

# Minimalism

## Background to Modernism

- Minimalist music was a reaction against the excesses and complexities of Modernism
- Modernism was a style of music and art which had developed around the same time as the two World Wars (early 20<sup>th</sup> century)
- The main characteristics of musical Modernism are experimental music and aleatoric (chance) music

## John Cage

- John Cage composed experimental music. One of his most famous pieces was "Sonata for Prepared Piano" (1940). In this piece he put objects such as rubber, forks, screws and bolts in between the strings inside the piano

John Cage  
(1912-1992)



## Cornelius Cardew (1936-1981)

- Cornelius Cardew composed aleatoric music. One of his most famous pieces was "Treatise" (1963). To perform this piece the performer must interpret a graphic score



## Background to Minimalism

- Minimalism began with Terry Riley and his piece "In C" (1964). Like "Treatise" aleatoric techniques. However, unlike Cardew's piece "In C" has 53 musical motifs provided for the performers to use

Graphic  
Score



Terry  
Riley

## Steve Reich

- Steve Reich performed in the premiere of "In C" after returning from a fact-finding mission in Ghana, West Africa. Whilst staying with the Ewe tribe in Ghana, Reich had become interested in African rhythms and how they could be incorporated into Western Classical music. Using his new learning, Reich went on to compose three important minimalist pieces:

## "Come Out" (1966)

- This piece uses two identical tape recordings of Daniel Hamm, a victim of police brutality. The phrase "to let the bruise's blood come out to show them" is repeated over fifty times slowly going out of and then back in to sync.

Steve Reich  
(1936-)

Claves



## "Clapping Music" (1972)

- In this piece two players perform one 12 beat ostinato. The first performer repeats the original rhythm 144 times, whilst the other *phases* the original rhythm once every 12 repeats



## "Music for Pieces of Wood" (1973)

- This piece is written for five clave performers. It begins with player 1 performing a steady pulse or beat. Then player 2 enters the piece playing a 12 beat rhythmic ostinato. After that the other 3 players enter when they want either performing the ostinato in unison with player 2 or slightly out of sync with player 2. After a signal from player 1, the ostinato is then shortened a beat a time until it dissolves leaving only player 1 playing the beat alone



Minimalist  
Painting

## Conclusion

- The minimalist style centres around the use of simple motifs repeated excessively so that the audience is transported into an almost **hypnotic** state



# Rock Songs

## Origins of Rock (1940s/50s)

- Rock and roll began in the United States
- It is a mixture of various popular musical genres, including rhythm and blues, gospel music, and country and western
- The first rock and roll record was **Bill Haley's** "Rock Around the Clock" (1955), although some critics believe that "That's All Right (Mama)" (1954), **Elvis Presley's** first single, was the first rock and roll record
- The 1950s saw the growth in popularity of the electric guitar through the playing of **Chuck Berry**
- It also saw major developments in recording technology such as multitrack recording developed by **Les Paul**
- The social effects of rock and roll were worldwide and massive. Far beyond simply a musical style, rock and roll influenced lifestyles, fashion, attitudes, and language. It also helped the cause of the civil rights movement because both African American teens and white American teens enjoyed the music



Elvis Presley  
(1935-1977)

## The British Invasion (1963–1974)

- In mid-1962 bands like **The Rolling Stones** and **The Yardbirds** began composing blues influenced music
- Other acts in the invasion included **The Kinks** and later **Cream** and **Led Zepppelin**

## The Beatles

- By the end of 1962, the British rock scene had started with beat groups like **The Beatles**
- In the beginning The Beatles performed standard American tunes, playing for dancers doing the twist, but eventually they began composing their own original rock compositions
- The group consisted of:
  - John Lennon** – lead vocal/backing vocal, rhythm guitar
  - Paul McCartney** – lead vocal/backing vocal, bass guitar
  - George Harrison** – backing vocal, lead guitar
  - Ringo Starr** – drum kit + tambourine



The Beatles (1960-1970)

## Daytripper

- "Day Tripper" was written by Lennon and McCartney, and was recorded during the sessions for the "Rubber Soul" album
- Lennon wrote most of the *lyrics* and the famous guitar *riff*, while McCartney helped with the verses
- The song is about a girl who leads the singer on. McCartney later admitted that "Day Tripper" was about drugs, and in particular LSD
- The song begins with a 2-bar lead guitar solo *riff* after which the other instruments enter one by one until finally the voice begins marking the beginning of the first *verse*
- Verse 1 is an 8-bar *blues* in **E**, which then changes from the blues when the *chorus* begins ("she was a Daytripper...")
- After two verses and two choruses, a *bridge* is heard which features harmony on the backing vocals and which is based around repeats of the guitar riff and then a *lead guitar solo*
- There is then a 3<sup>rd</sup> verse and chorus, and finishes with a *coda/fade-out section*

Stave Notation

TAB Notation

RIFF 1

RIFF 2

"Daytripper" Guitar Riff

## Words to the rock song: "Daytripper"

Got a good reason for taking the easy way out,  
 She was a Daytripper, one-way ticket yeh,  
 It took me so long to find out, but I found out.  
 She's a big teaser; she took me half the way there,  
 She was a Daytripper... (*as before*)  
 Tried to please her, she only liked one night stands,  
 She was a Daytripper, Sunday driver yeh,  
 It took me so long... (*as before*); Daytripper yeh

# The Beatles: The Final Years

## “Hey Jude” (1968)

- "Hey Jude" was mostly composed by Paul McCartney to comfort John Lennon's son Julian during his parents' divorce
- Totalling more than seven minutes in length, it was the longest single ever to top the British charts
- It is Verse/Bridge structure and begins with McCartney's vocal performance and piano accompaniment
- The verses are based on three chords: C, G and F (I, V and IV in C major)
- At the end of the verses the piano shifts downward to a flat seventh of the tonic chord, making the bridge the point of arrival in the new related key of F major ('And any time you feel the *pain*')
- At the end of each bridge, McCartney sings a brief phrase ('Na-na...')
- Additional details, such as tambourine on the third verse and backing vocal harmonies, are added to sustain the interest of the listener
- After the fourth verse, the song shifts to a fade-out coda ('Na-na...Hey Jude') that lasts for more than four minutes

**John Lennon** – backing vocal, rhythm guitar (acoustic)

**Paul McCartney** – lead vocal, piano, bass guitar

**George Harrison** – backing vocal, lead guitar

**Ringo Starr** – backing vocal, drum kit + tambourine

**Orchestra** – Flutes, Clarinets, Bassoon, Trumpets, Trombones, Percussion & Strings

## “Let it be” (1970)

- "Let it be" comes from the 12th and final studio album of the same name
- Shortly after the album's release the group announced that they were *breaking-up*
- The song has a unique religious theme, heard in its use of organ, references to "Mother Mary" and frequent plagal cadences – F chord (IV) to C chord (I)

**John Lennon** – backing vocal, rhythm guitar

**Paul McCartney** – lead vocal, piano, bass guitar

**George Harrison** – backing vocal, lead guitar

**Ringo Starr** – drum kit

**Billy Preston** – organ, electric piano

Words to the rock song: “Hey Jude”

Hey Jude, don't make it bad  
Take a sad song and make it better  
Remember to let her into your heart  
Then you can start to make it better

Hey Jude, don't be afraid  
You were meant to go out a get her  
The minute you let her under your skin  
Then you begin to make it better

And anytime you feel the pain, hey Jude refrain Don't  
carry the world upon your shoulders  
For well you know that it's a fool, who plays it cool  
By making the world a little colder (Na Na etc.)



Words to the rock song: “Let it be”

When I find myself in times of trouble  
Mother Mary comes to me  
Speaking words of wisdom  
Let it be

And in my hour of darkness  
She is standing right in front of me  
Speaking words of wisdom  
Let it be

Let it be, let it be  
Let it be, let it be  
Whisper words of wisdom  
Let it be