

Country Music - History And Development Drummers Guide Part One

Country music stems from the Appalachian region where during the 18th and 19th centuries a majority of the population were of Scotch or Irish descent. These physically isolated mountaineers performed the Scotch Irish folk songs of their ancestors. The folk based musical formula consisted of ABAB rhyming quatrains citing personal experiences combined with the vocal and harmonic characteristics and subject matter of religious hymns. Appalachian and or Scotch Irish music centered around the fiddle, and this remained so even after the intrusion of railroads in the 19th century brought new musical influences and instruments to the region. Traveling minstrel shows imported the banjo, providing a unique sound to accompany the fiddle, Appalachia's primary instrumental voice. By the early 1900s, now affordable, mass produced guitars gave singers a broader chordal and rhythmic base than the less versatile banjo and fiddle.

This new arrangement of vocals with primary guitar accompaniment provided the base of contemporary Country music. In the 1920s, radio broadcasts, most notably Nashville's The Grand Ole Opry (first broadcast in 1925), brought Country music to wide popularity. Recognizing commercial potential, recording pioneer Ralph Peer announced auditions in 1927 in the Bristol, Tennessee newspaper. The indigenous musicians straddling the Virginia and Tennessee border showed up in droves. They included Jimmie Rodgers and The Carter Family. Drums first appeared in Country music with the recordings of Jimmie Rodgers ("Desert Blues" and "Any Old Time") in 1929, though they were excluded from traditional Country circles, most notably The Grand Ole Opry.

They remained largely excluded from Country music ensembles until the 1930s, when Texas musicians, notably Bob Wills (with drummer Smokey Dacus), created "Western Swing," adding drums, other Big Band rhythm instruments, and more complicated harmonies than those of traditional Country music. Also, as the name "Western Swing" implies, the primary feel was "swung," as opposed to the straight feel of most other forms of Country music. When Wills appeared on the stage at The Grand Ole Opry on December 30, 1944, the Opry's ban on drums was lifted exclusively for his performance, and then promptly reinstated. During the same decade, another relative of Country music appeared in the West, as Roy Rogers and Gene Autry pioneered "Western" music.

Western music differed considerably from both Appalachian hillbilly (Country) music and Western Swing in that it downplayed instrumental virtuosity, was primarily vocally oriented, and more especially crooner oriented. The subject matter of its songs differed greatly, too. Instead of the strange duality of gritty and religious songs, Western performers sang pop songs (e.g., Gene Autry's 1941 version of "You Are My Sunshine") and original Western songs portraying a heavily romanticized West (e.g., "Cool Water" and "Tumbling Tumble Weeds"). Western music's greatest star in the latter half of the 20th century was Marty Robbins ("El Paso"). Western lives on today in nostalgia oriented groups such as Sons of the Pioneers, though its popularity has diminished.

When drums are used in this style (often they're not), they normally play slow Country Shuffle grooves and are very much in the background. The mainstream of Country music had made its way into the night life of cities and run down bars by the 1940s. And in the latter part of that decade, Country's first post war "superstar," Hank Williams, developed the "Honky Tonk" style. This featured what has become the standard Country instrumental line-up: acoustic guitar, electric guitar, electric bass, drums, vocalist, and often pedal steel guitar and or fiddle, and occasionally piano.

About the Author

By Eric Starg. Eric's have used drums from many [Drum Manufacturers](#), but for live gigs favors [Gretsch Drum Sets](#) and [Gretsch Snare Drums](#). Eric is an active member of Drum Solo Artist where he is answering drum related questions, and helping drummers with tips and advices.

Source: <http://www.tntarticles.com>