

A conceptual map is always an abstraction and can never mirror reality. Its aim is probably not to make too many mistakes and not to be much too superficial. It can be a useful tool, though, to quickly visualize branches, offshoots, connections, while being aware of its innate vagueness. I conceived this map in 2020 while doing, because of the Corona virus emergency, an online course on popular music for Italian Conservatory students. I needed to gather ideas unavoidably fragmented in faltering connections and badly working microphones. I make no bones, so, about its partiality being just what it is: a cursory glance at a fundamental part of our musical history including Italy.

Modern urbanisation and the birth and development of cultural industry set the frame, not only in the States or in Europe, as one might think, but in many parts of the world, also due to colonial domain. Cultural industry provides the 'supports' to the music, from early broadsides to cds and files. The studio appears two times: the first because it really marks the birth of 'modern' music, the second because of its ever-growing importance in music creation.

This map mixes up genres, places and supports because it aims at conjuring up an image, not at classifying things in the most accurate way. Race records, for example, are mentioned to remind us of how essential they were for minority groups in the Usa and because blues came out of them and blues is central to so much of popular music for so many things.

The straight line indicates direct filiations, the dotted line means evolutions (a cd or a file are something different from a record but the record 'invents' the recorded music) or offshoots: from mento comes rocksteady and from rocksteady comes reggae but countless other kinds of music could be included). The dotted line, though, also points at genres which preceded popular music (like 'classical' music) or proceeded alongside with it (jazz), sometimes intertwining with it. The arrow indicates a terminal point: something beyond which, apparently, we have nothing. A huge space is given to the United States, obviously, and to rock music, the most popular 'popular music' genre. The locations of popular music, are given in scrambled order because it is a global phenomenon that I want to illustrate and not its precise geographical places. Even the definitions are given trying to embrace as much as possible, that's way American topical songs (those of Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and Phil Ochs) end up in the 'folk revival' section and that's why 'art rock' is preferred to 'progressive', as progressive is generally thought of as being a British trend while 'art rock' allows me to catch in one fell swoop Velvet Underground and Genesis, David Bowie and Soft Machine, all of them being musicians who developed a tie between music and 'high' art, visual, theatrical, musical, whatever. There are, then, some purposely made incomplete indications or choices which inevitably are affected by my personal taste; and that's why someone might complain for the absence of surf or garage rock, say, and the inclusion of Kosmiche Musik (Tangerine Dream, Popul Vuh) but, sometimes, an 'etc.' will help imagination... This map, finally, has obviously an eye for the Italian popular music, being made by an Italian scholar.

This is a processual map, even if I copyrighted the original one, and everyone can imagine further lines. I am totally responsible for this 'game' but I enjoyed the support of Stefano I. Bianchi, director of the Italian magazine Blow Up, for some precious advice, Luca Majer, Raffaele Pinelli e Alessandra Morelli for some hints, Antonello Mercurio and Mattia Orza for their help. But I would most like to thank Candido Del Pizzo, with infinite patience has helped me actually draw up the scheme, transforming and adjusting it innumerable times. Should have we used more professional tools? Had we got paid we would have!

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