

Emo: Then and Now

Emo, a musical genre characterized by themes of social alienation, sensitivity, misanthropy, introversion, and angst, is generally considered to be a relatively modern musical genre. It's not widely known that it actually first appeared in the 1980s, and that it grew out of the punk rock movement.



Many music historians trace emo back to a hardcore-punk band called Rites of Spring, though the members of that band reject being categorized as "emo." For a while, in the 1980s, the emerging genre was known as "emo-core," but the suffix was soon dropped. And while the first "emo-core" bands quickly came and went, the genre itself took root.

In the 1990s, the popularity of emo spread. Midwestern emo bands were both less rough-sounding and more emotional. At this time emo became an underground movement. Towards the end of the decade, sub-genres, like screamo, began to form.

By the turn of the century, emo was firmly bound up with pop-punk, while the heavier post-hardcore and screamo bands remained underground. It was the appearance of MySpace in the mid-'00s that made emo a fully realized counterculture, spearheaded by bands like Fall Out Boy, My Chemical Romance, Paramore, and Panic! At The Disco whose popularity exploded seemingly overnight.

Beginning around 2010, the term emo developed two quite different definitions. Many "emo-revival" bands looked back to the 1990s for inspiration. The more modern emo bands have abandoned the underground and essentially become modern pop acts. Today, artists are combining the emo sensibility with hip-hop to create a new version of emo, which if history is any indication, will continue to evolve.

Name _____

QUESTIONS: Emo: Then and Now

1. What characterizes the music genre called emo?

2. When did the genre emo first appear on the music scene?

3. What genre did emo evolve from?

4. When did the popularity of emo both start to spread and become an underground movement?

5. What happened in the mid-'00s that made emo a fully realized counter-culture?

6. When did emo as a genre split and go in two different directions? What were those directions?

7. Do you like emo? Why or why not?