound are very strong memory triggers
  - e. Music is part of our language, of how we speak
  - f. Diana Deutsch, Professor of Psychology at UC-San Diego, illustrates this point with her “speech to song” illusion:





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# Memory & Meaning

1. Music and sound are very strong memory triggers
  - g. The human brain is hardwired for music
  - h. Daniel Levitin, a cognitive neuroscientist and author of *This Is Your Brain On Music*, argues that music was evolutionarily advantageous, promoting social bonding, communication and understanding.





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# Memory & Meaning

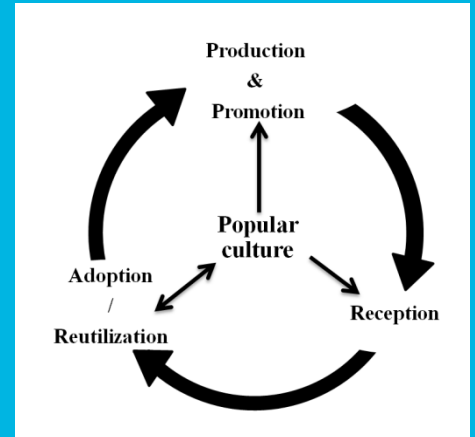
1. Music and sound are very strong memory triggers
  - i. Likewise our individual experiences of listening are affected by our experiences, our histories, our personal memories and feelings.
  - j. Most of us can remember where we were when we first heard a song and it can cause us to clearly recollect those moments



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## Memory & Meaning

2. Music has only general inherent meaning; most of its meaning is culturally signified
  - a. There are formal elements (major/minor keys, rhythm, tempo)
  - b. Those do not guarantee *meaning*
  - c. Irene Garofalo drew this image, borrowing from cultural theorist Stuart Hall, to show how meaning-making is a cyclical process involving artist, audience, industry and culture
  - d. In this manner meaning is continually *encoded* and *decoded* all the time.





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# Creativity

1. Memory and meaning infuse musicians' creativity
  - a. As Jason Toynebee writes in *Making Popular Music*:

“the composer, novelist or painter is supposed to be a special kind of being whose creativity and imagination rise up above the banality of everyday life and the everyday psyche.... The popular musician, on the other hand, is exemplary just because s/he comes from the people and cleaves to popular values.”
  - b. Is popular music art, commercial, folk, or some combination of these?
  - c. Its combination is what makes popular music special, Toynebee argues: It is both “ordinary” and “marvelous,” showing us what might have been “if only.”



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# History

1. The most obvious parallel w/r/t music is 1918
  - a. Actually 1917 is the better parallel: E. Douglas Bomberger's book, *Making Music American: 1917 and the Transformation of Culture* is a splendid account of the cultural, and musical, transformation in the U.S. as the country entered WWI and endured the flu pandemic.



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# History

2. Remarkable parallels between 1917-1918 and the present when it comes to popular music
  - b. Politics – debates about American music and ‘foreign musical influences,’ about ‘proper American music.’
  - c. Culture – cultural identity became intertwined with music (*e.g.*, German music was anti-American (as were German conductors who were deported or sent to internment camps) and thus classical music (esp. opera) receded from popular repertoire despite their efforts to incorporate patriotic music; Dixieland jazz first recorded and subsequently became enormously popular.



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# History

3. Remarkable parallels between 1917-1918 and the present when it comes to popular music
  - e. Technology – audio *playback* began to come into its own allowing greater dynamics, range of sound, in pre-radio era (though amplification was still not electrical)
  - f. Portable phonograph for the troops, the “Army and Navy Model,” built by the Edison Company.





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# History

4. Remarkable parallels between 1917-1918 and the present when it comes to popular music
  - g. Technology – audio *recording* began to come into its own allowing greater dynamics, range of sound, in pre-radio era (though amplification was still not electrical)
  - h. Two examples:
    - i. Vess Ossman – Maple Leaf Rag (1907) 
    - ii. Original Dixieland Jazz Band – Livery Stable Blues (May, 1917), earliest known jazz recording 



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# History

5. Musicians were hit particularly hard at a time when most of their income was from touring and live performance
  - a. Bomberger notes a fall 1918 newspaper headline, “Influenza Closes Many Conert Halls.”
  - b. An interesting aside: In a Chicago court a judge ruled against the leader of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band who sought to stop publication of the sheet music of “Livery Stable Blues” by a former bandmate claiming, “all blues were the same” and therefore could not be copyrighted.





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# Audiences & Economics

1. Circumstances dictate audiences and economics
  - a. Art vs. commerce, particularly for popular music
  - b. Musicians are nothing if not adaptable, but the internet has stretched the limits of adaptability already.
  - c. Will audiences be adaptable?
  - d. Will audiences want 'living room' concerts, etc., to continue?
  - e. Will musicians find ways to get live feedback?
  - f. Will tastes change?



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# Musicians

1. Sam Rosenthal, owner, Projekt Records, and musician, Black Tape for a Blue Girl
  - a. Projekt Records founded in 1983, over 200 releases
  - b. Black Tape for a Blue Girl started in 1986, 12+ albums.
  - c. Solo performer and frequent side projects
  - d. <http://www.projekt.com>
  
2. Michael Hogg,
  - a. .

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