

Season 2 Episode 1:

“PC Music, Hyperpop, and the Existence of Genre”

Jennifer: [00:00:00] Hi listeners, it's Jennifer. I'm a first year music history and industry major, and I hosted this week's episode of *Everything but the Music*. We recorded this episode three days before SOPHIE's untimely death on Saturday, January 30, 2021. As one of the pioneers of hyperpop, SOPHIE was a true visionary and we're thankful for the work she shared with us. Although her life was short, her legacy lives on. We dedicate the following episode to SOPHIE.

In 2013, British music producer A.G. Cook founded the record label PC Music. The label is known for exaggerating elements of 1990s and early 2000s pop and electronic music, such as the use of vocal effects and synthesizers. In this episode, we discuss PC Music, the advent of hyperpop and the existence of genres in music today.

So I wanted to start off by asking you guys about your initial reactions to the songs I sent.

Ashley: [00:01:01] It felt like I was 10 years old again on YouTube.

Jennifer: [00:01:06] Like in a good way?

Ashley: [00:01:08] Yes! Like, it's like, I'm watching Minecraft videos and there's, like, the music in the back just really hyping me up.

Samantha: [00:01:15] To see "Barbie Girl" and "We Like to Party" by The Vengaboys on this list, um, I didn't really know what PC Music, like, consisted of, but as soon as I opened your PDF and saw those, I was like, *Oh, okay, this is going to be great.*

Liv S.: [00:01:30] "Boom Boom Pow" was the first song I bought on iTunes. And then, uh, right at the end of high school, when I came out, I was like, *What's the gay music*, and that's also when Charli XCX released *Pop 2*, and SOPHIE released *Oil of Every Pearl's Un-Insides* and it just got me then. And yeah, I love it.

Jennifer: [00:01:56] Did you guys draw any connections to, like, other songs that I didn't put on the playlist?

Reed: [00:02:00] Yeah, I think "Scary Monsters and Nice [Sprites]". I feel like I...I don't know how long ago it was...I listened to the 100 geecs album, and I was like, *Oh man*, just the idea of music can be crunchy is like a whole genre in and of itself, and I think, I don't know, maybe that started with Skrillex? Who knows.

Jennifer: [00:02:21] Yeah, when I first listened to 100 geecs' album, like, especially with that, like, beat drop at the end of "745 sticky," like, I just feel like that reminded me a lot of Skrillex. And I feel like there were also a lot of, like, pop punk elements in 100 geecs' album. Yeah, it just reminds me of so many different genres put together.

Reed: [00:02:37] Totally. Like a big, like, you watched Honey Boo Boo when it was on? How, like, they had, the mom was, like, *the multi-meal*, and it's just a bunch of different things that shouldn't go together, but do. Tastefully, that's a different question.

Samantha: [00:02:51] I was getting, like, "Crazy Frog" vibes, "Like a G6", "Everytime We Touch", like those kinds of like hyper-produced, hyper-energized, just, like, ridiculous songs that weirdly I've been listening to a little bit to, um, motivate myself to write papers quickly. It made me happy. Honestly, I feel like this is, like, bringing me back to a time where I just didn't really, like, whatever sounded good or, like, fun was just, like, acceptable.

Jennifer: [00:03:23] I agree. It's like very fun, maximalist pop. And [it's] not afraid to just be, like, completely over the top.

Liv S.: [00:03:30] It also sounds a little bit like the cheer music, the competitive cheer music that we were listening to a few weeks ago, especially some of the A.G. Cook and SOPHIE stuff just really meant to stimulate the mind.

Jennifer: [00:03:44] Yeah, definitely. I feel like there's like no breathing room, like in those songs, like both the PC Music songs and cheer songs, like it's just, there's so much going on.

Samantha: [00:03:52] Also, in a weird way to connect it to, like, more current trends, I guess, in the last few months I've seen a lot of people

listening to, like, Mario Kart music to, like, keep them awake basically while they do their work. So I kind of feel like there's like, you know, all trends kind of eventually resurface and come back, and based on like the Mario Kart stuff and the friends that I have that are going back and listening to these songs, just, like, for enjoyment, it's an interesting full circle for me. I feel like I've gotten old enough to have these full circles happen.

Jennifer: [00:04:28] Yeah, that's a really good point that you bring up, because it's like, when PC Music first came out, which was like in the early 2010s, like 2013, it was seen as this, like, really weird, polarizing thing, because like most of the music at that time didn't sound like that. It was moving towards more, like, moody, you know, like slower pop, so to make, like, really maximalist pop music, it was not, like, mainstream, I guess. So it was kind of like mainstream, like mainstream pop music or traditional pop music as we knew it, like in the early 2000s, became, like, almost underground, which I think is pretty cool.

Reed: [00:05:01] Yeah. And to kind of connect what Samantha was saying about, like, the Mario Kart music, like, I'm not sure if you guys know, but on YouTube, the video [of] that guy playing that saxophone lick from Mario Kart over the Spain changes has 4.3 million views. So I think I can safely say that, um, just kind of like, although granted it is that soundtrack and where that lick comes from is more of like a jazz kind of fusion vibe, but like, I think there's something to be said about like the, the merging of like, I dunno, jazz to become more, like, I dunno, maximalist in a way. 'Cause then you have, like, artists, like Louis Cole, and you have artists like JD Beck and DOMi Keys before they, until they, once they drop their new album or whatever, and then you have Thundercat, like all of that stuff is just like blazing speeds with like the compressed sound of like the dryness of the tone. I don't know.

Jennifer: [00:06:01] It's interesting that you brought up jazz, Reed, because, like, I played some PC Music and 100 geecs for my mom a few days ago and I wanted to get her reaction on it, and she said that 100 geecs reminded her of jazz because there's, like, so much going on and there's, like, so many different sounds being put together. So I thought that was, like, a really fascinating connection.

Reed: [00:06:19] Like bebop, I'm sure. Like most of freeform, free bebop is like the most, exactly what that is.

Liv B.: [00:06:27] Adding onto that, I feel like that idea of, like, maximalism that someone else mentioned, like, it seems to only be getting more energizing, like the vibe of the songs. So I feel like the more there is incorporated, the more styles incorporated, the more, like, energizing and I mean, sometimes chaotic it'll feel, but it's exciting.

Jennifer: [00:06:52] Yeah, definitely. So speaking of [maximalism], there's a Spotify playlist called "hyperpop". Now it's being called, like, a genre in itself and then, like, even the term hyperpop itself, like, what do you think of those things? Like, do you feel like it's an accurate name? Do you feel like it should even be labeled? What do you guys think?

Reed: [00:07:08] I absolutely believe it should have a name because like any other genre, at least in the ways that I've come to know what the word genre even means is almost purely dependent on the tones rather than the chords used or the instrument or, or the...it's the tone, and the instrumentation, like country music lives off of, like, brush drums, as opposed to, like, the tight compressed sound or whatever. And then same thing for like, if hyperpop lives in the realm of like crunchy-sounding music, then, so be it. Then it should be its own genre, rather than just like, I don't know, anything else.

Liv S.: [00:07:51] The way I've come to understand genre labels is having nothing to do with the music, and essentially just a marketing scheme. Like you have to categorize it in order to market it appropriately. And I think in some of the articles that you sent, Jennifer, the artists were sort of rejecting that label or they're like, Charli XCX was tweeting, like, "what is hyperpop?" And I think that's a fair response. I think that, um, the label of hyperpop does sort of allow them to make fun of genre labels in a way. And part of what I really appreciate about both PC Music and hyperpop is I feel like there is a level of like, making fun of, or making fun out of something. But I also feel that it's quite sincere in a lot of ways. And I know that people spoke to that in the, in the readings you sent, especially from artists like Charli XCX and Caroline Polachek. I get this real sense of love and intimacy, and maybe it's because they're transparent about what they're doing, how they're engaging with marketing schemes, how they're engaging with the industry. Maybe that transparency sort of makes space for that love as well. That was just my initial reaction.

Jennifer: [00:09:01] Yeah, I agree. I feel like their work and, like, their whole aesthetic and their image is very intentional. Like, I don't feel like it's

satirical at all, which is why it's fascinating how PC Music in its early days was seen as, like, satire, like making fun of pop music, and now, like, hyperpop is seen as making fun of pop music as well. But yeah, I personally don't interpret it that way. I think it is definitely serious and should be taken seriously, even though it might seem, like, fun, but yeah, totally agree.

Austin: [00:09:27] I think the idea of sincerity in hyperpop...yeah, it's a big, controversial thing for some reason. Like I'm on music journalism Twitter, and they were talking about how, like a lot of publications, they don't cover hyperpop, one, just because it's a very, like, youth-oriented thing, like only young people seem to get it because it just sort of fits the sort of, like, maximalist lifestyle we think we're supposed to lead, like being in all these extracurriculars and then like knowing a crap load of memes and like, that Toad cover of "Chandelier" that went viral. And there's all these little niche things that really feed into how we react and, like, interact with music and, like, a lot of older people just don't seem to get that for some reason. I think it's just because again, like we're raised in different, kind of like moments of culture and time. And I do know some people who still think that hyperpop is ironic, but I don't think it's supposed to be, either. I think it's just supposed to be, like, shitposting fun, almost just like doing whatever the fuck you want and just letting loose. And with, like, the label of hyperpop, a lot of people were talking about that too, how like hyperpop was basically coined from that Spotify playlist, because I think, I'm not sure, Spotify created the term hyperpop and then it just started being disseminated everywhere. So, um, I think the reaction that a lot of artists have to the genre or like the label of hyperpop is sort of correct because it's like they didn't really have free reign of how they wanted to market themselves. It was just sort of imposed on them and not to make false equivalences, but it's sort of the same thing that you kind of see with, like, Black artists being, like, labeled as urban or R&B, with like Moses Sumney. Like he didn't want to be labeled as R&B but then like, his music has evolved since 2015, but he's still being labeled as R&B, even though he is not really R&B.

Reed: [00:11:32] Can I ask what you mean by "we're all growing up like at a different time," or something, or what you said about, like, growing up and we're all like different, about that?

Austin: [00:11:45] Oh, so I think that internet culture, I guess, varies from between generations. I hate, like, generalizing about like different age

groups, I feel like it's kind of ageist, but I know that a lot of older people who are listeners who try to get into hyperpop don't really like it. I'm, like, reading some of their reviews right now, but there is this, like, site and one of the reviews on the site was literally just like this guy said, "I'm sorry, but I'm just too old for this shit." Like, he, like, can't understand it and he can't get into it because he doesn't feel like it's sort of like his niche or thing. And I think that, I don't know, um, especially growing up, as we were saying, in like the 2000s and, like, having music, like "Barbie Girl," or "Promiscuous," or like "Fergalicious," like these are all things that we sort of know and they're still like camp to us. And I feel like it's maybe that sort of culture sort of ingrained in us and it's imposed its way into, like, how we listen and how we appreciate music that I think other people, other older people just won't understand, maybe. So that's just, like, my personal take. And I feel like that can be a generalization because I do know, like, some people who do take hyperpop seriously and they are older people. So, yeah.

Liv B.: [00:13:08] I agree with that. I also think that there's, like, something to be said about, I feel like there might be even a stigma around like highly produced or electronic-sounding music because, I don't want to like, make a generalization about older generations, but like with more time we get more produced in electronic, and oftentimes people are like, I mean, everyone has a hard time, like adapting to change, so music's been like, kind of on that track for a while, like, in many genres, going more electronic or like, like I said, produced. So I feel like it could relate to that, there's like a harder time understanding with older generations, PC-style music.

Reed: [00:14:00] And I also think it's like, there are, um, there's such a push with that, like quote on quote, "older generation," "not" quote unquote, "understanding," quote unquote, um, the genre of hyperpop. I think there's something to be said about, too, that like people really crave...how real music is. And like, there's so many conversations, especially anyone who enjoys theater and Broadway will say that, "I hate pop music because *blank*, *blank*, it's not real and *blank*. Why don't you do it live, see how it sounds then?" And it's like, a case can be made for that. And I think, however, I also think that music can coincide, or co-exist, I should say, music can coexist. What's wrong with real music and music that is done in a way that is or forged out of a computer rather than a human voice or instrument, not a human instrument? I mean, like, I mean like an instrument made by a human, even though computers are also...I'm going to stop talking.

Liv S.: [00:15:12] Well, that hits on something that is to me, a very contemporary issue and very salient. I mean, I totally get what you're saying, 'cause I'm a theatre person, I love theatre, and I feel like there's totally something to be said for being in a room physically with other people. And there is definitely a certain magic there, but there's also something to be said for Donna Haraway's [work], specifically "A Cyborg Manifesto," and scholarship like that, that's talking about the very real phenomenon of us being, you know, sort of living these cyborg lives, living partial identities, living pretty much inseparable from machines. And I think that hyperpop taps into the really cool state of embodiment that we are currently experiencing. It's very like science-fiction in a way. It allows you to explore gender a lot more by pitching your voice. And I think someone talked, this is, my citations are so vague, but someone definitely mentioned that in one of the articles that Jennifer sent about, um, playing with gender. And so that is to me why it reads especially as a queer project. And sort of that, like, disembodiment is an absolutely fascinating space to explore. I think it's very relevant to a lot of like, what would be labeled as post-humanist scholarship, but everybody who is doing it completely rejects that term because it tends to like allied axes of oppression.

Austin: [00:16:41] And I think the stuff you said of, like, destabilization also feeds into a lot of what, like how music, how PC Music and hyperpop [are] received. Because I remember when I was like writing about Charli XCX for something, one of the descriptions I came upon was like, "Oh, the end of 'Click' sounds like two monster trucks fucking," and it's like, you would not hear that about any other genre. And I do think that, yeah, it really hones into this idea of like, *what is real music*, but also like exploring, like, other spheres of being, like finding out more about what you can do with sound that like incites a reaction in you such as monster trucks fucking, like, I do not know how that would sound, but apparently now I do. Okay.

Jennifer: [00:17:40] That connects a lot to what A.G. Cook said in one of the interviews I linked about how Auto-Tune is kind of like a folk instrument, because it can still express authentic feelings, even though the way the voice sounds is slightly changed. And like, thinking about authenticity in music, like through the use of electronic instruments, is pretty fascinating, because it's like, are we saying that, like, music made with electronic things aren't real just because, you know, it's not made like with acoustic instruments, you know, even though like the sentiment might be real or like the lyrics might

be really genuine? I think that's really something fascinating [to think about].

Samantha: [00:18:15] Going back for a second to the generational thing, I feel like I can never completely take that seriously when like, older generations, and again, this is generalizing here, obviously [there are] people from older generations who are totally cool with like newer music and everything, but, like, this happens every single time. Not to be that person that brings up the Beatles thing, but like, I'm going to bring up the Beatles thing! Like older people and parents and such when the Beatles were first coming around were like, *Oh, this is just noise. And these boys have long hair and such and such*, and like in every single generation, it just happens. And then those people, and again, generalizing, but if we're taking it in a generalized direction, those people then hated it when their kids were listening to like '80s glam rock, and then they hated it when their kids were listening to 2000s pop and such. So I feel like it's just like this weird unavoidable thing that people tend to forget what being a kid or like In the younger generation is like, and they're just stuck to what they grew up with, and that's like the "legitimate" form of music. Not to go on a tangent, but this also comes up when older or not older, but like, I don't know, middle-aged, let's say, men get mad that, like, Harry Styles is wearing dresses and K-pop artists are wearing makeup. And then I'm like, *Your favorite band was Poison, what are you talking about? Why are you angry?* But anyway, that's my spiel on the generational thing. I feel like it just doesn't hold much ground. And I don't know...kind of coincides with the "real" thing, because, you know, "older music was so much more valid" and older music was "real" and we can only listen to, like, "real" instruments, and like Reed was saying, like, human-made instruments. Then you have, like, vocaloids, which are kind of crazy cool. Like what a crazy world we live in where there's all these kinds of music, just limited to what you consider, like quote, unquote, "real". I just, I don't really see the point. And I, I don't know, man, I just don't see anything wrong with like overly produced fun, energetic music that sometimes gives me anxiety because it's just like nonstop and like horns blaring everywhere. I don't know. I don't even remember where I was going with this, but I just felt the need to, like, defend pop music, I guess. Yeah.

Jennifer: [00:21:02] That reminds me a lot of the nostalgia bias or like [favoring the music we heard when] we were kids. So it's like, we kind of like, have bias for like, that nostalgia, if that makes sense.

Austin: [00:21:11] When I was listening to, um, which one was it, “thos moser”, my first reaction was like, wow, this makes me want to throw up. Back to Jennifer's point about, uh, this idea of, uh, like folk or stuff, like, acoustic instruments, having some sort of basis and authenticity, like we still see it going on. I think the most recent case would probably be *folklore* and Taylor Swift and like *evermore*, like that being sort of marketed as, even though it's, I think it has a bit more fiction than her last albums, it's like one of her most personal confessional, like “authentic” albums today. And the same thing happened with Lady Gaga and *Joanne*. And it's like every time, like someone has an unplugged album, that's not heavily electronic or that's like predominantly acoustically based, it's like, “Aw, they're being so much more authentic to their true selves,” and it's like, you don't really get to determine that based on the instrumentation they use, like, that's not the point. And like, how do you even define something being personal in music? Because that's really up to the person making the music too.

Jennifer: [00:22:24] Yeah, like, building onto that, Charli XCX's recent album, *how I'm feeling now*, like, I feel like that was a very authentic album. She's literally, like, talking about mental health and being open with, like, having feelings of self hatred or like, you know, feeling bad about yourself, but like, it's all covered in Auto-Tune and I mean, yeah, you're right when you say that, like, we can't really define, like, personal for someone else or like what someone's most personal work yet.

Samantha: [00:22:49] I feel like in that whole, like authenticity, that topic, there might be an element of like, I guess how I feel about it, because I feel like I'd be lying if I said I never judge music and I'm never like, *Oh, this isn't as good as the music that I like*, or like, you know, someone drops an unplugged album and I'm like, *Oh wow, it's so cool to hear them, like, you know, just singing and not like surrounded by all this, all these GarageBand sounds* and whatever, but I feel like maybe there's an element of like the artist being...the way that they present it. Like, I feel like there's a difference between a pop star who is like pretending to sing live and not doing that, and like with what we would call over-produced music and everything, but trying to play it off as if they're like very authentic and, um, whatever.

People who are just, like, comfortable with like this maximalist pop kind of sound that they're making, I don't know if that maybe changes the way that I, or just people in general feel about it. Like, because you are being authentic, you're still making a thing. Like, it's not easy. I mean, in some cases it is, but it's not always easy to like, make this kind of music. You still have to put in the time and think about the kind of music you want to make and then actually make it, and then go through the process of releasing it and promoting it and performing it and so on and so forth. So like, I don't feel like we can call it not authentic because it's still a thing that's being made. But I don't know. Maybe there's just like this...maybe the artist and how they kind of present it and how they talk about it, maybe that has some kind of play into it. I don't know.

Liv B.: [00:24:42] I totally agree with that. And I think adding onto it, like, there's this generalization that like, anytime there's this [maximalist production] I think there's a generalization made that...it's replacing some natural sound or some non-produced sound when there are so many like, sounds we haven't, you know, like they're often trying to kind of create one or, like, go deeper, like find new things, find new tones.

Liv S.: [00:25:27] Yeah, just a couple things re: authenticity and the generational debate, I think if you were to try to explain to an alien, *Hey, it's real music if it comes from, like, wood, but it's fake music if it comes from this other material*, they would be like, "What the hell are you talking about?" So to me, it just kind of reeks of like privileging of the quote, unquote, "Western art music canon". And yeah, I don't know. I just think, do whatever you want. And also, with the generational issue, I mean, I just wanted to remark, and this was a while ago, but Samantha's comment, I do think there could be an argument that recent generations, this generation, whatever generation we folks are, could be different just due to the exponential increase in technologies that are available to us and are intertwined with our daily lives. And also the fact that I think there's a strong argument to be made that our current...little time that we've found ourselves in, the Anthropocene is a boundary event that will hopefully be over within the century, and we will find some new way to exist on this planet because it's not going very well for us at the moment. Like, this could be a tipping point. I mean, I'm not sure. I just have my little perspective, so it kind of could be different for us not to be like, *We're so special*, but it could be interesting to examine hyperpop through that lens of sort of being at this tipping point and really having to

reconsider the way we conceive of ourselves as human beings in relation to other living beings on this planet. And then there, oh God, there was some comment in one of the articles, maybe it was like Skrillex, who's talking about, like, highbrow and lowbrow and I'm just like, shut up about brow. Like nobody cares. It's a worthless system based on classism. That's all.

Reed: [00:27:42] What's highbrow and lowbrow?

Liv S.: [00:27:48] It's like the, it came around, I think, in the mid-19th century. Highbrow things would be the things that educated quote unquote, "cultured" people enjoy, like, classical music, concerts and museums and things. And lowbrow would be the entertainment for the masses.

Austin: [00:28:14] Yeah, and just to like go off of that, if you read *Pride and Prejudice* or anything like Jane Austen, like that would be considered like high comedy or like high brow. So a lot of it is like witty or like manners and whatnot and like literature, and yeah, it's very, as Liv was saying, very classist, like, just let people like what they like!

Ashley: [00:28:43] Yeah, exactly. Like this is such a glorification of Western art music when people are just like, *The computer's not an instrument*, but if you really think about it, like the violin was once new technology, a saxophone was once very new technology. So are we going to define those as not instruments too? Like, I can't imagine someone being around when the violin, like first, like, the earliest forms of violin first came around, that was like, *That's not real music. It's not coming from your body. It's not coming from like an organic being*. And that's just ridiculous to me.

Samantha: [00:29:19] When Liv, you were talking about, like, the Western perspective, playing a big role in this, that's a really valid point. And like, I'm just thinking about, I just read this chapter from a book by John Blacking for my Sociology of Music class, and it was just coming up that, like, the way that we think about, like, real music and quote unquote, like "fake music" or whatever is absolutely rooted in, like, the Western perception of it. Because if you think about it, not even terms of like within, so let's just say like, this, hyperpop and everything that we're talking about today is like, kind of located within the Western, like the US and UK and whatever. But like, if we don't even consider that and we just consider like the world, what the people who say like, *Oh, this isn't real music*, or *This isn't authentic*, what they're talking about, then isn't going to apply in other parts of the world, like where...I

don't know, Bob Dylan is not like the “real music” creator. Like there are people who are going to hear that and not consider it and not just hear it for the first time, like, *Oh, this is real music*. Like there's, there's no way to have, like, a universal basis of what is real, because it's just going to apply differently in every situation and every culture and everything. So yeah, the whole, like, rooted in Western biases is just, I think, an important point here, because it doesn't apply really, when you think about it.

Liv S.: [00:31:30] Which is why musicking as a practice, as we've come to learn about it in the musicology department here at UCLA might be a little more of a helpful, inclusive model.

Jennifer: [00:31:42] So, speaking of genres and, like, what “real music” is, how would you define hyperpop as a genre?

Reed: [00:31:47] Can we define another genre first?

Jennifer: [00:31:50] We can talk about like...genres that hyperpop derives from...so like, going back to PC Music, thinking that, like, style of music derives from, like, Europop or like, you know, techno music or house music. Like what genres do you think hyperpop is inspired by?

Reed: [00:32:03] Like techno music, right? No?

Jennifer: [00:32:07] No. I mean, that's right. Like, I mean, if that's what you think, then yeah. Like, do you think it derives from any different genres that PC Music does not derive from? Thinking about the fact that PC Music originated in London, in the UK, and it was inspired by more European genres, I guess, like, more like, Europop, things like that. And then, like, comparing that to hyperpop, which I would say, like, with 100 geecs and with other artists who are from the US, you know, like that kind of is derived more from, like, American trends, like pop punk or hip hop or things like that.

Okay, so kind of changing topics a bit. What do you think will happen to PC Music and hyperpop in the future? Like, do you think it will become mainstream? Do you think it will just disappear? What do you think?

Ashley: [00:32:48] I find it really interesting how on the playlist you listed hyperpop as, like, beginning in 2019, right. And it feels like there's a parallel between the emergence of like TikTok and the emergence of hyperpop. And it feels like TikToks kind of really bring that out, and there's just, like, this

whole play on TikTok of, like, diversion of expectations and like these bursts of like content so that we're engaged the whole time. And I feel like there's a lot of parallel between that, but again, I'm a poser, like I watch Reels on Instagram. But I feel like TikTok is going to blow hyperpop up even more.

Jennifer: [00:33:24] I feel like there's definitely a correlation to be made there, like with the rise of TikTok and the rise of hyperpop, because I mean, like, you have these, like, short-form videos and then, like, you want as much content or as much action to happen as possible in these things, you know? So then that, like, leads to shorter attention spans and, you know, shorter songs.

Samantha: [00:33:41] To answer your question, I feel like I can actually apply in a way generational bias or whatever here, um, on a smaller scale, but just thinking about myself, like a person in their early twenties versus like a 15 year old, who's like at the heights of TikTok or whatever, I feel like I do have within me this unconscious kind of generational bias, because when you ask the question, like, do you think it will become mainstream? My immediate reaction was, I don't know if it could become mainstream because it's just like, it's a lot. But then I think like [Low] was mainstream and, like, T-Pain was mainstream. And like, I doubt that there were people, or I believe that there were people before that who heard stuff like that kind of pop, [and were] like, this would never play on the radio. It wouldn't be like the top hits, but I was in fifth grade on the bus to school and "Buy You a Drank" was always on and everybody knew every word. So yes, T-Pain is dope. So I feel like if I kind of remove myself from, like, my own weird biases from just like growing up in the time that I did, I would be less surprised if this became like more mainstream than I feel like it actually could be.

Ashley: [00:34:51] Yeah. And if hyperpop does become more mainstream, I wonder how that's going to affect, like, the music industry and how music is made from here on out. 'Cause it feels like it's a version of listener expectations that just becomes more and more microscopic as the years go on. Like instead of, *Oh, the composer, like used a deceptive cadence here*, and like *They use this form instead of that form*, it's just like within phrases, like, it feels like there's like a genre switch where, like, the whole whiplash thing we were talking about when we were listening to cheer music last week, or two weeks ago. So I just wonder how that's going to play out in the future.

Jennifer: [00:35:26] Yeah, I agree. Like, I wonder if, like, the sound is going to retain the same energy, I suppose, or if they're going to, like, make it more accessible for artists. Like, yeah, I wonder how that would work. If we think of, like, pop today or like defining mainstream as what's on the Billboard charts today, you know, I feel like you could kind of argue that, like, hip hop and rap for example, is pop because that's like, what's popular, you know? But if we think of pop music in like typical terms, you know, thinking of, like, having a formula or having, like, a clear songwriting structure, um, yeah. I don't know, like, where hyperpop would fit into that, because I feel it's just like so much happening.

Austin: [00:36:01] I don't listen to it enough to, like, make this statement, but like, I feel like K-pop's sort of bringing the maximalist swing back onto the charts. I don't know if it'll ever get to the point where like hyperpop will also be up there with it, but like with the electro-clash of like, "Kill This Love" from BLACKPINK, and like other songs that have been charting from BLACKPINK except for "Ice Cream," which was interesting, but that's, that's besides the point. I do think that, whether it's from like stans or some other source, like TikTok, that I think there is a chance for exposure for hyperpop that, like, wouldn't have been there as we were saying, like back in the early '10s, when it was just starting to emerge. And I do think that obviously like Ariana Grande or, like, Taylor Swift wouldn't collab. But I do think that, like, a lot of collaborations that have been happening with say, like, reggaeton artists that have been bringing them into the mainstream over here in the States could be possible to bring up PC Music into the cultural forefront. But that's also sort of, I think, dependent on publications and like that exposure, 'cause I feel like a lot of the legitimacy given to hyperpop and like genres in general are from publications sometimes and just like how they are marketed. And I feel like again, like, because PC Music isn't really accepted as something to be studied, or just like reported on, that it might be more difficult. And I feel like it's, it was, it was the same thing with K-pop back when it was like, um, like, the second generation, I think of K-pop, 'cause like, I think this is the third, but yeah, I do think that it would be more accessible for it to be popular nowadays than before.

Jennifer: [00:38:01] You think it's the publications that are making it officially, like, a legitimate genre? Or do you think it's, like, the viewers or the listeners that are making it, or establishing it as a real genre?

Reed: [00:38:11] I think it's definitely the listeners. If we saw anything that happened recently with the whole GameStop stock thing, I think if that can happen, which I don't think that's ever happened in history [before], somebody please prove me wrong because I'd love to hear a story like that. But if that's what's happening, like there's of course, the genre is going to be determined by the people or the popularity is going to be determined by the people versus whatever anything else is pushing on to us.

Jennifer: [00:38:42] So going back to, like, the term “hyperpop,” Spotify decided, *We're going to call this “hyperpop,” because all of this sounds the same*, you know, but then you go to the hyperpop playlist, and I feel like for me personally, like, I don't know if the music there fits my definition of hyperpop, because I feel like it's more derivative of, like, SoundCloud rap, things like that. It's like a moodier version of pop versus like what I'm thinking of, like maximalist pop, you know, I would think of more as hyperpop. So, like, I wonder if that's why, like, artists and, you know, the audience, is kind of hesitant to call things hyperpop because, you know, it was made by the industry. It wasn't made by the artists themselves. Yeah, I wonder if that's like a factor.

Reed: [00:39:21] Quick question. What's glitchcore?

Jennifer: [00:39:24] I have no idea, but I've heard that term being thrown around a lot.

Reed: [00:39:27] Yeah, I get it heard as well, like when people talk about hyperpop, so I was like, *Oh, what's glitchcore?* anyways.

Jennifer: [00:39:35] Yeah, I think people were using, like, glitchcore as a way to like, kind of rebel against the label of hyperpop. Like, *No, this isn't hyperpop. This is glitchcore*. Or like, I remember seeing TikToks that were reposted on Twitter, because the “hyperpop discourse” is a thing, I guess, on both platforms, like people saying “this is hyperpop,” and “this isn't hyperpop”. So for people to be like, *Oh, well, this is hyperpop and this is glitchcore*, it's like, I mean, I don't really know what the difference is, and I don't know if it's just people trying to gatekeep or what, but yeah. I wonder what you guys think.

Samantha: [00:40:04] in regards to the question of like, the power to become mainstream. Like, is that in the hands of like the people and the listeners or the publications and such? I think that's a really good point,

Reed, that like, the internet and the chaotic people that exist on it are so powerful. And if we're thinking in terms of, like, music fandoms, the stuff that can be achieved is unreal. But kind of going back to Austin's example of K-pop, which I have like some experience in, like K-pop fandoms, many of them are so large and so powerful. They can get stuff done, like it's unbelievable. But I don't think that K-pop by anyone really is in a place where we can call it truly mainstream yet, because like it's, it's getting radio play, and I mean, Twitter is a playground of K-pop and stuff, but I don't think it's really broken through. It's really hard to get like consistent radio plays without that kind of backing from like companies and The Academy, not to mention The Academy, but there's like, not, I feel like there's legitimacy, that's missing in the eyes of many people regarding that kind of music. And, you know, that has to do with, like, the language barrier and stuff too. But I feel like there's a certain level of, like, the industry that if they're not really behind something, it may break through to the mainstream, but it's probably going to have a harder time getting to the mainstream. And I'm talking about like the true mainstream, not just popularity, but to the point where, like you say, *Oh, I listened to this artist*, and nobody, or, you know, in most cases, nobody judges you for that because everybody listens to it because it's like, quote, unquote "acceptable". [Whereas] I think like, there are genres of music that are very popular and beloved by many who are powerful, especially through the internet, but it's not like quote unquote "acceptable" in the same way.

Jennifer: [00:42:17] I agree. Like, I feel like there's a lot of things that are, like, popular on the internet, but like aren't popular in real life. Like hyperpop, in a sense, because I feel, I don't, like, know that many people who talk about hyperpop in real life versus, like, on the internet, I feel like a lot of people do. Like, I mean, depending on, like, I guess what fanbases you're a part of, or like, what accounts you follow.

Liv B.: [00:42:36] I'm curious to know how relevant the real mainstream will stay because social media is just getting bigger and I feel like more than ever, like, fans and just, like, consumers are so in on everything and vocal. So I feel like it might turn into something like cable TV where honestly, streaming is much more relevant. Now we could have never seen that coming, but I feel like it might mirror that a little where like, it'll just be a lot of, I wouldn't say fashions, but like just different genres and styles and

people will kind of just float to those and take those more seriously with more weight than like what's on KIIS FM.

Jennifer: [00:43:22] Going back to the idea of streaming, I feel like TikTok definitely affects the charts, because like, you'll see a lot of songs that are like, "TikTok songs," become big on Billboard. So I think the viewers and the fans definitely play a big role into like, what is mainstream and what is popular. So like, going back to the original question, will hyperpop become mainstream, I mean, I feel it is possible, perhaps, you know, because I mean, thinking back to, like, other genres, that have, like, become big, you know, like, I mean, I definitely think it's like a possible thing that could happen, but I just don't know when.

Liv S.: [00:43:53] Fans are so cool. I took a class in the musicology department about fandom and it really is like the internet that has enabled fandoms to take so much power and it's super cool how these fan works and fan engagements, just basically passionate people on the internet enjoying media are able to completely blur the line between producer and fan, because they're all like sort of creating the world of whatever work, like be it a TV show or a musician, together.

Austin: [00:44:29] When I was talking about publications, I was mainly just talking about, like, exposure to, like, audiences that aren't on, like, viral platforms like TikTok, because of course there's also, when we talk about nostalgic biases against, like, music, that also goes along with, like, technology and apps and whatnot. But like returning to the point about glitchcore versus like hyperpop, I feel like since chillwave and like electropop and like, since whenever, micro-genres have been coming up, like portmanteaued genres have just really been going every which way. And to be honest, I don't know where one ends and where the other begins, either. I didn't even know that glitchcore existed until Reed brought it up today. So I feel like, and then like, the idea of genre itself, like a lot of artists are also being labeled as like genre-bending, whatever that means. And it's like, well, if everyone is genre-bending, and then like, why even say it, or like, why even use the term of genre? But, yeah, I think that when we're talking about like TikTok and virality and like getting up into the mainstream, not necessarily like, uh, the chart mainstream, but mostly just like in a viral context, I do think that like, TikTok makes like everything an equal playing field, almost. It's just sort of like, whatever fragment that you

stumble upon that, like, gets the most iterations, like happens to land you to the top.

Allison: [00:45:57] When it comes to things like being considered mainstream, at this point, it doesn't even, like, depend on the music. It really just depends on, like, having music taste that is, like, popular. So like, what I'm saying is like, people will say that they like, listen to SZA, for example, just to be like, *Oh my God, I'm a SZA stan*, you know what I'm saying? And it's not even like about how good or bad the music is. It's really just about like getting clout for like being a part of this, like, group and having this, like, aesthetic.

Jennifer: [00:46:30] Yeah, that's a really good point that you bring up, because it's like, I mean, what comes first, the aesthetic, or like the artist and, like, liking that type of music? Like, are people only liking a certain type of music to fit or an aesthetic, or vice versa?

Ashley: [00:46:41] I heard somewhere that 100 geecs got, like, viral on TikTok, right?

Jennifer: [00:46:46] Yeah, I think like, “money machine” was, like, a meme at first...People were like, *Oh, listen to this*, and then people thought it was a meme, and then it became, like, popular.

Liv S.: [00:46:55] I had a TikTok get like hundreds of thousands of views solely because I used a 100 geecs song and it was the most worthless TikTok.

Jennifer: [00:47:04] So going back to, like, genres and like whether genres should even exist if everyone is genre-bending now, like, I mean, I understand why they exist, it's for categorical reasons and for industry reasons, but like, I mean, when do you think this whole genre-bending thing will end? You know, if we're, like, describing, like, all, like, I mean like, a lot of new artists lately as genre-bending.

Austin: [00:47:24] I think as long as there is a genre to bend, it won't end.

Allison: [00:47:28] It's just going to get even more, like, more and more micro. Because like, no one's going to produce new music. Everyone's going to, like, look at old types of music and then try to find ways to combine them and then just like mix them. So it's never going to end, you know what I'm saying? It's like, it's just going to be like, at like some point we're just going to have like some genre that's going to be like a mixture of like

country and like, EDM, and then like, hip hop. It's all going to be like one, and it's going to, we're going to, like, have like an actual name for it because everyone's just going to keep experimenting with everything.

Jennifer: [00:48:06] Yeah, and like, thinking about “Old Town Road” and the controversy that caused because it was genre-bending, you know, I don't know if, like, the mainstream media is ready for a song that encompasses multiple genres. I don't know, but that's, that is definitely something to think about.

Reed: [00:48:22] There was controversy about “Old Town Road”? I thought everybody loved that song.

Jennifer: [00:48:26] There was, because like, when it first came out, it was, like, a TikTok trend, I guess. And then they put it on, like, the hip hop charts, and then people got mad because they were like, *No, it's a country song. Why are you categorizing it as, like, hip hop and R&B*, and then it became a [race-related] discussion because it was like, *Are we like only labeling it as hip hop because it was made by a Black artist*, but then they added Billy Ray Cyrus to it and then it was considered pop and country.

So, yeah, I mean, it's still a big hit. I mean, it's the longest running song on Billboard, but like, I mean, that is something to consider, like...why did we have to wait until, like, a remix was done with a white artist in order to call it pop or country?

Austin: [00:49:11] I feel like a lot of that is, like, going back to the point about, like, Western traditional values. ‘Cause I feel like pop, not to make generalizations, but pop in other places doesn't really have that same problem. Like again, returning to K-pop even though I don't know too much about it, like a lot of people just like, talk about K-pop as like using a kitchen sink method where they're just like, *Bam*, look, it's just all [these] styles at once. And what's coming to mind is like NCT's “Resonance” where like, they literally, like, flip the camera 12 times to represent different musical styles. And it's, like, kind of annoying, but it's also just like a really big mishmash for one song with, like, all these different genres and, like, that's considered pop, even though it has a lot of different styles. But like here in the States, like we're still, like, again, like, going back to R&B just because you're Black and all these other, like, biases. And I really think that a lot of it sort of ties into, like, resurgences of, like, perhaps, like white

supremacism and like how a lot of these, like, again, like, traditional conservative values are, like, being reinforced and how, like, we can't really escape that in any aspect of our lives. And like, maybe it's like, especially like just going back into, like, because it was country specifically, like, we needed to have Billy Ray Cyrus, "Achy Breaky Heart," like, on "Old Town Road".

Jennifer: [00:50:45] Yeah, exactly. Like, why did we need Billy Ray Cyrus to, like, validate it as country? Like, why couldn't it just be country on its own? It reminds me of, like, the 1950s music industry and, like, how they had "race records," you know, and that was, like, segregated from pop music, you know? So I feel like we haven't really progressed much as like, you know, a society and, like, as a music industry, you know, if we're still, like, segregating artists in that way.

Samantha: [00:51:08] Can't even remember the last time I had a conversation with someone where it was like, *Oh, what kind of music do you like*, and we talked in terms of genres, like when I'm talking to, like, peers and just people in general, I feel like it's usually artists, so that's interesting, but then, like, when you're on Spotify, if you don't know what artists you want to listen to, you can, like, go into the genre categories. But I don't know, that just made me wonder, like, I don't, I don't know if the genres will ever go away or if they do, if they will, anytime soon. 'Cause I think that like, there's this need, whether it's like within human society or, or even more so within like the industry to categorize things, to like, you know, for labeling purposes and numbers and money and things. But I do wonder if like, because there's just so much genre-bending going on, and so many artists who, like, I listened to them and I cannot put my finger on, like, *What would I call this*, I feel like, at least in my experience, there's been a shift from genre. It's become a little bit less relevant [than] artists, and that's been like a bigger indicator of what kind of music you're into.

Jennifer: [00:52:24] The advent of hyperpop, you know, as a genre, is really fascinating, and I look forward to seeing what other genres will be combined and the progression of genre itself in the future.