

Listening to (Mainstream) Popular Music in 2021: Sounds and Practices

11–12 June 2021, Department of Music, University of Innsbruck, Austria

Description

The interdisciplinary two-day conference seeks to intensify the scholarly discourse on the current sounds of popular music, and about those who stream, buy, talk about, like, use, and listen to them. The goal is to bring together different approaches unified by the interest in the cultural meanings, identities, experiences, and values that music without a clear subcultural context is being loaded with.

Until recently, the mainstream(s) of popular music didn't seem to be very popular, but rather underexamined, in popular music scholarship. The idea of the mainstream, though, as Huber (2013) pointed out, has always been present, functioning as the binary – but hardly defined or theorised – opposite to the authentic, honest, subversive, and creative music. In the last years, however, more and more research has emerged that leaves this pejorative perspective behind, considering mainstream sounds and practices as phenomena to be examined in their own right. Amongst others, such studies help to enlighten our understanding of how music is a catalyst or a mirror of certain images and concepts within dominant society.

For this conference, one particular focus is on research that connects a reception-oriented focus with music-related questions: how is popular music listened to and made sense of, at the beginning of the new decade, and what role do the sounds and their particularities play?

Scholars from various fields and methodological backgrounds will participate with presentations in the realm of:

- social, psychological, and aesthetic functions of contemporary popular music
- music in everyday life, 'receptional competences'
- theoretical conceptions and definitions of the mainstream
- musical trends, 'hit song science'
- musical analysis, production and recording
- perception and cognition of current sounds
- journalistic perspectives and discourses
- musical knowledge transfer today
- gender roles in mainstream popular music
- musical dislike

The conference language is English.