'Here comes the sun': Does pop music have a 'rhythm of the rain?'
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Weather is frequently portrayed in popular music, with a new scientific study finding over 750 popular music songs referring to weather, the most common being sun and rain, and blizzards being the least common. The study also found many songwriters were inspired by weather events.

The study, led by the University of Southampton, together with the Universities of Oxford, Manchester, Newcastle (all part of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research) and the University of Reading analysed the weather through lyrics, musical genre, keys and links to specific weather events.

Frequently, songs mentioned more than one weather type, indicating a range of emotions within a song. Songs mentioned up to six weather types, such as ‘Stormy’ by Cobb and Buie. Over 900 songwriters or singers have written or sung about weather, the most common being Bob Dylan, followed by John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

Weather-related songs are also very popular, with 7 per cent of them appearing Rolling Stone’s (2011) top 500 list of the Greatest Songs Of All Time. Lead author, Dr Sally Brown from the University of Southampton, said, "We were all surprised how often weather is communicated in popular music, whether as a simple analogy or a major theme of a song, such as Bob Dylan's 'Blowin' In The Wind' or The Hollies' "Bus Stop", where a couple fall in love under an umbrella."

The study, published in the journal Weather, also found that musicians were inspired by specific weather events. Dr Brown commented: "In 1969, George Harrison wrote the Beatles hit "Here Comes The Sun" after being inspired by one of the first sunny days of spring after a 'long cold lonely winter'. Our study also concluded that references to bad weather in pop songs were statistically more significant in the USA during the more stormy 1950s and 1960s than the quieter periods of 1970s and 1980s."

The study concluded by noting a total of 30 weather-related artists, bands and lyricists, including Wet Wet Wet, The Weather Girls and KC and the Sunshine Band. The findings are a follow on from previous research in 2011 by co-authors Paul Williams, from the University of Reading, and Karen Aplin, from University of Oxford, into weather events appearing in classical music.


The team, who conducted the research in their spare time, are interested to learn about any weather-orientated music songs they may have missed in their study. For a full list of weather songs and to add missing songs, see bit.ly/1ftrtoL

Provided by University of Southampton