# Standardization is Music in the Contemporary Times

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**Introduction**

This essay presents a cultural perspective of music and applies the concept of standardization to it. It also makes use of Max Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s published work “The Culture Industry” to understand the perceptions of the music listeners for a better understanding of whether standardization in music composition is a successful and significant point or not. The essay also throws light on the contemporary music artists like Hardwell, David Guetta, Afrojack, Sidney Sampson and others who make high use of electronic tunes (progressive house music genre and electronic house music genre) and how it is followed by many music lovers across the globe (Horkheimer).

The above mentioned contemporary artists have no relation with the standardised way of composing music but are still highly successful in the contemporary music industry. Using this point, the essay argues that standardization is not apt in the current music industry which will always have room for innovation and a standardized way (Afrojack) of producing music is not favourable given the current trend in the music industry.

**The Standardization concept in Music**

Musical spheres can be broadly divided into two categories which are namely popular music and serious music. This distinction marks back to the times in Europe where the distinction was made initially before the popular era of American music took prevalence. The focus of this paper is on paying attention to the popular music which highly follows the notion of standardization (Watts).

As a very fundamental example, the experts in the music industry would characterize chorus in the music as consistent of 32 bars, where the range is limited to one octave and a single note. This has been a standardised structure which the music directors have been following to compose music in different genre. However, this notion has certainly changed in the recently followed trend where the music composers are coming up with exotic and state of the art tunes to appeal to the music lovers. Examples of these acts include party music numbers, electronic house, progressive house and other music genres which makes extensive use of technological equipments which offers a high degree of rhythmic music to the listeners (Paddison).

The standardised structure was followed for a long period of time by a huge number of music composers. They continued to follow the same structure for decades before the tunes and melodies became monotonous. Change was inevitable. The need for following a non- standardised structure while composing music was also increasingly recognised. The main point why the standardised structure was followed for a long period of time was the fact that the music schools and the music teachers and the experts also use to teach the same to the young music lovers and learners. Hence, it carried on from one generation to another without realising that music is something that should appeal rather than doing the basics correct one time and every other time subsequently (Watts).

**Applying the thoughts of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s “The Culture Industry”**

It has been argued by the two theorists that the cultural forces that are highly homogenous in nature and the influences of the masses spread together as common. Thus, if the perception of a large group of individual start to favour a particular style (if music is taken as an example), then that turns out to be a fad and a trend and increasing number of people start to follow the same. This results into the professionals of the music industry needing to address the requirements of the customer (Frascina).

**Serious Music vs. Popular Music**

The above discussion primarily focuses on popular music (one of the main category of the musical sphere identified in this paper). The other sphere that has been identified is called the serious music. It has been identified that serious music can be characterised in a much more elaborative manner relative to the popular music (Horkheimer).

As far as the description and the definition of the two categories of musical spheres are concerned, the serious music has lyrics which are much more expressive in nature and hence a more characterised form of music is acceptable by the listeners. This is not the case with popular music where different types of tunes are encouraged by the listeners at different points of time which creates a significant difference relative to the category of popular music. The notion of musical automatism is dominant in the case of serious music and hence it is acceptable for the music listeners not to questions a fixed and a standardised format for the development of the musical notes (Paddison).

**Contemporary Music Artists not following the notion of Standardization**

Contemporary artists have been following exceptionally state of the art musical notes to come up with music that is more prevalent in the discs and pubs across the globe. Famous events like ‘Sunburn’ form the main core of the central events that result in improving and enhancing the popularity levels of these artists. The main piece of music that is utilised for purpose of analysis in this paper relates to a popular music number ‘Zeggie’ by Afrojack. It is a very different number and one of its kinds. An idea of the popularity of this music number can be evidently judged by the fact that the music video on YouTube has been viewed as many as 1,178,713 times till date. This clearly shows that this musical piece is immensely popular among the youth and is followed as a popular music number by many latest and contemporary music Disc Jockeys across the globe (Frascina).

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