

Nerd Rock 101 – Panel script/notes

Intro panelists/band

Song: “Leaf on the Wind”

What is it?

- Overall Characteristics:
- Lyrical references to pop culture, sci-fi/fantasy, science/math
- Elements of humor, irony, self-deprecation
- Celebration of mundane, common things
- Variety of musical genres

“To us now, what we consider or genre of 'nerd' or 'geek' rock means anything we are really passionate about, whether that be traditionally geeky subject matter or a song about how we're really into tacos. In essence, they're love songs dedicated to whatever we're really passionate about”

-Kyle Stephens, Kirby Krackle

History/antecedents:

Novelty music: comical nonsensical songs – long history , Doctor Demento

- Spike Jones – “Der Fuhrer’s Face” (political humor), “All I Want for Christmas”, bizarre instrumentation
- Stan Freberg – Humor, parody, satire – “John and Marsha”,
- Tom Lehrer – comedy, science/math, politics/religion – “Vatican Rag”, “New Math”, “The Elements”
- “Weird” Al Yankovic – parodies, nerdy topics

Geeky “Popular” Music: primarily prog rock, metal, etc

- Frank Zappa: novelty tunes, uncommon instrumentation, nonsensical lyrics, geek themes “Cheepnis”, “Zombie Woof”, etc
- Rush: sci-fi themes, concepts (“2112”, “Red Barchetta”)
- Led Zeppelin – fantasy themes: “Immigrant Song”, “Ramble On”, ‘ Battle of Evermore”
- Others:
 - Iron Maiden: “Caught Somewhere In Time”
 - Europe: “The Final Countdown”
 - Styx: “Mister Roboto”
 - Flaming Lips: “Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots”
 - Queen, David Bowie, Dio, Billy Thorpe, Daft Punk

Filk: “The Music of Fandom”

- Participatory, Filk Circles (“filk” is bastardization of “folk” based on a typo)
- Sci-Fi/Fantasy Themes

- Parodies

Modern Geeky Performers:

Traditional Rock/Pop: They Might Be Giants, Barenaked Ladies, Dead Milkmen, Fountains of Wayne, Nerf Herder – quirk, irony, humor, geeky topics

Singer/Songwriter geeky: Jonathan Coulton, Paul and Storm, Mariann Call, Molly Lewis, Jonah Knight (“paranormal modern folk”), The DoubleClicks

Comedy Geek: Mikey Mason, The Great Luke Ski, Tenacious D, Devo Spice, “The FuMP”

Filk: Tom Smith, Leslie Fish, Filk Ferrets, Brobdignagian Bards (Marc Gunn, Andrew McKee), Danny Birt, Gray Rinehart, Moss Bliss

Gothic/Horror/etc: Valentine Wolfe (“victorian chamber metal”), The Long Losts (horror, punk), Bella Morte,

Song: “Code Monkey”

Where to find it?

Dr. Demento

Sci-Fi Conventions

Podcasts

“The FuMP”

Subgenres:

Wizard Rock – Harry and the Potters, Blibbering Humdingers, Tonks and the Aurors, Hawthorn and Holly, Draco and the Malfoys, etc

TimeLord Rock – Chameleon Circuit, The KLF (“Doctorin’ the Tardis”)

Nerdcore (hip hop) – MC Frontalot, Devo Spice, Adam WarRock (+ “legit” rappers like MF Doom and Wu Tang)

ChipTune, Heavy Mithril (viking metal), Gamer stuff (Minibosses, etc),

Dimensional Riffs:

We cover a lot of the various elements above:

Folk-based, Songs about Pop Culture, Geek Topics (Doctor Who, Potter, Math, etc)

Closing Words

Song: "Always"