

Queen



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Reasons Why We Chose Queen:

There are a lot of reasons that we, as a group, decided to do our project on Queen. Queen is an extremely well-known band across multiple generations, so it is an artist that we can talk to almost anyone anywhere about. Additionally, they were an influence to many artists after them. Finally, they released over 15 albums that showed a very impressive musical range and an awe-inspiring amount of talent.



Queen: Overview

Queen was one of the most popular and successful rock groups during the 1970s and 80s, with a very unique, experimental style and sound, Queen has remained one of the best selling artists of all time.

The band began its formation in 1967, when the guitarist Brian May and the drummer Roger Taylor joined with Tim Staffell to form a rock group named Smile. When Tim Staffell left the group, May and Taylor joined forces with Freddie Mercury and a bass player named John Deacon, resulting in the core version of the band in 1970.

Queen was famous for bright, glam, “pomp-rock” and put on energetic shows. Freddie Mercury in particular was known for his flamboyant style.

Their sound was a very produced and incorporated elements of glam rock, heavy metal, hard rock, and harmony.

After the tragic death of Freddie Mercury the band added new members and continued performing

Even today their songs remain popular, for example, “We Are the Champions,” “Another One Bites the Dust,” “Bohemian Rhapsody,” and “We Will Rock You” are still played often.

The band consisted of Freddie Mercury, Brian May, Roger Taylor, and John Deacon

Queen Timeline

- 1971 - Queen is formed
- 1973 - Queen signed with EMI
- 1973 - Queen released their first album *Queen*
- 1974 - *Queen II* is released
- 1974 - *Sheer Heart Attack* was released
- 1975 - "Bohemian Rhapsody" is released and spends 9 weeks as No. 1
- 1975 - *A Night at the Opera* is released
- 1976 - Queen had their first US tour
- 1976 - *A Day at the Races* was released
- 1977 - Queen released *News of the World*
- 1978 - Queen released *Jazz*
- 1980 - Queen released *The Game* which went 5 times platinum in Canada
- 1980 - Queen did the soundtrack for *Flash Gordon*
- 1981 - Queen was the first band to make a stadium tour of South America
- 1982 - *Hot Space* was released
- 1983 - *The Works* was released
- 1986 - *A Kind of Magic* was released
- 1989 - *The Miracle* was released
- 1991 - Freddie Mercury died
- 1995 - *Made in Heaven* was released
- 2001 - Queen was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame



Freddie Mercury

Freddie Mercury (born Farrokh Bulsara) 5 September 1946 – 24 November 1991 was the lead vocalist of Queen - he was also one of their main songwriters and producers.

Mercury was Parsi and spent his childhood in [Zanzibar](#) and India until his mid-teens, before moving with his family to Middlesex, England.

As a child he studied piano and he attended the Ealing College of Art in London.

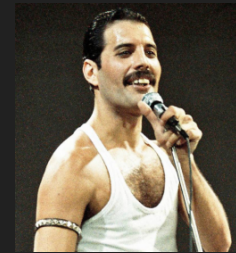
He was one of the founding members of Queen.

Mercury was known for his flamboyant performances and energetic over-the-top stage style.

He had an impressive four-[octave](#) vocal range, and the band would often layer his voice to create harmony.

He wrote and composed numerous hits for Queen including, "Bohemian Rhapsody," and "Killer Queen”

Mercury died in 1991 at the age of 45 due to complications from [AIDS](#), which he had previously kept hidden from the public.



Brian May

Brian Harold May, 19 July 1947, is an English musician, vocalist, and songwriter.

He was the lead guitarist in [Queen](#), which he cofounded after creating the band Smile.

He famously used a homemade guitar called “The Red Special”

His most famous songwriting contributions include: "We Will Rock You," "I Want It All," "Fat Bottomed Girls," "The Prophet's Song," "Who Wants to Live Forever," and "The Show Must Go On".

May used his background in astrophysics to create a new sound for Queen by modifying soundwaves to create an intense arena-effect, which makes it sound like a crowd is singing.



Roger Taylor

Roger Meddows Taylor born 26 July 1949 is an English musician, singer and songwriter. He was the drummer of Queen, as well as one of their songwriters and occasional lead vocalist.

Taylor contributed at least one track on every album, often singing lead vocals on his own compositions.

He wrote or co-wrote three UK number 1 hits: "These Are the Days of Our Lives," "Under Pressure," and "[Innuendo](#)."

Taylor played multiple instruments for the band, contributing his talents on the keyboard, guitar, and bass.

He was the first Queen member to go solo in 1977 - and he has continued to form and work with other bands.



John Deacon

John Richard Deacon, born 19 August 1951, is a retired English musician and was the bass guitarist for Queen, as well as a composer and financial manager.

Deacon grew up in [Oadby, Leicestershire](#), playing local band called The Opposition, before moving to study electronics in [Chelsea College, London](#). He became Queen's bass player in 1971 at the age of 19.

Deacon had a passion and skills for electronics, and he designed his own custom-adapted amp, now known as the legendary “Deacy Amp.”

He had more of a quiet demeanor than his band mates.

He composed several of Queen's hit singles: "You're My Best Friend", "Another One Bites The Dust" and "I Want To Break Free.”



Musical Analysis - “Bohemian Rhapsody”(1975)

Form: Intro, Ballad, Guitar, Opera, Rock, Outro

1. Intro: chordal homophony created by a capella consisting entirely of multitrack recording of Freddie Mercury until the piano entered to create melody and homophony, quadruple meter except, and duple subdivision on the piano.
2. Ballad:
 - a. Spacer is a one measure piano arpeggio that repeats for a 2 measure monophony of just the piano.
 - b. Verse one - texture is melody and accompaniment homophony, accompanied by bass and piano, standard meter with some duple subdivision on the piano
 - c. Spacer is the same as the first one.
 - d. Verse two - texture is melody and accompaniment homophonic, texture is much thicker because drums, backup vocals and guitar have entered, still standard meter with duple subdivision on piano, but there is now also quadruple subdivision to provide an even thicker texture
3. Guitar Solo: Takes the melody from the vocalist at its peak creating a counter melody, the texture remains melody and accompaniment and accompaniment homophony. Homophony with vocal accompaniment that quickly vanishes into simple percussion accompaniment. Bridge from ballad to opera, composed and played by May.

*But now I've gone
and thrown it all
away*



David R. Fuller

Musical Analysis - “Bohemian Rhapsody”(1975) cont.

1. Opera - elaborate vocal multi-tracking, piano accompaniment with duple subdivision giving it a double time feel- switches to some triple subdivision, multiple trade-offs between vocalists, dominant textures were chordal homophony, where it was just multiple vocalists harmonizing, and melody and accompaniment homophony.
2. Rock:
 - a. Riff - 4 measures (AA) containing triple beat subdivision which gives a 6/4 meter feel, but the drums provide a steady 4/4 meter with the backbeats emphasized
 - b. Vocals - texture is a melody and accompaniment homophony with chordal homophony within the vocalists,
 - c. Riff - 4 measures (AA) containing triple beat subdivision, very similar to first with the triple beat subdivision and the percussion accompaniment
 - d. Connector - fairly dissonant sections, half-time feel
3. Outro - doesn't quite reach half time, the texture is melody and accompaniment homophony, duple subdivision in the piano, lyrics reappear



Further Analysis of “Bohemian Rhapsody”

Lyrical Analysis:

Queen never revealed to the public what the lyrics meant; Mercury went as far as to say, “It’s one of those songs which has such a fantasy feel about it. I think people should just listen to it, think about it, and then make up their own minds as to what it says to them.” As a result, there are many theories that have been presented:

1. Having to leave his homeland of zanzibar at a young age
2. His struggle with his sexual orientation
3. A love story that touched on social issues
4. Freddy maintains that Queen are nothing more than, “Random rhyming nonsense”

Fun Facts:

It was #1 on the charts for 9 weeks in 1975

It rose back to #1 in 1991 after Freddie Mercury’s Death

It was written solely by Freddie Mercury

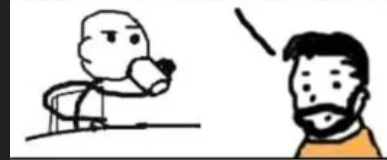
It was used in the film *Wayne's World*

The band referred to it as Freddie’s baby

I hate "Bohemian Rhapsody" by Queen, it's random nonsense.



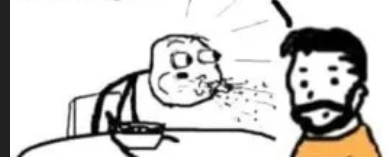
Actually it's the story of a boy whose girlfriend left him for some other guy. He kills him, now the gang of that guy is looking for him. He goes to say goodbye to his mother before the gang finds him. The "opera" part is the gunfight, where the gang mocks him for being a "just a poor boy."



They shot in the air, which is the thunderbolt and lightning. He begs, but they won't let him go. So he kills them all. "So you think you can stone me and spit in my eye?" as he celebrates.



But still, he knows he'll have to spend his life as a fugitive. He needs to "get right out of here", which explains the melancholy at the end. Even though he came out alive, he'll never see his mother again.



More About “Bohemian Rhapsody”



The range shown in this song is fairly amazing, and it is impossible to put it into one genre because it has elements from pop, rock, opera, and even show tunes. The introduction opens with the chordal homophony with a lead as the second highest pitch - just like how most barbershop quartets perform. Then there is pop elements in the ballad because you have this very memorable - fairly slow melody - that is being sung very smoothly and professionally. Additionally, at this point in the song the dynamics definitely play to the melody being the strongest part. The ballad was the section of the song that most catered to the masses - similar to pop. Then there is the opera section that - somehow - blends very well with the rest of the song. Finally, there is the rock section that is characterized with a strong driving rhythm and an impressive guitar solo - an element that is very characteristic of rock and roll.

An Interesting Comparison

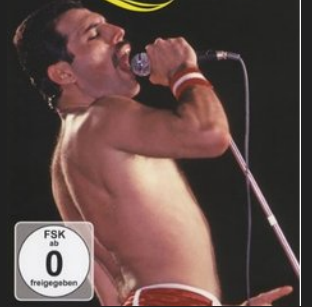
“We Will Rock You” (1977)

Straight up Verse and Chorus form

Form: Intro, verse, chorus(AA), verse, chorus(AA), verse, chorus(AAAA), solo

It was very interesting that “We Will Rock You” came so soon after Bohemian Rhapsody because it was so different. “Bohemian Rhapsody” was Queen’s most popular song and one of UK’s most popular songs ever. Additionally, there was such a draw due to the song’s complexity. There are pop, rock, opera, and acapella elements, and the range shown is amazing. On the flip side, “We Will Rock You” is arguably the simplest song that Queen produced. It showed a turning point for the band towards a minimalistic songwriting and composition style. These two songs showed just how versatile and talented Queen was as a group, and the black and white of the two pieces selected really highlights that.

A COMPLETE ROCK CASE STUDY
Queen
We Will Rock You



Music that Influenced Queen

Mostly from British hard, progressive, psychedelic or pop rock bands.

Beatles - psychedelic, pop rock

Deep Purple - progressive, hard rock

The Who - hard, pop rock

Led Zeppelin - hard rock, instrumental influences

David Bowie - glam, pop rock, stage presence

Genesis - progressive, pop rock

Cream - progressive, pop rock, guitar influences



Artists that Influenced Queen's Members

Brian May influenced by the epic guitar solos of Jimi Hendrix



Freddie Mercury by the vocals of Robert Plant

Mercury's range spans about 4 octaves

Roger Taylor also influenced by impressively high-pitch quality



John Deacon was inspired by John Lennon to buy a guitar and get into music

Robert Plant and
Freddie Mercury

Queen's Influence

Bands took in Queen's styles and infused them into their own creative works.

Panic! At the Disco takes the chorus driven and drive to make a dance party from Queen

The Darkness follows in Queen's footsteps by performing for giant arenas and making fantastic theatrical performances

Daft Punk shows an influence by Queen's "Radio Ga Ga" in their hit "Television Rules the Nation"



Artists Inspired by Freddie Mercury

The legacy that Freddie Mercury left behind is inspiring many artists, and is not bound to any particular genre.

Mercury was not afraid to be over-the-top, bold and passionate on stage, and this is a characteristic that many artists across the board have repeated

Rock artists

Kurt Cobain (Nirvana)

Matt Bellamy (Muse)

Hip Hop/Rap artists

Wiz Khalifa

Lupe Fiasco

Pop artists

Katy Perry

Lady Gaga



Another - Unique - Musical Influence

We Will Rock You is a musical that was based on the songs of Queen along with a book by Ben Elton. This musical was made in 2002 to capture the essence of Queen and its frontman, Freddie Mercury. So, this musical focused in on Queen's style of performance that was so iconic in its extravagance. Arguably, their performance style was what propelled them to their prowess in Rock and Roll History. This musical has been performed in 17 different countries for over 15 million viewers.



Queen's Other Lasting Impacts

All members of Queen have at least a college degree, none of which had anything to do with music



John Deacon (bass) had a degree in electronics which stimulated his interests in many gadgets and electronics. Queen's use of videos with their music and the different electronic elements Queen used in recording (ie: overdubbing and multitracking) really paved the road for other groups.

Freddie Mercury had a degree in Illustration and Design, which helped him stand out as the band's frontman. He also designed Queen's logo, called the Queen crest.

Roger Taylor had a BS in Biology and Brian May had a BS in physics. Queen all helped to shatter the normal course that most previous artists took to success.



Queen's Other Lasting Impacts cont.



Freddie Mercury battled AIDS for his final chapter in life, which eventually took his life

His battle inspired the organization, Mercury Phoenix Trust, an AIDS awareness and education fund. This was created by the band to help others with the disease to hopefully prevent spreading and help fix the disease.

The organization has raised over \$15 million and is now funding projects in 16 different countries

Over the course of just the last year the group has raised over \$330,000 which has allowed the funding of 57 projects.



Other Musical Styles of the Time

- Debut album, *Queen* (1973), was heavily influenced by the heavy metal and progressive rock of the early 70s
- Called “so derivative it hurts” by *Winnipeg Free Press* (1974), citing influence by Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath and Jimi Hendrix as influences, but with a fresh spin
- In these movements, Rock musicians began to give greater artistic weight to the compositions and instrumentations associated with jazz or classical music
- Jethro Thull, Pink Floyd, Yes etc. pioneered this new progressive style
- The late 60s also saw a rise in the use of synthesizers as part of the new progressive style. As purists, Queen emphasized that “nobody played the synthesizer”, it was simply an effect of multi-tracking guitar and vocal sounds

Other Musical Styles of the Time

Rock becomes more avant-garde and experimental (art rock, concept albums)

Queen II (1974) showcases these experimental styles, with a loose theme connecting the album

Glam rock emerged from the psychedelic rock scene of the late 60s, and *Sheer Heart Attack* (1974) embodied this new style with outrageous clothes, hair, and makeup

A Night at the Opera (1975) used more experimental elements such as an 8-minute song and harp instrumentation



Other Musical Styles of the Time

In response to the perfection of rock pursued by Queen and other bands of the era, a genre called punk rock was created in order to get back to a more simple version of rock

The Sex Pistols and the Ramones were bands to lead this new form of music

Punk Rock celebrated the imperfections of rock, willing to sacrifice precision for high energy songs and performances



Other Musical Styles of the Time

Punk rock was the typical four minute maximum, pop style song with simple music and a conservative harmonic vocabulary

Songs did not utilize long instrumental solos

Bands in this genre even used older style equipment, such as Gretsch and Rickenbacker guitars, and Vox amplifiers, to create the feeling of a 1960s rock band



Career Accolades

Queen had eight gold and six platinum records.

In 1975 the band released a breakthrough LP, *A Night at the Opera*, which featured their song "Bohemian Rhapsody."

"Bohemian Rhapsody" stayed at Number One in England for nine weeks and was a top hit in the US.

Some of their songs from the U.S. Top Forty lists include:

"Killer Queen" (Number 12, 1975)

"Bohemian Rhapsody" (Number 9, 1976)

"You're My Best Friend" (Number 16, 1975)

"Somebody to Love" (Number 13, 1976),

"We Will Rock You" (Number 4, 1977)

Their 1981 collaboration with David Bowie, "Under Pressure," reached number 1 on the UK Singles chart, and was featured on their platinum *Greatest Hits* album.

Queen eventually was awarded for their impressive Rock Career, in 2001 Queen was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. All four members were inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2003, becoming the first band to have every member inducted.



Present Day Queen

Freddie Mercury- passed away in November 1991 from bronchial pneumonia, a complication of his AIDS

John Deacon- retired from the band in 1997 after a tribute song to Mercury

Brian May and Roger Taylor have been performing with guest artists and are now touring with American Idol Season 8 runner up, Adam Lambert



May, Taylor, and Lambert (Left)
John Deacon out and about(Right)



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