

How much science can be found in pop? And how much pop is in science?

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In his research, Joachim Allgaier (Institute of Science, Technology and Society Studies) examines the occurrence of science in mainstream pop music and asks whether the media of popular culture are suitable for scientific communication.

Working with Chun-Ju Huang (National Chung Cheng University, Taiwan), the sociologist recently published a study in the journal "*Public Understanding of Science*", in which the researchers explored the occurrence of science in the lyrics of Taiwanese pop music. Their results revealed that expressions from the field of astronomy and space research are notably prominent in the lyrics. Most texts address emotional states, while the latest scientific topics are only rarely mentioned.

"In many countries, and that includes Austria in particular, there is a distinct gap between the sciences and the population, which must be bridged. Popular culture and the entertainment media, amongst others, could play a valuable part as intermediaries," Allgaier believes. The challenge lies in creating new opportunities to link the world of science and the world of everyday life.

In Allgaier's view, there are many ways to serve this purpose. He has also found examples in Western culture, where popular lyrics deal with science. The alternative rock band "They Might Be Giants", for instance, composed the [lyrics](#): "Balloons are full of helium and so is every star. Stars are mostly hydrogen which will someday fuel your car...". In three and a half minutes, they sing their way through the periodic table and

invite their audience to "Meet the Elements". Similarly, scientists are producing their own video clips, which are watched on YouTube or other channels. CERN's "Large Hadron Rap", to cite just one example, has been viewed just under eight million times.

Allgaier is critical of the trend to employ stereotypes, as was the case in the fiercely debated European Commission video "Science – It's a Girl Thing!". While an effort was made here to inspire enthusiasm for science among girls, the producers still felt unable to do without the bright pink lipstick and the trendy clothes. "Platforms like YouTube offer no form of quality control," Allgaier points out. "Pseudo scientists and those, who generally oppose science, are also active there, and attract an audience". Nevertheless, he feels that the new technologies provide significant bright opportunities for the communication of [science](#). Researchers must embrace the challenge to use the chances well.

More information: Huang, Chun-Ju & Allgaier, J. (2014). "What science are you singing? A study of the science image in the mainstream music of Taiwan." *Public Understanding of Science*, [pus.sagepub.com/content/early/ ... /21/0963662514542565](https://pus.sagepub.com/content/early/.../21/0963662514542565)

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