

## The History of Rock Music: 1995-2001

Drum'n'bass, trip-hop, glitch music

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### Violence

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(These are excerpts from my book ["A History of Rock and Dance Music"](#))

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#### *Garages, 1995-2000*

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The revival of garage-rock continued unabated throughout the decade with decadent acts such as Georgia's [Nashville Pussy](#), whose **Let Them Eat Pussy** (1998) harked back to Cramps' porno-billy.

Ohio's [Thomas Jefferson Slave Apartments](#) (1), led by Great Plains vocalist Ron House and guitarist Bob Petric, delivered a concentrate of Cramps, Stooges and Ramones on **Bait And Switch** (1995) and especially **Straight To Video** (1997).

Both the hippies' philosophy and sound reincarnated in a bizarre San Francisco project, Anton Newcombe's [Brian Jonestown Massacre](#) (2). Despite the clumsy recording quality and the amateurish stance, **Methodrone** (1995) and **Their Satanic Majesties' Second Request** (1996) were monumental encyclopedias of psychedelic music, from the Jefferson Airplane to Hawkwind, from the Rolling Stones to the Velvet Underground. Subsequent albums alternated between superbly derivative, such as **Take It From The Man** (1996) and **Give It Back** (1997), majestically musical, such as **Thank God For Mental Illness** (1996), arranged with a wealth of instruments, and dreamy/melancholy, such as **Strung Out In Heaven** (1998). Newcombe mostly followed in the footsteps of deranged street folksingers like David Peel, but his naive folly could also explode in noise collages.

Inspired by the depravity of the Stooges and the New York Dolls, Seattle's [Murder City Devils](#) (1) added the screams of vocalist Spencer Moody and the gothic overtones of an organ to the mayhem of **Empty Bottles Broken Hearts** (1998).

A more personal and intimate take on garage-rock was offered by Seattle's [Love As Laughter](#), fronted by Lync's Sam Jayne, whose fusion of Royal Trux's artsy retro-rock, irregular post-rock structures and Jim Morrisonian histrionics peaked on third album **Sea To Shining Sea** (2001).

The punk approach to the blues and to soul music was refined by Washington's [Delta 72](#) (1), whose **The R&B Of Membership** (1996) and particularly **Soul Of A New Machine** (1997) were derailed by Sarah Stolf's organ and Gregg Foreman's primordial howl. Their conceptual revisitation of black music eventually led to imitate the Rolling Stones circa **Exile On Main Street** on the more professional **000** (2000).

New Jersey's [Danielson Famile](#) (2) reinvented Christian music in the form of gospel hymns with an off-kilter instrumental backing and frantic harmonies worthy of the Holy Modal Rounders and David Peel on **A Prayer For Every Hour** (1995), a program of 24 songs, one for each hour of the day, the manic **Tell Another Joke At The Ol' Choppin' Block** (1997), and **Tri-Danielson!!!** (1999), a quirky philosophical concept.

Louisiana's one-man band [Quintron](#) devised the demented and largely improvised percussive experiment **Internet Feedback 001-011** (1996). The mini-album **Satan Is Dead** (1998), replete with nostalgic overtones and dance beats, added a new dimension to the genius of this musical clown.

Texas' [Sixteen Deluxe](#) (1) practiced the psychedelic pop tune on **Backfeed Magnetbabe** (1995).

Texas' [Sincola](#) unleashed the post-feminist rants of **What The Nothinghead Said** (1995).

Oregon's most hyped band of the 1990s, the [Dandy Warhols](#) (1) managed to fuse Brit-pop and the Velvet Underground on **Dandys Rule OK** (1995), but then sold out to generic power-pop with **Come Down** (1997) and **Thirteen Tales From Urban Bohemia** (2000).

The [Deadly Snakes](#), a sextet from Toronto with guitar, keyboards and horns, played rowdy epileptic soul-tinged garage-rock reminiscent of Fleshtones, J Geils Band and New York Dolls on **Love Undone** (1999).

In Britain, [Kula Shaker](#) penned the derivative but exuberant **K** (1996).

[Comet Gain](#) resurrected the neo-mod sound of the Wildhearts with a more hysterical attitude, especially on **Tigertow Pictures** (1999).

The [Heads](#) concocted **Relaxing With** (1996), a demented soup of Stooges, MC5 and Blue Cheer.

Scotland's [Long Fin Killie](#) updated Pentangle's folk-rock to the age of trip-hop and post-rock on **Houdini** (1995).

During the 1990s, the single most impressive concentration of garage-rock bands was perhaps in Scandinavia. Hanoi Rocks had led the way, and, one decade later, a number of Scandinavian bands followed their lead.

MC5, Motorhead and New York Dolls were the role models for Sweden's [Hellacopters](#) (1), who delivered the impressive punch of **Supershitty To The Max** (1996) and **Payin' The Dues** (1997), and for Norway's [Gluecifer](#), who stormed through a program of acrobatic rock'n'roll numbers on the mini-album **Dick Disguised As Pussy** (1996).

The [Hives](#) (1) opted for anthemic overtones on the mini-album **Barely Legal** (1997) and especially the album **Veni Vidi Vicious** (2000).

Santa Cruz-based [Comets On Fire](#) (3), featuring vocalist/guitarist Ethan Miller and keyboardist Noel Harmonson, played acid-rock with a punk vengeance on **Comets on Fire** (2000), one of the most intense albums of distorted and anthemic rock'n'roll since MC5. Loud, fast, apocalyptic waves of guitar distortions and gigantic rhythm shake **Field Recordings From the Sun** (2002). Adding Ben Chasny of the Six Organs of Admittance, **Blue Cathedral** (2004) lent intellectual depth to the most primal, barbaric emotional bursts. Their most effective weapon was the sheer density and frenzy of their playing.

Hugh Golden's [Lowdown](#), that shared Noel Harmonson with the Comets On Fire, transitioned from **Revolver II** (1999), a sarcastic, cacophonous and anarchic collection of jams, to **Y Is A Crooked Letter** (2003), a rather different beast that harked back to the intense maelstroms of Japan's noise-core bands.

### ***Instrumental nostalgia, 1996-98***

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While not as original as their counterparts of the early 1990s, an impressive number of groups still offered witty and creative takes on instrumental rock. Notable albums of the period included: **The Utterly Fantastic and Totally Unbelievable Sound** (1995) by the [Los Straitjackets](#) in Tennessee; **At Home With Satan's Pilgrims** (1995) by the [Satan's Pilgrims](#) in Oregon; **Savage Island** (1996) by the [Bomboras](#) in Los Angeles; **Battle Of The Loons** (1998) by [Shark Quest](#) (1), in North Carolina, that contaminated surf music with flavors of country and folk; New York's [Mooney Suzuki](#), who played old-fashioned high-adrenalin garage-rock on **People Get Ready** (2000).

In Canada, [Mark Brodie And The Beaver Patrol](#) resurrected the vibrato melodies of the Ventures and Dick Dale on **The Shores Of Hell** (1996), thus following in the footsteps of Shadowy Men On A Shadowy Planet.

### ***Post-punk, 1995-2000***

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The languages of punk-rockers continued to multiply, although few bands were able to stand up as generational icons.

There were those who still played the original style. The [Streetwalkin' Cheetahs](#) rediscovered catchy punk-rock for Los Angeles' "street"

generation on **Overdrive** (1997). Minnesota's [Dillinger Four](#) matched their verve on the sociological trilogy that began with **Midwestern Songs Of The Americas** (1998). New York's [Chavez](#) became contenders for the title of greatest Mission Of Burma disciples with the huge riffs of **Gone Glimmering** (1995).

Towards the end of the decade punk-pop had become as mainstream as pop muzak thanks to groups such as Florida's [New Found Glory](#), who had started out with the "old school" sound of **Nothing Gold Can Stay** (1999) but later achieved stardom with a much watered-down version of punk-pop, and Scotland's [Idlewild](#), with **Hope Is Important** (1999). England's [Skunk Anansie](#), a multi-racial group fronted by bold black lesbian feminist Deborah Anne "Skin" Dyer, unleashed a politicized blend of funk, blues, hardcore, reggae, hip-hop and metal on albums such as **Stoosh** (1996).

Other bands, particularly in the Midwest, came up with original styles indebted to Fugazi and Jesus Lizard. Minneapolis' [Calvin Krime](#) played ferocious "old school" hardcore on **You're Feeling So Attractive** (1998). New Jersey's [Rye Coalition](#) fused emocore and hard-rock, Fugazi and AC/DC, starting with **Hee Saw Dhuh Kaet** (1997). A similar maturation was displayed by Florida's [Hot Water Music](#) on **Fuel for the Hate Game** (1996). Ohio's [Terrifying Experience](#), the project of Guided By Voices' guitarist Mitch Mitchell, experimented with progressive hardcore on **Supreme Radial** (1999). So did Los Angeles' [Stanford Prison Experiment](#), that tried to bridge that style and funk-metal on **The Gato Hunch** (1995).

### ***Jazzcore, 1996-2000***

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Avantgarde hardcore bands tried to revitalize the genre mostly by incorporating jazzy idioms. New York's [Stratotanker](#) offered atonal punk-jazz on **Baby Test The Sky** (1996) that evoked the unlikely wedding of Captain Beefheart and Miles Davis. [Dysrhythmia](#) (1), a Philadelphia-based instrumental trio, were heirs to the tradition of instrumental jazz-tinged punk-rock of Universal Congress and Saccharine Trust on **Contradiction** (2000) and **No Interference** (2001). Oregon's [Irving Klaw Trio](#) wed the spastic dementia of Red Crayola and Captain Beefheart with the avant-jazz architecture of Frank Zappa and Can on **Utek Pahtoo Mogoi** (1997). The Minutemen were still an important reference point for the dissonant, angular hardcore of combos such as Maryland's [Candy Machine](#), for example on **A Modest Proposal** (1994), and Virginia's [Kepone](#), mostly on **Ugly Dance** (1994). Sweden's [Refused](#) (1), featuring vocalist Dennis Lyxzen, gave their spiritual and artistic testament with their third album **The Shape of Punk to Come** (1998), whose title paraphrased Ornette Coleman's jazz masterpiece. Their militant jazzcore bridged the generation of the 1980s and the generation of post-rock.

### ***The golden age of emocore, 1995-2000***

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Meanwhile, the deluge of emocore continued in the second half of the 1990s, indirectly making it less and less relevant.

Wisconsin's [Promise Ring](#) epitomized the conventions of that generation, shifting from the litanies of **30 Degrees Everywhere** (1996), fueled by Davey VonBohlen's passionate screaming and crooning, towards the rousing singalongs, reminiscent of the Replacements' populist rock'n'roll, of **Nothing Feels Good** (1997). The natural outcome of that evolution was the blue-collar rock of [Maritime](#), fronted by VonBohlen and featuring two virtuosi such as Dismemberment Plan's bassist Eric Axelson and Promise Ring's drummer Dan Didier, especially on their second album **We The Vehicles** (2006).

There was hardly a month without a new significant addition to the "emo" canon: Illinois' [Braid](#), with **The Age Of Octeen** (1996); Texas' [And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead](#) with **And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead** (1997); Texas' [At The Drive In](#), featuring guitarist Omar Rodriguez and singer Cedric Bixler, with the highly technical and emotional **In Casino Out** (1998); Kansas City's [Get Up Kids](#), with **Four Minute Mile** (1998), which were among the most popular; Chicago's [Alkaline Trio](#), with the razor-sharp anthems of **Goddamnit** (1998); Arizona's [Jimmy Eat World](#), with **Clarity** (1999), the most popular at the turn of the decade; Kentucky's [Elliott](#), with **False Cathedrals** (2000); Kansas' [Appleseed Cast](#), with **Mare Vitalis** (2000), Buffalo's [Snapcase](#), with **Designs for Automotion** (2000); [Dashboard Confessional](#), the project of Florida-based singer and guitarist Chris Carrabba, with **Swiss Army Romance** (2000); Florida's [Underoath](#), with the electronic arrangements and intricate melodies of their fifth album **Define The Great Line** (2006); New Jersey's [Thursday](#) with their third album **War All the Time** (2003) that transposed the intimate angst of old emocore into the collective psyche; etc. Most of them emphasized melody over fury, and emotions over rebellion.

Towards the end of the decade a number of bands tried to introduce new elements.

One of the best, Wisconsin's [Rainer Maria](#) (1), relied on the male/female vocal harmonies of Kyle Fischer and Caithlin DeMarrais, and on complex dynamics for the psychological studies of **Past Worn Searching** (1997).

The early works of [Cursive](#) (2), the project of Nebraska's guitarist and vocalist Tim Kasher, displayed the leader's erudite and tortured persona, as well as his ambition to craft a post-emocore punk ballad. Kasher reached a remarkable musical and lyrical maturity on the concept album **Domestica** (2000), that introduced Lullaby For The Working Class' guitarist Ted Stevens. **The Ugly Organ** (2003), adding cellist Gretta Cohn to the line-up with Kasher increasingly toying with keyboards, mixed emocore melodrama and the angular punch of noise-rock in uniquely eccentric formats. If fear was the overarching theme of that album, then anger was the leitmotiv of **Happy Hollow** (2006), a scathing indictment of organized religion. Kasher's side-project [Good Life](#) complemented Cursive with the stark and melancholy ballads of third album **Album of the Year** (2004).

New York's [Saetia](#) invented a popular variant of emocore: "screamo". Its main attribute was the high-pitched screaming, but also the extremely furious guitar playing, as demonstrated on **Saetia** (1999).

Milestones in the emergence of screamo were the jarring and psychotic EP **Chaos is Me** (2000) by Boston's [Orchid](#) and **Document #5** (2000) by the Virginia-based septet [Pg. 99](#).

New York's [Glassjaw](#) played emocore that sounded like the original nuclear hardcore of Black Flag on **Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Silence** (2000).

In Texas, Will Johnson fronted [Centro-matic](#), that bridged psychedelic-pop, cow-punk and emocore on **All the Falsest Hearts Can Try** (2000). A more mature version of the band, renamed [South San Gabriel](#), delivered the allegorical concept album **The Carlton Chronicles** (2005).

Get Up Kids' keyboardist James Dewees formed [Reggie and the Full Effect](#), that introduced a sense of humor in emocore, besides wedding catchy hooks and quasi-metal fury, notably on their second album **Promotional Copy** (2000).

Kansas' [Anniversary](#) flirted with both the revival of the new wave (thanks to the videogame-inspired keyboards of Adrienne Verhoeven) and with the poppy emocore that was fashionable at the turn of the century (thanks to frontmen Joshua Berwanger and Justin Roelofs) on **Designing a Nervous Breakdown** (2000).

New York's [Brand New](#) greatly expanded the stylistic range of the genre (from hard-rock to roots-rock to power-pop) on **Deja Entendu** (2003) and **The Devil and God Are Raging Inside Me** (2006).

### *Progressive hardcore, 1998-2000*

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In Washington, Ted Leo's [Chisel](#), on **Set You Free** (1997), and especially [Dismemberment Plan](#) (1), on **Emergency and I** (1999), a sci-fi concept album enhanced with all sorts of studio witchcraft, fused progressive hardcore with new wave and power-pop.

[Les Savy Fav](#) from Rhode Island mixed angular rhythms, twisted melodies, psychotic vocals, dissonant guitar and spastic drumming on **3/5** (1997).

Los Angeles-area's [Thrice](#) evolved from the "screamo" style of the EP **First Impressions** (1999) to **The Illusion of Safety** (2002), an eclectic work that indulged in both grandiose pop and heavy-metal fury.

The hardcore of San Diego's [No Knife](#) incorporated elements of post-rock on **Hit Man Dreams** (1997). In the same city [Locust](#) coined a feverish and convulsive brand of electronic and noisy hardcore on **The Locust** (1998) and especially **Plague Soundscapes** (2003).

New York's [Mindless Self Indulgence](#) (1) played a mixture of hardcore, industrial music and hip-hop, heavily syncopated, derailed by scratching or electronics or videogames, and sung in a psychotic falsetto, notably on **Frankenstein Girls Will Seem Strangely Sexy** (1999), a 30-song self-

parodistic hardcore monolith with overtones of operetta.

Seattle's [Juno](#) (1) specialized in open-ended structures with a wide range of dynamics on **This is the Way It Goes And Goes And Goes** (1999) and **A Future Lived in Past Tense** (2001).

Chicago's [90 Day Men](#), featuring keyboardist Andy Lansangan and bassist Robert Lowe, bridged hardcore, progressive-rock and new wave on **(It (Is) It) Critical Band** (2000).

Seattle's [Blood Brothers](#) (2) virtually invented a new kind of hardcore with their blend of progressive and melodic stances on **This Adultery is Ripe** (2000). The chaotic punk-rock songs of **March on Electric Children** (2001), via cabaret piano, sampling and tape manipulation, led to the reckless stylistic chameleons and visceral nonchalance of **Burn Piano Island Burn** (2003). The vocal interplay of Johnny Whitney and Jordan Blilie was a first, pitting the high-pitched outburst of one against the melodic pathos of the other. The massive stylistic detours of **Crimes** (2004) and **Young Machetes** (2006) relied on instrumental virtuosi such as guitarist Cody Votolato and drummer Mark Gajadhar. Johnny Whitney and Mark Gajadhar also released an album under the moniker [Neon Blonde](#), **Chandeliers in the Savannah** (2005), that wed the Blood Brothers' aesthetics to the ballad format and to dance beats.

[Arab On Radar](#) (2), from Rhode Island, played a concentrate of wildly dissonant punk-rock. **Rough Day At The Orifice** (1999) is a demented collage of feverish and feral sounds, vaguely approaching the state of music, somewhere along the twisted line that straddles Red Crayola, Pop Group, Mars and Pere Ubu. **Soak The Saddle** (2000) is the music of very angry (and very spastic) youth: psychotic melodies, manic pace, abrasive guitars, hardcore fury and extreme noise.

### *Industrial violence, 1995-2000*

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Nine Inch Nails and KMFDM imitators surfaced on both coasts as well as inland: Seattle's [SMP](#), with **Stalemate** (1995), New York's [Bile](#), with **Teknowhere** (1996), Missouri's [Gravity Kills](#), with **Gravity Kills** (1996), Colorado's [Society Burning](#), with **Tactiq** (1997), Oregon's [Hellbent](#) (Bryan Black), with **Helium** (1998).

Chicago's [Acumen](#) (1) unleashed the industrial-metal fury of **Territory = Universe** (1996) and then mutated into [DJ? Acucrack](#) (1) to experiment with a brutal, all-electronic, version of techno and drum'n'bass, best on **Mutants Of Sound** (1998).

Los Angeles' [Static-X](#) offered speed-metal for dance clubs on **Wisconsin Death Trip** (1999).

[EC8OR](#), i.e. French keyboardist Patric Catani and German vocalist Gina D'Orio, carried out a similar campaign with **All Of Us Can Be Rich** (1997), a harrowing, excruciating, non-stop sonic assault made of bulldozer/jackhammer beats, mind-bending distortions and death-metal

riffs.

Pennsylvania's [God Lives Underwater](#) (1) wed industrial music to Depeche Mode's synth-pop on the all-electronic **Life In The So-Called Space Age** (1998).

EBM was still thriving in San Francisco, where [Battery](#) relied on vocalist Maria Azevedo, best captured on **Distance** (1997), to deliver a formidable punch, and where [Scar Tissue](#) (1) crafted one of the most innovative and complex works, **TMOTD** (1997).

The third album by New York's [Infidel? Castro](#) (1), the double-disc **Bioentropic Damage Fractal** (2005), was a massive chaotic collage that ran the gamut from noise to grindcore to digital hardcore to drones to musique concrete.

New York artist Alan Dollgener, disguised under the moniker [Reverb Sleep](#) (1), only released the electronic collages of a nightmarish, ghastly intensity of **Fish Dream** (1995) before dying of AIDS.

Inheriting Throbbing Gristle's aesthetic of industrial chaos, and the brutal, visceral, dissolute abrasiveness of post-psychedelic improvisers such as Gravatar, [Wolf Eyes](#) (1), started in Michigan by vocalist and electronic musician Nate Young, crafted frantic, distorted, violent trancey electronic soundscapes on their first album as a trio, **Dread** (2001). Their futuristic vision was expressed by works such as **Dog Jaw** (2005), the mini-album **Human Animal** (2006) and the 40-minute piece **Black Wing Over The Sand** (2007) that were drenched in galactic drones, electric turbulence, vocal samples, manipulated found sounds and instrumental doodling; a form of pure abstract horror soundsculpting.

English noise-meisters [Aufgehoben No Process](#) were largely an invention of drummer Stephen Robinson, who edited in studio the savage improvisations of his quartet (guitar, electronics, two drummers) to produce the percussive and distorted mayhem of **The Violence Of Appropriation** (1999). The two "collaborations" with guitarist Gary Smith, **Magnetic Mountain** (2001) and **Anno Fauve** (2004), approached the madness of Japanese noisecore. The 27-minute *Jederfursich*, off **Khora** (2008), marked the insanely solemn zenith of Robinson's post-processing art.

British born New York-based super-prolific noise artist Dominick "[Prurient](#)" Fernow (who released more than 20 works in 2007 alone) blasted vomit-like shouts, ear-piercing eruptions of feedback and grotesque rhythms in the hour-long **Collaboration** (2000), the two colossal pieces of **Fossil** (2004), the 30-minute **The Baron's Chamber** (2005) and the four suites of **Pleasure Ground** (2006). His reputation was established by visceral live performances.

### ***Breakcore, 1998-2000***

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The descendants of Atari Teenage Riot's digital hardcore could avail

themselves of more advanced sampling and mixing equipment. While they may not have matched the urgency and fury of the masters, they easily outdid the master's chaotic dynamics.

The EPs, such as **Welcome To The Warren** (1997), mostly compiled on **Ambush** (2003), released by London's Toby "[DJ Scud](#)" Reynolds were emblematic of the raw electronic mayhem that underpinned breakcore.

The second album, **All Things Are Connected** (2000), by [Schizoid](#), the project of Canada's producer Jason Smith, was the epitome of heavy violent metallic breakcore born from the ashes of drill'n'bass: distorted pounding beats, metallic guitars and evil vocals wrapped in dense grim electronic ambience.

Chicago's [James Plotkin](#) (1) used processed guitar sounds to compose subliminal works such as **A Peripheral Blur** (1998), but then ventured into the most ferocious kind of industrial music and digital hardcore on **Atomsmasher** (2001), a concentrate of drilling electronics, chaotic collages, hyper-fibrillating drums, psychotic howls and barbaric noises.

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