

Ben Wiebers

Developing a Theory on Quality Music Using American Popular Music

Talking about Music

- Music is constantly discussed
- There should be an academic way to describe quality



Overview

- What is music?
- Music's importance in society
- Music with individuals
- Quality in the arts
- Theories of music analysis
- Theory of Quality Music
- Experiment
- Analysis

Music

- Organized (Ball, 2010, p. 33)
 - Meaningful
- Actively listened to (Kerman & Tomlinson, 2000, p. 2)
 - Purposefully heard



Background

- Music surrounds human life (Macionis, 2011, p. 54)
- Used in
 - Traditions and Rituals
 - Social Change
 - Education

Background (cont)

- Used to affect our status (Machin, 2010, p. 9)
 - Stimulate emotional change
- Consciously or not, music changes our mood



(Marrakech, 2012)

Theory

- Quality
 - Standard of excellence (Google, 2012)
 - In music there is no standard of quality
 - Hard to define in the arts
 - Subjectivity
 - Objectivity

Existing Theories

- Ideal Observer Theory (Firth, 1952)
 - From ethical debates in philosophy
 - An ideal observer judges a work of art (Sharpe, 2004, p. 132).
 - Judgment is absolute and objective
- Music Culture Discourses (Wall, 2003, p. 21)
 - Framework to discuss music with special vocabulary

Existing Theories (cont)

- Criteria (Sharpe, 2004, pg. 129).
 - Song must meet criteria
 - Criteria are based on quality characteristics

Theory of Quality Music

- Comprised of three criteria
 - Emotional Connection
 - Intellectual Appeal
 - Implied Musicality
- Each related to quality
- Quality songs pass each criteria

Experiment

- GRAMMY “Song of the Year” winners
 - 56 songs from 1959-2012
- Individual song ran through each criterion once



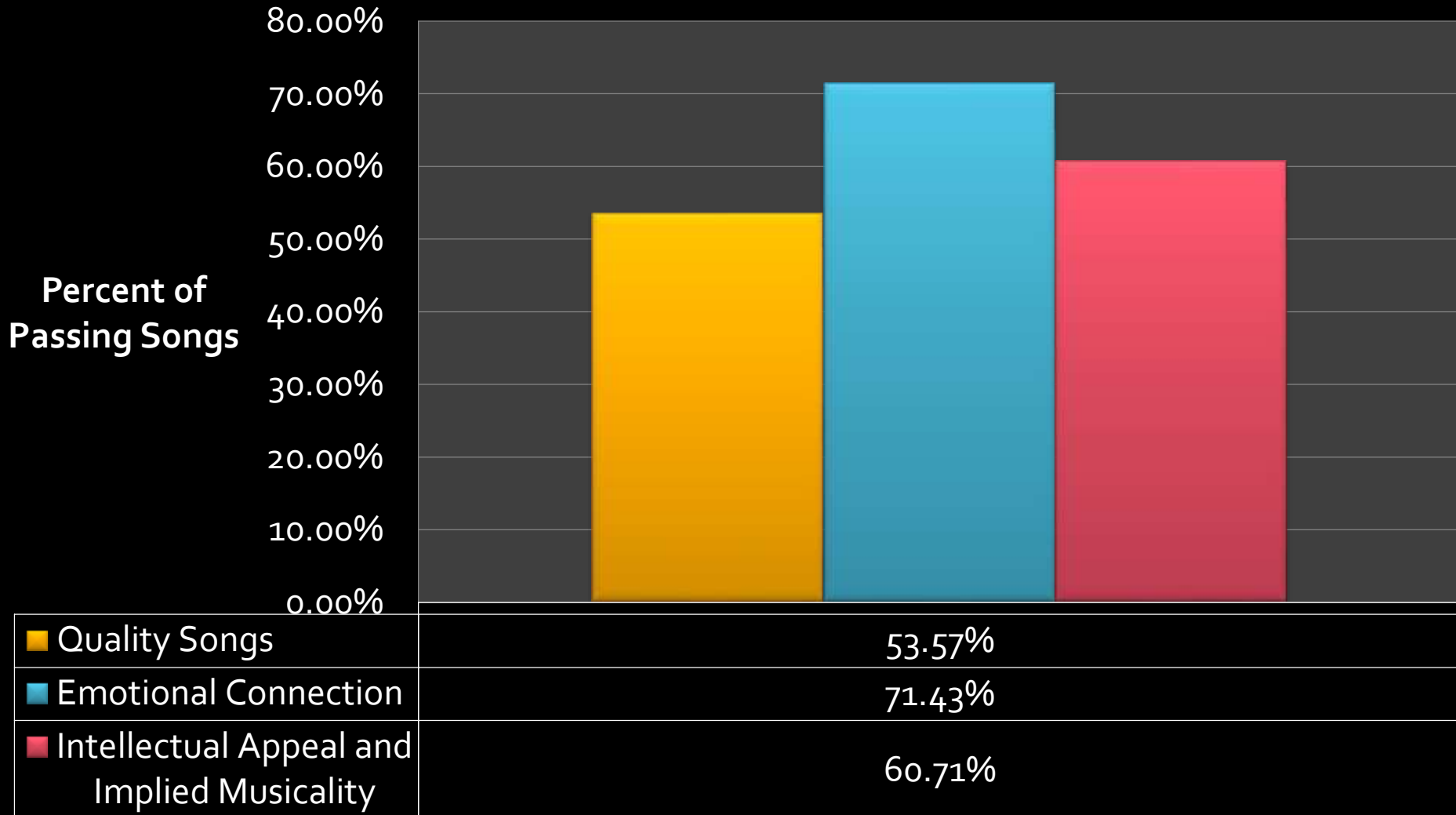
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Experiment (cont)

- Scales
 - Emotional Connection- pass/fail
 - Intellectual Appeal- 1-5
 - Implied Musicality- 1-5
- Songs which pass Emotional Connection and gain 7 total points from the others are Quality

Results

Passing Song Percentages



Analysis

- Music can be objectively analyzed
 - 53 percent passing rate
 - Consistency of criteria
- Criteria are good indicators of quality within GRAMMY winners
- GRAMMY “Song of the Year” winners may not be quality

Conclusion

- Inconsistencies with society's perception of the quality of GRAMMY winners
- Musical quality can be formed in criteria
- Music can be quantified



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