
. Music Cycles, Part 2

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- *This week in Part 2 of Guy Zapoleon's updated for 2022 'Music Cycles' presentation he explains how to program your way out of the Doldrums and improve both ratings and revenue.*

Beginning Year Three of the Doldrums In 2022, We Need To Change Our Ways Of Finding New Hits

MISSING THE HITS

In the past few years there have been great songs that have basically been lightly played or avoided entirely because programmers had their hands too tightly on the wheel, looking straight ahead and not seeing the hits, instead favoring the Pop genre to the extreme. These programmers didn't believe that these songs from other genres fit their Pop-centered sound, and because their stations were so Pop-centered and not balanced, it was a self-fulfilling prophesy!

One example of a missed hit for Top 40 is certainly the huge Country hit "Fancy Like" by Walker Hayes, which, with a dance associated with it, became a sensation on TikTok. The song, which is all about a date at Applebee's, got the attention of the restaurant, became the song that you heard virtually everywhere, and got even more additional exposure on *Applebee's endless television ads, including on commercials at major NFL and college events (the most watched television shows of 2021)*. *The song was destined for #1 on Billboard, but instead, because Top 40 radio was hesitant on giving this song full-time exposure or even playing it, peaked at #3 on Billboard and only made it to #13 on the Mediabase Top 40 spins chart. This is a prime example of a mass appeal Country song that should have been given the spins and wasn't, and so Top 40 missed out on seizing the moment of a nationally-beloved song. So what if it was Country and a big hit there?! It was even more than that. It was a mass appeal hit that got lost for Top 40!*

Another smash that may get lost as well, because it doesn't sound like every Pop genre hit, was the central topic of [a brilliant article](#) by Integr8's Matt Bailey. That's the smash hit "We Don't Talk About Bruno" from "Encanto," the #1 animated movie on Disney+ with a soundtrack written by Hamilton's Lin Manuel Miranda. It has been seen by millions of mothers with children, and so, is instantly familiar to them.

Unfortunately, some Top 40 Programmers are extremely slow to embrace a song that is #1 streaming, #1 digital singles sales, #1 Top 200 Albums, and #1 on the Billboard Hot 100 Chart. Yes, you may see a song become #1 streaming and it still does not fit Top 40, but this is really different because when you see a song go #1 on the Billboard Hot 100, it has never not been a mass appeal hit! When you don't play this one, you are missing a #1, or at least a Top 5 hit for your Top 40 station. It hurts your station, because you are playing weaker Pop songs in the place of this hit song, and probably overly hesitant about playing hits from other genres despite all the evidence.

When you continue to avoid enough of these kinds of hits because they aren't from the "Pop" genre, you will lose the variety factor for your Top 40. Missing enough of these kind of hits will cause you to eventually lose ratings. (Even a great morning show can only protect you for so long, if you avoid playing too many real hits.)

THE RECIPE FOR TOP 40 MUSIC PROGRAMMING SUCCESS

As we see more and more 12-24s leave for streaming, the one audience that's more loyal to radio and will stick with it longer is 25+ /30+ women. With radio's audience getting older, it may well be time to adjust the format. Top 40 radio targets 18-34 or even 21-34 (but that depends on your market and competitive situation). Playing hit songs that also appeal to a 25-34 audience is keeping those women who grew up with your station from going to the Hot AC or AC in town and keeping them loyal to radio as well.

Don't forget, left field hits like "Fancy Like" and "We Don't Talk About Bruno" appeal to this older audience as well and young adults, too. So the remedy for getting out of the Doldrums is what the always forward-thinking President & CEO of RCS /Media Monitors /Mediabase /Florical Philippe Generali told me a decade ago: You will be able to "follow the breadcrumbs" to find the hits. What he was saying was that when you follow the behavior of music consumers, and you review every bit of the "Big Data" of music consumer behavior from all its sources, it's easy to tell what the hits are very early.

As we look into the future at these sources for Big Data, we know that on TikTok, for example, 75% of users go there for music discovery, and it's where the newer hits (and hits for radio) are beginning to come from now. This is music that is fan-to-fan delivered, as fans are making thousands of videos with music for other fans.

Young adult event programs like HBO's "Euphoria" are launching TikTok, streaming and even #1 Shazam songs like Lana Del Rey's "Watercolor Eyes" with each episode. In a few years, when Rebirth is upon us, many of those hits will more than likely be coming first from

streaming sites and TikTok, not to mention new music discovery apps that haven't even been born yet.

So, in conclusion, remember to keep your Pop balance, but be open to other genres as they become popular, and play more of them as they become big hits in streaming, TikTok and Shazam. Also look at Hitpredictor, which is still an incredible tool for finding the hits. And remember to ride the wave of each phase of the Music Cycle. Don't stay in a rut with the same formula no matter what!

During the Extremes, you will play a little more Hip Hop if it's melodic, or even more Rock. If Top 40 is in the Doldrums, as we are in now, you should be playing more AC, Rock, Country and melodic Hip Hop when those songs show "all the signs" that they are hits, and a little less Pop! When it is Rebirth time after Doldrums in a few years, you'll see more songs, Pop genres and new artists emerging with hits, but you'll still want to play the Variety Mix combination of AC/Rock/Country/other genres.

There is a new way to some, but an obvious way to others who have stayed ahead of the game. It's not about looking at the charts, which are really the worst way to find out about new music these days. The charts are one way to know what the hits are, but it's very hard to identify what's driving a song's growth in popularity by looking at a national chart itself. A song rising on the chart could be due to multiple factors, streaming, or airplay or both.

When you are look at a spins chart, the rise on the chart could be due to great label promotion team. Many, many times a potential hit gets lost. Look at what happened to Dua Lipa's "Levitating," which was rocketed up the charts, but peaked at #4, and then was shuffled off to Recurrent Land. That is until people noticed that great Program Directors like iHeartMedia's Dylan Sprague (WXKS) and Mark Medina (Z100) were continuing to power the song. The label noticed and began promoting it as a current song again. That miraculous turnaround gave "Levitating" a second chance, and became 2021's #1 song of the year. As tough as it is to find hit songs, Top 40 would have lost a huge hit, and that's bad for the format!

When you are looking at Music Discovery and finding new hits, it's like a massive jigsaw puzzle. However, in solving any problem, the best way to do that is to break it down to the individual parts, the sources that contribute to a song's popularity, and study them.

These days, that means you should be studying on a weekly basis and trending streaming, TikTok, Shazam, and sales. (HitPredictor is also still a great tool.) I personally love the TikTok Trending 10 that's on SiriusXM, and while the turnover from week- to-week is

generally around 70% from the previous week, songs that continue to be at the top of that chart for several weeks are definitely potential Top 40 hits.

So I say to Top 40 programmers, don't get caught up in a stagnant, one-size-fits-all Top 40 formula. That will only hurt you. Ride the wave of the Music Cycle.

If you stay in your Pop rut, you are avoiding the formula which made Top 40 the #1 format for music and music discovery for well over 60 years. That formula, as my buddy in heaven, Steve Rivers, as well as my friend John Ivey says, "Play the Hits" and that's playing ALL THE HITS, while playing the natural variety of all Pop, Rock, Hip Hop and R&B, AC and yes even Country.

Remember, playing "All The Hits" is the very definition of playing what are the most popular hits. That is to say, what's A) streaming the most, plus B) TikTok'ing the most, plus C) Shazaming the most, plus D) selling the most. When you find those hits, and if Top 40 programmers give those songs the necessary spins (now 400-500 5a-7p since 2020), and five to six weeks of callout, you'll see that those will come through in your callout ranker as the hits!

Here's another look at the artists that made the Music Cycles through the years.

Cycle 1				
	BIRTH Birth of Rock & Roll 1956	DOLDRUMS(60s Pt1) 1960-1961 Tragic events and anti rock and roll forces removing superstar and rock from radio.	EXTREMES 1962 Teen Idols Dance	DOLDRUMS 1963 Chicken Rock
Pop	Buddy Holly, Everly Brothers, Bobby Darin, Teen Idols: Ricky Nelson Paul Anka, Frankie Avalon,	Pop Elvis Presley, Roy Orbison, Ricky Nelson, Bobby Rydell,, Connie Francis, Brenda Lee, Country Jim Reeves, Patsy Cline	Pop The Four Seasons, Elvis Presley, Bobby Vee	Bobby Vinton Leslie Gore Folk Music Peter Paul & Mary Crossovers J. Cash
Rock	Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis	Duane Eddy, Del Shannon Freddy Cannon	Dion	Kingsmen Cars/Surf Music- BeachBoys Beach Boys Jan & Dean.Instrumentals/Ventures (Marketts, Chantays)
R&B Rhythm	Fats Domino, Little Richard, The Platters, The Coasters	R&B Ray Charles, Sam Cooke Jackie Wilson, Brook Benton, The Drifters, Shirelles,	R&B Chubby Checker, Dee Dee Sharp, The Marvelettes	Girl Groups:Ronettes, Crystals Chiffons, Martha & Vandellas; Miracles
Cycle 2				
	REBIRTH 1964	EXTREMES 1969 Acid Rock	DOLDRUMS 1971 Soft Rock	
Pop	Beatles /Beach Boys/ Mamas & Pappas, Teen Idols Monkees/Herman's Hermits	Rascals, Tommy James	Helen Reddy/James Taylor/Neil Diamond Carole King/Jim Croce/Carpenters, Chicago, Bread, Country: John Denver/Anne Murray	
Rock	Rolling Stones, Animals, Yardbirds, Kinks, Bob Dylan	Hendrix/Cream/ Zeppelin/Deep Purple/Doors	The Who, David Bowie, Moody Blues, Rod Stewart	
R&B Rhythm	Diana Ross & Supremes, Temptations, Four Tops, Smokey Robinson & Miracles, James Brown	James Brown, Temptations	OJays, Chi-Lites.Stylistics Jackson 5,Spinners/Marvin Gaye	
Cycle 3				
	REBIRTH 1974 Album Artist	EXTREMES-1977 Disco	DOLDRUMS 1980 AC/Country Crossover	
Pop	Elton John, Paul McCartney&Wings.Linda Ronstadt,	Bee Gees, Olivia Newton John	Barry Manilow/Neil Diamond/ Barbra Streisand, Country: Urban Cowboy/Kenny Rogers/ Eddie Rabbitt	
Rock	Fleetwood Mac/Eagles/Rolling Stones/Aerosmith/Doobie Brothers	Supertramp, Queen, Knack	Journey,REO Speedwagon,Foreigner, Styx	
R&B Rhythm	Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross, Barry White	Chic/Donna Summer/Earth Wind Fire, Village People	Diana Ross, George Benson, Kool & The Gang	
Cycle 4				
	REBIRTH1983-88 MTV	EXTREMES 1989/1990	DOLDRUMS 1991-1994- Rock +HipHop	
Pop	Madonna, George Michael, Duran Duran Culture Club, Bangles	New Kids On the Block, Roxette, Richard Marx, Gloria Estefan	Elton John/Billy Joel/Gloria Estefan/Michael Bolton, Mariah Carey Garth/Billy Ray Cyrus,	
Rock	Bruce Springsteen/John Mellencamp	GunsNRoses Def Leppard Motley Crue, Poison, Bon Jovi	Green Day, REM, U2, Counting Crows, Nirvana, Pearl Jam	
Rhythm HipHop R&B	Michael Jackson/Prince	Rap/Funk Hammer//Salt N Pepa/Run DMC/Tone Loo/Bell Biv DeVoe	BoyzII Men, Color Me Bad.CCMusic Factory HipHop 2 Pac.Notorious BIG (CHR didn't play it)	
Cycle 5				
	REBIRTH 1995-1996 Modern AC	REBIRTH P2 Teen Pop 1997-2000	EXTREMES 2001-2003 RCHR Birth+ HipHop	DOLDRUMS2004-2005
Pop	Mariah Carey, Ace Of Base, Madonna	Backstreet Boys, Britney, Nsync, Sugar Ray	Destiny's Child, Pink,J-Lo	Soft Rock from Kelly, Christina, Mariah, Maroon 5, Lifehouse, Avril Lavigne
Rock	Alanis Morissette, NoDoubt, Gin Blossoms, Blues Traveler, Collective Soul	Matchbox 20,3rd Eye Blind Goo Goo Dolls, Sheryl Crow	Creed.Linkin Park RedHot Chili Peppers, Blink182, Staind,	Nickelback, Hoobastank.Killers, Green Day
HipHop R&B	TLC, Brandy, Janet Jackson, Montel Jordan, Keith Sweat	Will Smith, TLC, Brandy	Jay-Z, Nelly, Eminem, 50 Cent	Clara Outkast R&B Ballads from Alicia Keys Usher,
Cycle 6				
	REBIRTH 2006	EXTREMES 2010	Doldrums 2011-2013	
Pop	American Idol Artists (Kelly Clarkson) Britney Spears, Justin Timberlake	Black Eyed Peas, Rihanna, Lady Gaga, Ke\$ha	Adele, Bruno Mars, Katy Perry, Maroon 5, Lady Gaga, Taylor Swift, David Guetta	
Rock	Fall Out Boy,All American Rejects, Coldplay	Kings Of Leon, Paramore	Lorde, Fun, Lumineers, Mumford & Sons, Neon Trees, Coldplay, Of Monsters & Men	
HipHop R&B	Beyonce Ne-Yo, Rihanna, Chris Brown, Mary J Bilge	Kanye West , Jay Z, Lil Wayne, T.I., Jeremih	Jay-Z, Lil Wayne, Drake, Nicki Minaj, Beyonce	
Cycle 7				
	REBIRTH 2014-2017	EXTREMES 2018/2019	Doldrums 2020-2023	
Pop	Justin Bieber, Chainsmokers, Calvin Harris, Taylor Swift, Ariana Grande, Ed Sheeran, Maroon 5, Selena Gomez, Bruno Mars	Maroon 5, Ariana Grande,Halsey Shawn Mendes, Camila Cabello,Selena Gomez, Jonas Brothers	Justin Bieber.Ariana Grande.Dua Lipa,Harry Styles, The Weeknd Country Dan & Shay	
Rock	Twenty One Pilots, Imagine Dragons, Fall Out Boy	Imagine Dragons, Panic! At The Disco, Portugal The Man, Billie Eilish	Billie Eilish, Twenty One Pilots, AJR	
HipHop R&B	Rihanna, The Weeknd, Beyonce, Drake, Nicki Minaj	Post Malone, Lizzo, Cardi B, French Montana Drake, Kendrick,Lamar,Lil Nas X, Khalid, Migos, Future, Travis Scott, Migos	Drake, Lil Nas X ,Roddy Ricch DaBaby, Lil Baby, Pop Smoke, Megan Thee Stallion, Chris Brown	

