

The History of Protest Music  
Class 4:  
Current issues and songs

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# More recent songs

- Address a multitude of issues
- Anti war and civil rights remain issues
- However, other issues have come to the fore
  - Police/minority relations
  - Hunger
  - International conflicts
  - Free expression



**Eric Bogle**

b. September 23, 1944

# Eric Bogle

- Born in Scotland, and after dropping out of school at age 16, worked in a variety of trades
- Moved to Australia at age 25
- Was involved in a number of bands, and settled in the folk scene in Canberra, Australia's capital
- Many of his songs deal with war and conflict, including "the Troubles" in Northern Ireland



# **Liam Clancy**

September 2, 1935 – December 4, 2009

# Liam Clancy

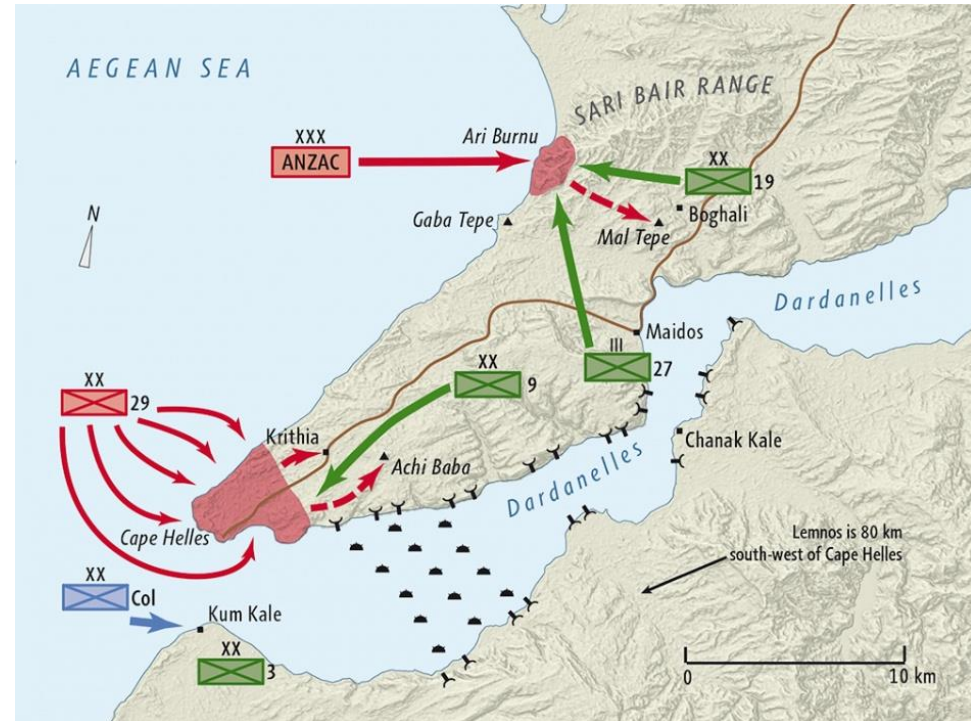
- Was part of the Clancy Brothers group (with brothers Paddy and Tom) with Tommy Makem
- Famous for traditional and Irish rebel songs
- The group was one of the most popular during the folk revival of the early 1960's
- Had a number one hit in 1976 with "And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda"
- Liam was the last surviving member of the group.

# And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NA961ER34Co>

## And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda

- Churchill wanted to open a new front
- Idea was to force the Dardanelles open from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea





# And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda

- A naval attempt to force the Straits failed
- No plans were made for a land invasion, but after the naval failure, that was the only option
- The ANZAC landed unprepared on April 25, 1915
- This date is still celebrated in Australia and New Zealand as ANZAC Day

# And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda

- The Turkish forces were well dug in
- After months of fruitless attempts to root them out, the troops were withdrawn in January 1916
- Many Australians and New Zealanders still believe their troops were squandered by British leaders

# And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda

- Australian casualties – 8,700 killed, 19,400 wounded
- NZ casualties – 2,700 killed, 4,700 wounded
- WWI Australia population – 4.9 million, NZ – 1.1 million
- With US population of 323 million, equivalents would be:
  - Australia deaths – 573,500
  - NZ deaths – 792,800
- US deaths in all 20<sup>th</sup> century wars – 615,600

# And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda

- Bogle sang the song first in a competition, and after he finished there was dead silence and then thunderous applause
- Sung every April 25 at ANZAC Day celebrations
- Was voted one of the top 30 Australian songs of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

# And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda

- Song uses as its theme the unofficial anthem of Australia “Waltzing Matilda”
- Contrast between the proud sendoff and the forgotten return
- When the old man is watching the parade, he is asking the same question as Country Joe did “what are we fighting for?”
- And, like Country Joe, the narrator states “I ask myself the same question.”

# And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda

- In a 2009 interview, Bogle said
- “I wrote it as an oblique comment on the Vietnam War which was in full swing... but while boys from Australia were dying there, people had hardly any idea where Vietnam was.”
- “Gallipoli was a lot closer to the Australian ethos – every school kid knew the story, so I set the song there.”



**Bob Geldof**

B. October 5, 1951

# Bob Geldof

- Born in Ireland, and worked in a number of trades
- Moved to Canada, where among other things, hosted a children's TV program
- Returned to Ireland in 1975 and formed the Boomtown Rats, a punk group
- Had a number of hits with that group



# Bob Geldof

- Called out a group of nuns on a TV program, bringing an end to the Boomtown Rats
- Started a solo career in 1986
- Played in the Amnesty International event, The Secret Policeman's Other Ball
- Led to Band Aid and Live Aid

# Bob Geldof

- Since Geldof was born in the Republic of Ireland, he was awarded an Honorary Knight of the British Empire
- He is thus entitled to add KBE after his name
- But cannot officially be called “Sir”
- Not prevented him from the unofficial name of “Sir Bob”

# Do They Know it's Christmas?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1AcD7hho9fs>

# Band Aid

- In 1984, Geldof founded Band Aid in response to the hunger crisis in Ethiopia
- The song “Do They Know It’s Christmas” was the biggest selling single in UK history
- Raised over 8 Million pounds for hunger relief



# Band Aid

- The 1984 version included:
  - Bono and Adam Clayton (U2)
  - Phil Collins
  - Boy George
  - George Michael
  - Simon leBon and other members of Duran Duran
  - Members of Bananarama
  - Robert “Kool” Bell and members of Kool and the Gang

# Live Aid

- Geldof concluded that one of the reasons for the famine in Africa was crushing debt
- He organized Live Aid in 1985, with simultaneous concerts in London at Wembley Stadium and Philadelphia at JFK Stadium
- Phil Colling played in both, taking the Concorde between the two events
- The two concerts were said to have raised almost 50 million pounds

# Served as an inspiration for

USA for Africa



Farm Aid





**Bruce Springsteen**

b. September 23, 1949



# Bruce Springsteen

- Grew up in Freehold NJ
- Poor student, briefly attended Ocean County Community College
- Was called for induction in 1965, but was 4F as a result of a concussion
- Formed first band in 1965, and in a subsequent 1969 band, worked with many future members of the E Street Band

# Bruce Springsteen

- Signed a contract with Columbia Records in 1972, and first two albums received critical acclaim did not sell well
- Third album, *Born to Run*, was one of the best selling and most influential albums in history
- Became one of the best selling artists, with legendary live shows.

# Bruce Springsteen

- Considered Elvis Presley, Roy Orbison and Pete Seeger as influences
- Released, in 2006, *Seeger Sessions*, an album of 13 songs either written or popularized by Pete Seeger
- Spoke for the common man, who had been overlooked by society.

# Bruce Springsteen

- As noted, his song, *Born in the USA*, is the story of a Vietnam vet who comes home to a failing community.
- Used (before Springsteen stopped it) by the Reagan campaign as a warm up song.

# American Skin (41 shots)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQMqWAiWPMs>

# American Skin

- In February 1999, NYPD were searching for a serial rapist
- They approached Amadou Diallo, who allegedly ran for his building entrance.
- When he reached for his pocket, he was shot 41 times, 19 hitting him



# American Skin

- It turned out that he was reaching for his wallet, and was not the rapist.
- The police involved were found not guilty, but the city settled with the family for \$3 million
- *American Skin* was written as a reaction to the incident

# American Skin

- It was never released as a single or on a studio album, but is only available in a live version as a concert album
- Police organizations sharply criticized the song
- *American Skin* was written as a reaction to the incident



# American Skin

- Springsteen later wrote that the song, while critical, tried to be balanced
- The first verse is from the policeman's perspective
- Received an award from the NAACP for the song

# From Cop Killer to Katrina to Black Lives Matter

- Recent protest music from the black community has turned more hostile, based on the failure to receive complete equality
- The optimistic music of the civil rights era has changed to cynicism and pessimism

# From Cop Killer to Katrina to Black Lives Matter

- For many of these artists, they had to establish their career before they could turn political
- For example, both Beyonce and Kendrick Lamar had multiple hit records before “Formation” and “To Pimp a Butterfly”

# Cop Killer

- Cop Killer was released in 1992, by the rap group Body Count
- The lyrics were by lead singer Ice T and music by the group's lead guitarist Ernie C.
- The record was a middling seller until it came under criticism by many police organizations and others, including VP Dan Quayle



# Cop Killer

- In the introduction to the song, Ice T sets out all of the abuses he claims police have done, and sets up the rest of the song as justifiable.
- The grieving of police families is no different from the grieving of families of those killed by the police

# Cop Killer

- After public protests and complaints from stockholders, Warner Brothers withdrew the record, and it has never been released.
- Ice T later noted that he was playing a character, and if you believe him to be a cop killer, then you must believe that David Bowie is an astronaut

## Cop Killer

Ironically, Ice T is probably best known now as Detective Finn Tutola in the long running TV series, Law and Order: Special Victims Unit



# Formation

- *Formation* is the most explicitly political song of Beyoncé's career
- Debuted when she guest starred in Coldplay's 2016 Super Bowl halftime show





# Formation

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDZJPJV\\_bQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDZJPJV_bQ)

# Formation

- Images in the video harken back to Katrina, which many blacks think that the federal government did not provide sufficient assistance because the affected population was poor and black
- Also show images of a slave south, although with black images as the master class

# Formation

- In an aside, Beyonce talks about her “Jackson Five nose” making reference to Michael Jackson’s nose before multiple plastic surgeries
- Images of police cars going under water have been interpreted as anti police.
- Beyonce later said “anyone who perceives my message as anti-police is completely mistaken.... But let's be clear: I am against police brutality and injustice. Those are two separate things.”

# Kendrick Lamar

- Lamar's album, *To Pimp a Butterfly*, touches on many of the themes noted:
  - Police brutality and killings
  - Imprisonment
  - After affects of slavery
  - Oppression of blacks, particularly young men



# To Pimp a Butterfly

- The lead song from this album, *Alright*, has been called “a modern black national anthem.”
- In the video for this song, the singer is first seen lying on the ground, surrounded by police.
- In a flashback, he is shown being shot by the police.
- His spirit is then shown as flying over his hometown of Oakland, showing the depressed area and both the hope and despair of the black inhabitants.

# To Pimp a Butterfly

- The song makes frequent use of the N word, particularly in the chorus, where it is said, “n, we goin’ be alright.”
- Reflecting on the death of blacks by police, he cries out “And we hate Popo, wanna kill us dead in the street for sure”
- The singer’s spirit is shown on a lamppost after seeing all of his town and is shot and killed by the police, silencing his voice



**Graham Nash**

b. February 2, 1942

# Graham Nash

- Born away from his hometown because of evacuation during the Blitz
- First was a member of the Hollies, a band later inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
- Left the band in 1969 to form Crosby, Still and Nash (and later and Young)



# Graham Nash

- After the initial breakup of CSNY, paired up with Crosby, reunited with Hollies and reunited with CSNY
- Always was the most political of the group, and continued in recent CSNY tours
- Is an accomplished photographer
- Is an officer of the Order of the British Empire for music and charitable works

# Almost Gone (The Ballad of Bradley Manning)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywFTvC3JUKY>

# Almost Gone

- Bradley Manning released about 750,000 documents to Wikileaks
- Was arrested and charged under the Espionage Act
- At Court Martial, was found guilty and sentenced to 35 years



# Almost Gone

- In prison, transitioned to female and now goes by the name Chelsea Manning
- Just before the end of his term, President Obama commuted Manning's sentence
- However, he did not pardon or exonerate Manning.

# Almost Gone

- Written by Nash and James Raymond, the son of David Crosby
- Nash stated he considered Manning a hero
- “making public...true number and causes of civilian casualties in Iraq...human rights abuses by US funded contractors...role spying and bribery plays in international diplomacy.”
- Nash further criticized President Obama for stating that Manning “had broken the law,” which precluded a fair trial

# Almost Gone

- The title comes from a statement by Manning's lawyer, who, when asked about Manning's mental state, said it was "almost gone."
- Nash argues in the song that what Manning did was "tell the truth" and that he "did his duty to his country first."
- You can tell from the video that this song is not always popular when done live

# Other songs

USA for Africa

We are the  
World

U2

In the Name of  
Love

Green Day

American Idiot

# Bonus Track

- In 2003, Christopher Guest wrote, directed and starred in *A Mighty Wind*, a homage to the folk revival
- The plot was a memorial concert to one of the key producers of the folk revival
- Three groups were involved – all of them based on folk revival bands
- 2013's *Inside Llewyn Davis* was a more serious look at the folk revival



# Bonus Track

- The New Main Street Singers – *The New Christy Minstrels*
- The Folksmen – *The Kingston Trio, The Limelighters*
- Mitch and Mickey – *Ian and Sylvia, Richard and Mimi Farina*
- And now, with all three groups, the finale of the concert – *A Mighty Wind!*