

What is progressive rock music?

A lot of music nowadays could be called progressive, but the actual sub-genre of 'Prog Rock' developed out of the experimental times of the late 1960's and continued into the 1970's. Our ear is used to the normal 4/4 beat, but progressive music is actually a little more than that. There are a few properties that define progressive music: **The length of a song, time changes, complexity (both instrumentally and lyrically) and a more experimental way of playing 'traditional' rock instruments, together with the additional of less than traditional instruments.**

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Progressive music tends to mean longer songs, meaning probably 6 minutes (when average song length in the 1960's was around 3 minutes) or more, some even being up to 20 minutes! The songs will tend to break away from the typical verse/chorus song structure and will be broken into different sections, so it is as if the song is telling you a story.

If you listen carefully and count the beats, it may not seem straight forward, Progressive music tends to have different time signatures, or changing tempos within the song. Popular odd time signatures are 7/8, 5/4, 7/4. It tends to bore some people because it takes a while to get into it. It requires you to follow along with the song instead of relaxing into it.

Progressive music isn't your normal band consisting of drums, guitar, bass, and vocals. Most of the time, the typical band will be accompanied with instruments you wouldn't think would be there. For example, some sort of piano, keyboard, or even parts of the orchestral family, being violins, cellos etc. There is a higher level of skill involved in Progressive music, which requires the musicians to be both passionate and technical with their instruments.

While progressive music is very creative and complex, the lyrics follow along that path as well. The lyrics are more sophisticated than most other genres of music. Due to lyrics being complicated, it requires a lot of time undertaking massive projects to achieve the complexity of it. Many albums tend to be theme-based which every song relates to one another which makes the experience more abstract.

Conclusion

Progressive rock has been around for over 50 years. It has had constant battles with other genre of music to be the best of the most commercial. When progressive rock fell down (in the late 1970's) it managed to find its way back up to the top again. With some of the most popular bands such as Pink Floyd, King Crimson, Rush etc., all dating back to the very early stages of the progressive rock movement, many people today still listen to these bands, even teenagers who didn't grow up in prog-rock's heyday.

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Although it's not always the easiest music to listen to, unlike the majority of commercial songs in common-time (4/4), millions of people still do. Pink Floyd managed to make a great deal of money out of their music, having sold millions of albums all around the world.

The possibilities with music are endless, and progressive rock artists take full advantage of that, creating the most weird, confusing music that sends shivers down your spine, but still manages to pull the listeners in and want more. Artists have perfected the ideas of creating abnormal music but making it sound normal, which I think is amazing. The song “The dance of Eternity” by Dream Theater has over 128 time signature changes in just over six minutes. Which I think is incredible and a work of art to make it sound smooth. I do wonder what will happen in 10 years’ time. Prog Rock has spiked up and down in popularity in the past, so it seems it will again. But music is unpredictable and progressive rock more so in my opinion, and you never know what kind of sounds will be made next. Music is always changing so I cannot wait until the next change for Prog Rock happens because I am intrigued to find out what it will sound like.