

METHODOLOGY

Popular music: song lyrics, record sleeves, music videos, promotional material.

Television material: digital clips from original broadcasts of *Top of the Pops* and *The Tube*, among others.

Archival material: lifestyle and niche media materials, political ephemera, oral histories.



PROJECT OUTLINE

- S** 1. "A Different Kind of Tension": Punk, Synth-Pop, Camp and Bricolage Queerness
- I** 2. "Dandy in the Underworld": New Romanticism and Aestheticising Masculinities
- D** 3. "You and Me Together, Fighting for Our Love": Queer Dance and Provocative Pop in the Early AIDS Years
- E** 4. "Can You Forgive Her?": The End of Thatcher, Section 28 and Synth-Duos
- A**

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EX4 RECORDS



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) Why and how did the British popular music cultures of the 1980s witness and permit a multifaceted, mainstream exploration of gay male sexuality and masculinities?

2) To what extent did this enable gay maleness to both assimilate into and react against public discourse?

3) Were certain masculinities and gay male identities met with more acceptance, tolerance, or palatability than others?

4) What is the impact of the popular music cultures during this period on popular music today?

5) What are the parallels between the prominence of electronic music and synth-pop amid this rise of queerness within popular culture?



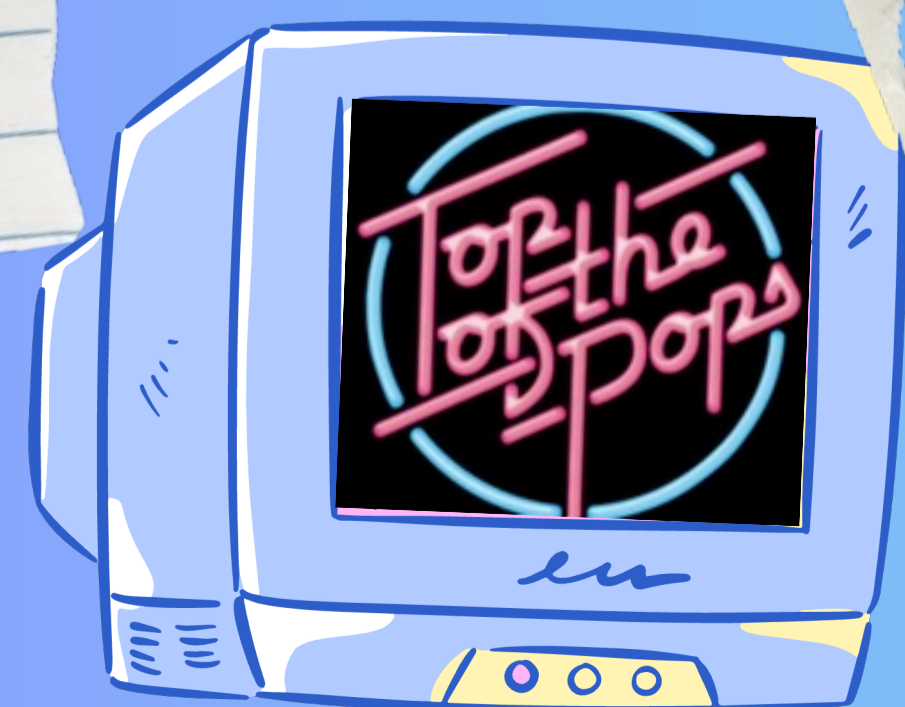
Listen Without Prejudice: Queer Masculinities in the Popular Music Cultures of Thatcher's Britain

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RESEARCH CONTEXT

My interdisciplinary and original approach draws on ideas from:

- (Visual) cultural and political studies
- Queer and gender theories
- Musicology
- Subcultural and fashion studies



ABSTRACT

This thesis brings into academic discourse the first substantial, periodised investigation into the role of British popular music in catalysing a rise in mainstream gay male visibility during Margaret Thatcher's premiership (1979-1990).

Interrogating the tensions faced by gay individuals within a Thatcherite neoliberal capitalist society, which advocated individual freedom and autonomy whilst simultaneously restricting queer lives, the thesis explores the spectrum of male sexuality and masculinity articulated by specific mainstream musicians.

Taking an interdisciplinary and chronological approach, I begin with the legacies of punk, new wave, and New Romanticism in the early 1980s, before considering the vitality of popular electronic acts during the early years of the AIDS crisis and the enactment of Section 28.

As electronic music continued to flourish into new subgenres such as Hi-NRG and house, the musical successors of disco continued its legacy of danceability. The visible presence of the autonomous dancing queer body remains radically symbolic and significant in a historical moment in which queer bodies, specifically those of gay men, were too often discriminately depicted in the context of anxiety and infection.