



Face the Music: The History of Women's Music within Cultural and Intersectional Feminism

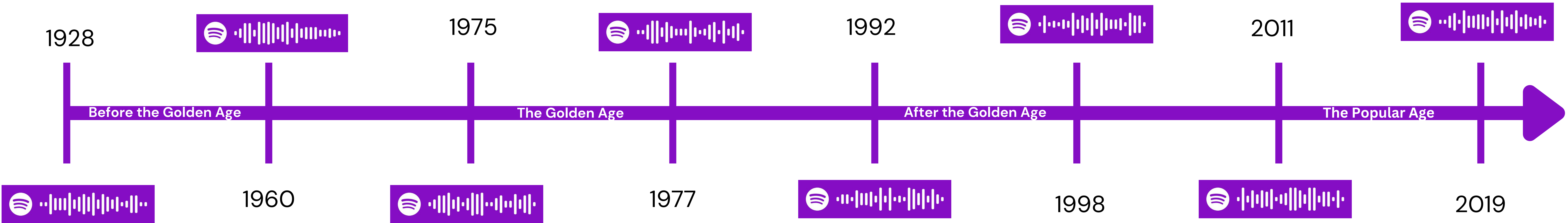
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The music timeline below provides an example of the sound from each stage of feminist music. Scan the codes on the Spotify app to hear the songs.



Background

Between the 1920s and 1960s, women of color laid the groundwork for the Women's Music Movement, utilizing stereotypes to push the boundaries of what was acceptable for women to sing about, pursuing more sexual themes and opening the door for future musicians to push further. Musicians who pushed these boundaries include Bessie Smith and Gertrude "Ma" Rainey.

The Golden Age

The Golden Age was the peak of the Women's Music Movement. This period from 1970 to the mid-1980s established women's music as a genre and aligned with the Women's Liberation Movement in the United States. Indie recording label Olivia Records played a large role in getting women in the recording studio. A great celebration of Olivia Record's 10 year anniversary, as well as the movement's success, was held at Carnegie Hall in 1982, which marked a high point of the movement. The event at Carnegie Hall brought together women from all over the world to share in an evening of music. While the event at Carnegie emphasized the reach of women's music, the Golden Age eventually came to an end.



Meg Christian was a founding member of Olivia Records and was also one of bigger artists at the label. The first album released by Olivia was Christian's *I Know You Know* (1974).

For Olivia Records' 10th anniversary celebration, artists Meg Christian and Cris Williamson performed at Carnegie Hall. Other musicians involved in the concert include Tret Fure, Diane Lindsay, Jackie Robbins, Adrienne Torf, Jeanette Wrate, Shelby Flint, Viki Randle, Linda Tillery, and Judy Chilnick.



The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival was one of the largest music festivals for women's music held annually until its final festival in 2015.

After the Golden Age

In response to anti-feminist rhetoric during the Reagan years, widespread feminist organizing decreased, and by the 1990s, many women rejected the term "feminist" even though they still embraced notions of female equality. Women in the 90s began to redefine the sound of feminism, resulting from transitioning methods of feminist organizing. As feminism moved towards the mainstream, so too did music that incorporated feminist themes. Riot Grrrl, a spin-off genre of punk, became one of the larger platforms for feminist music.

The Popular Age

Feminism in the 21st century began to look different than that of generations past. The focus turned towards intersectional feminism, which centers multiple aspects of a person's identity, such as race, class, and sexuality, in combination with their gender. In addition to an intersectional approach, feminists of the 21st century interact with a larger, global activist network due to the development of the internet and social media. This activism manifests in both grassroots and mainstream efforts. Artists like Beyoncé and Lizzo claim intersectional identities and display the present day interaction between music and feminism.

Conclusion

Music has the ability to reach mass audiences, accessible both physically as well as intellectually, in ways that localized protests and scholarly literature cannot, which makes it an important lens of analysis for social movements and their progress. Music had the ability to reach far and spread messages to anyone who may happen by a set of speakers. Women in music utilized this as an activist platform to share their experiences as women with others. Breaking into a male-dominated industry, women showed that they were not only capable of creating music, but also that their music was in demand. The strides taken in this industry reflect larger shifts in feminism across the late twentieth century as organizing moved from grassroots to mainstream.