

When did it become so popular and how?

The first 'Indie' bands which defined the genre 'Indie', or Alternative, are bands such as REM, The Smiths, Husker Du and Sonic Youth, These bands were commonly played in the United Kingdom and the United States during the 1980's on various college radio stations. College radio stations played a huge part in the 'Indie' music scene. It was one of the only ways one could hear previously unknown or experimental music as a lot of it was not played on mainstream radio. For example, to this day 95bFM are a successful college driven radio station which have been around since 1969. It started as a pirate college radio station which broadcast from a boat in Auckland's Waitemata harbour. These college radio stations effectively started the 'Indie' movement and scene, which created a huge devoted following.

The development of the 'Indie' scene is also likely due to the number of subgenres which fit under the Alternative or 'Indie' genre, for example Shoegaze (commonly based around guitar effects and their 'droning riffs' and given the name due to guitarists looking at their feet whilst playing; this is due to guitar effects pedals and their non-confronting and introspective nature), Garage Punk (characterised by a dirty overdriven choppy guitar sound; not as politically driven as most Punk bands) and Grunge (originated in Seattle; commonly called the Seattle sound, it's a fusion of Punk, Heavy Metal and Alternative music). You can see from the top selling albums throughout the 80's until today that the volume of 'Indie' bands increased dramatically. For example, in 1983, REM (one of the first 'Indie' bands) got the award for the best album of that year, the album Murmur. In 1985 they re-appeared with the number 5 album, Biograph.

It has been stated in articles that I have read that between the rising of 'Indie' in the 1980's and 2006, the 'Indie' scene started to die out. This is likely due to the rising of technology which severely challenged the "do-it-yourself" attitude which was commonly paired with being an 'Indie' musician. Because of this, when bands make music which acquired many fans and suited the money-making requirements of the major label, the labels would seek them out and 'buy' the bands. These bands would no longer be making, producing and distributing the music themselves as they are then required to do as the record label says. Hence, stripping the label of 'Indie' from the band.

This all changed in 2006 when the debut album of the Arctic Monkeys, "Whatever You Say I Am, That's What I'm Not" was released. It soon transcended the rate at which any previous album was sold. It became the fastest selling debut album of all time, selling almost 400,000 copies in the first week. This is a demonstration of how the internet has completely changed the music industry, in a way that wasn't controlled by any major record labels. This also bought back the 'Indie' attitude which had seemed to die out over time. "The Arctic Monkeys brought Indie music back to its roots, breaking new ground in the same way that The Velvet Underground had 50 years previously", according to Alex Wynick in an article on www.nothingbuthopeandpassion.com. The music industry has been changed by the internet and technology in a way never seen before. Their rise effectively gave musicians their own self advertising technology – giving them the right to exploit their music their own way and in any way. This is done through programs such as YouTube, Bandcamp, Soundcloud and

even social networking sites such as Facebook. All of these sites have given musicians a way to upload their music and have it potentially heard by thousands and thousands of people. This is something that could never be done before without being on a label.

To conclude

'Indie' is a genre of music made by and for the 'do-it-yourself' type of person. It's commonly known for its stand against the mainstream industry and its extremely devoted following. It began around the mid-80's and is still somewhat around today, although it has changed immensely. From between the mid-80's to 2006 it began to die. This is likely due to technology, such as YouTube and Facebook gravely challenging the 'Indie' spirit. This changes when the Arctic Monkeys debut album was released and bought back the 'DIY' 'Indie' spirit.

This influx of new technology changing music is, in my opinion, a good thing. Although it has, in some ways destroyed the industry, it has given artists of all types a sense of creative freedom and made it immeasurably easier to produce and advertise your own music in your own way. The uprising of social networking has given all artists an easy, free way of allowing their projects to be seen, heard or viewed by potentially thousands of people, which has in turn revolutionised how the industry works.

Although it seemed as if the ideas of 'Indie' and Mainstream were contrasting, there have been some bands over the years which have managed to achieve the best of both worlds. By this I mean being an 'Indie' band with mainstream success. Bands such as Muse, Coldplay and Snow Patrol have all been 'Indie' bands which have also had very mainstream success. These bands are the link between the two worlds and have received the ups and downs of both.

Since the mid-80's, 'Indie' has changed from being a way of making music to a label possessed by the media to give products a sense of authenticity. This has changed 'Indie' completely. It's now thought of as a genre to name a mainstream guitar driven band. As well as it becoming a genre it's also been successfully bought out by the media. This is shown by the way the fashion and mainstream music industry seem to develop and work off each other. Suggested by the clothing shop Urban Outfitters selling CD's of the music being played in the shop, so that the customers may buy the clothes and music by their favourite band. The two industries also work with each other to show a sort of fashion sense for the 'Indie' scene.