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## All pop music the same: Study

Reuters Jul 29, 2012, 04:46AM IST

**Tags:** [The Rolling Stones](#) | [Rolling stones](#) | [pop music](#) | [Million Song Dataset](#) | [journal Scientific Reports](#)

LONDON: Comforting news for anyone over the age of 35, scientists have worked out that modern pop music really is louder and does all sound the same.

Researchers in Spain used a huge archive known as the Million Song Dataset, which breaks down audio and lyrical content into data that can be crunched, to study pop songs from 1955 to 2010.

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A team led by artificial intelligence specialist Joan Serra at the Spanish [National Research Council](#) ran music from the last 50 years through some complex algorithms and found that pop songs have become intrinsically louder and more bland in terms of the chords, melodies and types of sound used.

"We found evidence of a progressive homogenization of the musical discourse," Serra told Reuters. "In particular, we obtained numerical indicators that the diversity of transitions between note combinations — roughly speaking chords plus melodies — has consistently diminished in the last 50 years."

They also found the so-called timbre palette has become poorer. The same note played at the same volume on, say, a piano and a guitar is said to have a different timbre, so the researchers found modern pop has a more limited variety of sounds.

Intrinsic loudness is the volume baked into a song when it is recorded, which can make it sound louder than others even at the same volume setting on an amplifier.

The music industry has long been accused of ramping up the volume at which songs are recorded in a 'loudness war' but Serra says this is the first time it has been properly measured using a large database.

The study, which appears in the journal *Scientific Reports*, offers a handy recipe for musicians in a creative drought.

Old tunes re-recorded with increased loudness, simpler chord progressions and different instruments could sound new and fashionable. [The Rolling Stones](#) in their 50th anniversary year should take note.

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**Readers' opinions (6)**

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**VIKASH** (maine usa)  
29 Jul, 2012 08:51 PM

This is the junk science! that wastes billions of dollars that could be used to help figure out the real needs of humans "scientists have worked out that modern pop music really is louder and does all sound the same" now like in the chil sports section ...this comment will be marked as inappropriate by the( none free speech people) that only want free : when it applies to them!

 **Dinesh Prabhakar** (delhi)  
29 Jul, 2012 05:07 PM

It is all sound and no melody!

**Ravi** (Seattle, WA)  
29 Jul, 2012 12:13 PM

All science articles in TOI is the same - junk

**Venugopal** (Delhi)  
29 Jul, 2012 11:47 AM

Hi Vikas, Just compare George Michael with Justin Beiber. You will instantly understand what the Study wants to co

**pikeman** (india)  
29 Jul, 2012 09:05 AM

Excessive dependence on loudness and the use of videos as props in modern pop music are a poor substitute for n Music must be experienced through the ears and not the eyes. Why does every singer have to look sexy? Also musi expression of emotions, to be supported by instrumental sounds that enhance the experience, not drown the essent noise. Good music has always drawn its lyrics from the ground, by the synthesis of the interaction between the land: people and the society, and not from the stratosphere of drug addled brains. One also requires a good vocabulary a with words to write good music, and it can be appreciated only by an audience that possesses some matching mea: vocabulary. Our audiences and the music writers are equally deficient in this capability, hence the dumbing down of beauty in modern pop music. The western world must learn from the oriental music where melody and lyrics have al supreme. To me the only Western singers who fit the bill are Neil Diamond, the Beegees and Michael Jackson. The just, well, also-rans.

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