

How the Drop Changed Pop: The Influence of Dubstep in Modern Pop Song Form and Production

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Abstract

Around 2011, the electronic music genre referred to as “dubstep” began to influence American pop music. This paper argues that as a result, pop music song arrangements have shifted to include instrumental focal points which replace the traditional chorus. This paper will trace the effect of dubstep through an examination of *Billboard*'s pop music charts over an eight-year period, analyzing song form trends that support this argument. Additionally, this paper will recognize certain production techniques in pop music, tracing their evolution back to dubstep's initial impact on the charts. Further consideration will be given to the future direction of pop song form and production as a result of this influence.

Keywords: music production, production analysis, electronic music, pop music, dubstep.

Misty Jones Simpson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Recording Industry at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee (MTSU). She received her bachelor's degree in Music Education from Baylor University and studied Music Technology Innovation at Berklee Valencia in Spain where she received the Outstanding Scholar award and earned a Master of Music degree. Specializing in MIDI programming, Ableton Live, controllerism, and pop/electronic music, Simpson teaches synthesis and music production at MTSU. She has presented and performed at various festivals and conferences including APME, MEIEA, MIT's EmTech España, Madrid Music Days, and the King of Spain's Impulsa Music Forum. She presented her thesis work at Sonar Music Festival in Barcelona, which was mentioned by *Billboard* magazine, and included in the textbook *The Impact of Technology*, published by Capstone. In 2017, Simpson won an award in Prism's International B-Side Remix competition, mentioned by *Sound on Sound* magazine. In 2019, her research was featured on the front page of Ableton's website, following her presentation at Ableton's LOOP conference.



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