

Comparative Study of Popular Songs between China and the United States Based on Data from Domestic and International Music Platforms

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Abstract: Popular music, as an important component of popular culture, is closely related to the development of society. Originating in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the United States, popular music is characterized by its concise structure, accessible content, lively form, and wide dissemination. As the global hub of popular music, the United States has witnessed the diverse development of various music genres. In recent years, with the continuous growth of the music industry, popular music has become an important aspect of showcasing a country's or region's cultural soft power. Against the backdrop of globalization and fierce competition between China and the United States as major powers, the competition of cultural soft power between the two countries has become increasingly intense. Therefore, conducting a comparative analysis of the current data on popular songs from China and the United States on music platforms, analyzing and comparing their influence, is of significant importance in grasping the trends of the times, understanding popular trends, enhancing China's cultural soft power, and using music as a vehicle to promote Chinese culture on the global stage.

Keywords: Popular Songs, Comparative Study, Music Platforms

1. Introduction

This study aims to compare the data of popular songs in China and the United States on domestic and international music platforms, in order to explore the differences and influence of Chinese and American popular music. The research will analyze data on the release time, trends, and streaming numbers of popular songs in both countries, revealing the characteristics and development trends of popular music in China and the United States.

By conducting this study, we can gain a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences in the popular music industries of China and the United States, providing valuable insights and references for music professionals, cultural exchange practitioners, and decision-makers in both countries.

2. Selection of Popular Music Platforms

Popular music is primarily disseminated through various music platforms. Due to copyright protection, most listeners access music by downloading or using music platform software and mobile applications. Based on this, the author has selected three platforms with the largest user base, widest dissemination, and greatest influence among numerous music platforms. These platforms include domestic platforms such as NetEase Cloud Music and QQ Music, as well as the international platform YouTube Music. Data from these platforms will be collected for comparative analysis.

3. Selection of Comparative Data

To explore the trends of popular music songs in both countries, and due to the absence of a recognized Hot Songs chart on domestic music platforms while there are well-known institutions like Billboard providing real-time updates on music charts internationally, the author has chosen the Hot Songs charts from NetEase Cloud Music and QQ Music on August 27th, 2022, as well as the corresponding Billboard Hot Songs chart on YouTube Music at the same time, to compare various data points. The focus will be on metrics such as song plays, likes, and comments. The following are Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3, which reflect the streaming data of the most popular songs on three mainstream

music platforms in China and the United States.

Table 1: YouTube Music Billboard Top 10 Song Data.

Songs	Singers	YouTube Music plays	Likes
As it was	Harry styles	286 Million	5.8 Million
Left and Right	Charlie Puth	183 Million	7.1 Million
About Damn Time	Lizzo	76 Million	1.2 Million
First Class	Jack Sparrow	58 Million	876 K
WAIT FOR U	Future/Drake/Tems	50 Million	624 K
Late Night Talking	Harry Styles	29 Million	1.1 Million
I Like You(A Happier Song)	Post Malone/Doja Cat	25 Million	762 K
BREAK MY SOUL	Beyoncé	25 Million	664 K
WAITRESS	DaBaby	1.3 Million	46 K
Beach House	Carly Rae Jepsen	986 K	42 K

Table 2: QQ Music Top 10 Song Data.

Songs	Singers	NetEase Cloud Music Comments	QQ Music Comments
Flying Bird and Cicada	Ren Ran	1,700(No Copyrights)	70,760
Small town summer	LiBi	49,482	30,706
By your side	Sheng Zhe	161,286	43,851
Letting Go	Tanya Chua	280,457	54,638
Nobody's Island	Ren Ran	251,595	55,901
Mom's words	Zyboy	12(No Copyrights)	43,707
Unique Skill	Leo Ku	49,118	13,191
You Are My Magic	Accusefive	44,925	15,325
Lonely Warrior	Eason Chan	330,173	181,600
Preference	Jing Chang	170,280	39,520

Table 3: NetEase Cloud Music Top 10 Song Data.

Songs	Singers	NetEase Cloud Music Comments	QQ Music Comments
By your side	Sheng Zhe	158,185	43,850
Confessions	KKECHO/MONARCH/DR0P	15,362	176
Goodbye,Monica	Peng Xiyang	62,264	No Copyrights
You Are My Magic	Accusefive	44,925	15324
You Are Everywhere	Captain	1,199,550	185,803
The Tears Lasts A Thousand Years	Cao Yuhang	3,008	102
Small town summer	LiBi	49,482	30,705
Bitter Camellia	Starling7	83,351	No Copyrights
The One And Only	Accusefive	189,844	22,205
I Put Together Memories for You	Wang Erlang	248,699	No Copyrights

According to the data from Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3, it is evident that there are different criteria for evaluating popular music between domestic and foreign music platforms. Currently, both major domestic music platforms have not disclosed data related to song play counts. They only display the popularity ranking of songs. Therefore, the popularity of songs can only be quantified indirectly through the number of comments. On the other hand, the foreign platform YouTube Music focuses on two main indicators: play counts and likes.^[1] Apart from these, it does not provide a comment feature for songs.

Domestic music platforms hide detailed information about likes and play counts. This is done to reduce the manipulation of play counts and likes by fans or music companies, forcing their preferred music to rank higher in the popularity charts. Opening the comment section allows for an interactive space between artists and fans. Fans can freely express their thoughts in the comment section and engage with like-minded fans from around the world. Sometimes, artists themselves participate in conversations with fans in the comment section, fully reflecting the social nature of music platforms as

a communication tool. On the other hand, YouTube Music simplifies its interactive features, becoming a purely music platform where listeners can only like or dislike songs. The advantage of this approach is that it keeps the platform clean and clutter-free, without unnecessary features, allowing users to conveniently and quickly enjoy their favorite music.

4. Comparison of the Influence of Popular Chinese Songs and American Songs on Foreign Platforms

To study the influence of Chinese popular music abroad, the author searched for the current popular songs on NetEase Cloud Music and QQ Music platforms on YouTube Music. Due to copyright restrictions, these songs have various versions available abroad. Therefore, when collecting data, the author chose the versions with the highest number of plays and likes among all the available versions for comparison.

Table 4: The Ten Most Popular Chinese Songs from the Two Major Platforms on YouTube Music.

Songs	Singers	YouTube Music plays	Likes
Flying Bird and Cicada	Ren Ran	54 Million	195 K
You Are Everywhere	Captain	37 Million	173 K
Small town summer	LiBi	37 Million	4.2 Million
Nobody's Island	Ren Ran	34 Million	160 K
Lonely Warrior	Eason Chan	29 Million	217 K
I Put Together Memories for You	Wang Erlang	27 Million	71 K
Letting Go	Tanya Chua	9.6 Million	42 K
Mom's words	Zyboy	7.5 Million	43 K
Bitter Camellia	Starling7	4 Million	42 K
Unique Skill	Leo Ku	2.8 Million	7.4 K

By comparing the data in Table 4, it can be observed that the most popular Chinese pop song on the YouTube Music platform at present is "Flying Bird and Cicada" by Ren Ran. It has reached a play count of 54 million and received 195,000 likes. The data is comparable to the fourth or fifth position on the current Billboard Hot Songs chart in the United States, but there is a significant difference in the number of likes. In contrast, "WAIT FOR U," with 50 million plays, has 624,000 likes, which is three times the number of likes for "Flying Bird and Cicada." Comparing other songs on the list, it is evident that Chinese pop music has a larger discrepancy between play counts and likes compared to American pop music. This difference may be due to the difference in the release time of the songs.

Generally, shortly after a new song is released, the number of plays and likes increases simultaneously. However, as the popularity of a new song decreases, many listeners are repeat listeners, which only increases the play count but not the number of likes. In terms of the duration of maintaining popularity, there is a significant difference between current Chinese pop songs and American pop songs.

On the other hand, both foreign and domestic platforms adopt the same approach when it comes to music without copyright limitations, which is to use music videos (MV) to bypass copyright restrictions on songs. Therefore, the play count of a song's MV can also serve as an important criterion for evaluating its influence.

Table 5: Comparison of the Top 10 Songs on the QQ Music MV Chart with YouTube Platform Data.

Songs	Singers	YouTube Music plays	YouTube Music Likes	QQ Music MV Plays
Boom Tick Boom	XIN Liu	70 K	3.6 K	10.5 Million
Pink Venom	BLACKPINK	282 Million	1.3 Million	11.7 Million
Greatest works of art	Jay Chou	20 Million	308 K	48.8Million
You jump,I jump	Vin Zhou	21 K	978	7.6 Million
Yu Qing	Charlie	151 K	1.8 K	2.1 Million
Still Wandering	Jay Chou	13 Million	141 K	13.8 Million
Secret Love	Faye	590 K	6.9 K	1.2 Million
Pink Ocean	Jay Chou	7.1 Million	64 K	2.8 Million
Looking For You	Liu Yu Ning	506 K	4 K	2.1 Million
The Missed Fireworks	Jay Chou	6.8 Million	75 k	4.8 Million

Table 6: YouTube Music Top 10 Songs Data for Popular Music in the United StatesI.

Songs	Singers	YouTube Music plays	YouTube Music Likes
Me Porto Bonito	Bad Bunny	299 Million	2.7 Million
Tití me preguntó	Bad Bunny	373 Million	3.5 Million
Alone	Rod Wave	7.2 Million	203 k
In A Minute	Lil Baby	70 Million	685 k
PROVENZA	KAROL G	401 Million	3.2 Million
Super General (freestyle)	Kevin Gates	33 Million	570 k
Back End Finesse	2tymes	9.4 Million	157 k
Super Gremlin	Kodak Black	212 Million	1.5 Million
Waddup	PGF Nuk	40 Million	410 k
Fuck My Cousin, Pt. II	Lil Zay Osama	10 Million	169 k

Table 7: YouTube Music Top 10 Songs Data for Popular Music in the United StatesII.

Songs	Singers	NetEase Cloud Music Comments	QQ Music Comments
Me Porto Bonito	Bad Bunny	346	243
Tití me preguntó	Bad Bunny	272	128
Alone	Rod Wave	35	10
In A Minute	Lil Baby	417	399
PROVENZA	KAROL G	163	54
Super General (freestyle)	Kevin Gates	\	7
Back End Finesse	2tymes	6	2
Super Gremlin	Kodak Black	92	388
Waddup	PGF Nuk	65	5
Fuck My Cousin, Pt. II	Lil Zay Osama	\	\

By examining the data in the Table 5, Table 6 and Table 7 above, we can observe several key points. On the QQ Music platform, the most popular songs include not only Chinese songs but also Korean songs, reflecting the diversity of Chinese popular music. Although there appear to be two English songs in the table, the artists are actually Chinese, and the songs are labeled as Mandarin songs. Moreover, the lyrics of the current top-ranked song "Boom Tick Boom" are an interesting mix of Chinese and English, demonstrating the influence of foreign cultures on Chinese pop music. Another interesting aspect of the QQ Music chart is that the songs "Yu Qing", "Secret Love", and "Looking For You" are all from the popular TV drama "Love Between Fairy and Devil", which has garnered high viewership ratings in China this summer. The song popularity resulting from this highly-watched period drama is remarkable, as evidenced by the significantly higher MV (Music Video) play counts on domestic platforms compared to overseas platforms.

As for the YouTube Music chart in the United States, its influence abroad differs greatly from its influence within China. These songs receive minimal attention in China, and some songs have yet to be introduced on domestic platforms. This can be attributed not only to the time required for song dissemination but also to cultural differences. The popular music in the United States predominantly encompasses rap styles, and not all of the lyrics are positive.^[2] As a result, it is challenging for these songs to gain mainstream popularity outside the United States and are only influential within the country. Therefore, when making comparisons, it is common to use music charts recognized by mainstream American culture, such as Billboard and the Grammy Awards, which feature songs that have a significant impact within the United States.

5. Comparison of the Influence of Chinese Pop Songs and American Pop Songs on Domestic Platforms

By comparing the data from Table 5 with Tables 2, Table 3 and Table 8, it can be observed that American pop songs have a significant gap in influence compared to domestic songs in China. In the QQ Music chart, the Billboard chart consists of 100 songs, with a total play count of only 1.97 million, while the play count for the Hot Songs chart is 19.9 million, which is ten times that of Billboard. Even the most popular song on the Billboard chart, "Left and Right," has a significant disparity in popularity compared to songs in the same position on the domestic chart. The existence of this gap is not surprising, and there are three reasons for it.

Table 8: YouTube Music Billboard Top 10 Song Data on Domestic Platforms.

Songs	Singers	NetEase Cloud Music Comments	QQ Music Comments
As it was	Harry styles	5,667	1,933
Left and Right	Charlie Puth	12,968	12,346
About Damn Time	Lizzo	2,096	952
First Class	Jack Sparrow	3,532	1,114
WAIT FOR U	Future/Drake/Tems	1,991	390
Late Night Talking	Harry Styles	1,438	426
I Like You(A Happier Song)	Post Malone/Doja Cat	2,254	769
BREAK MY SOUL	Beyoncé	3, 296	218
WAITRESS	DaBaby	202	17
Beach House	Carly Rae Jepsen	724	532

Firstly, it takes time for popular American songs to transition from being popular overseas to becoming popular in China. They do not immediately gain a large number of streams upon release. Secondly, there are cultural differences between Chinese and American pop music. English songs clearly cannot compete with the number of listeners of domestic pop music in China, and a significant portion of the audience cannot appreciate the content of English songs, resulting in a disparity in popularity.

The final point is that the release of songs inevitably involves promotion by music companies. It is difficult for foreign music companies to carry out promotional activities for new songs in China, while domestic music companies vigorously promote their own song releases through a series of marketing activities. Naturally, these songs gain more streams. Additionally, Chinese popular music is often used as background music in videos on domestic short video platforms, further increasing its influence, which surpasses that of American pop songs.

6. Comparison of Release Time for Hot Songs on the Charts

Table 9: Release Dates of YouTube Music Billboard Top 10 Songs.

Songs	Singers	Release Time
As it was	Harry styles	March 31, 2022
Left and Right	Charlie Puth	June 24, 2022
About Damn Time	Lizzo	April 13, 2022
First Class	Jack Sparrow	April 8, 2022
WAIT FOR U	Future/Drake/Tems	April 28, 2022
Late Night Talking	Harry Styles	May 20, 2022
I Like You(A Happier Song)	Post Malone/Doja Cat	June 3, 2022
BREAK MY SOUL	Beyoncé	June 21, 2022
WAITRESS	DaBaby	August 12, 2022
Beach House	Carly Rae Jepsen	August 5, 2022

Table 10: Release Dates of Top 10 Songs on NetEase Cloud Music Hot Songs Chart.

Songs	Singers	Release Time
By your side	Sheng Zhe	May 1, 2017
Confessions	KKECHO/MONARCH/DR0P	August 7, 2022
Goodbye,Monica	Peng Xiyang	March 2, 2021
You Are My Magic	Accusefive	June 14, 2022
You Are Everywhere	Captain	July 3, 2017
The Tears Lasts A Thousand Years	Cao Yuhang	August 12, 2022
Small town summer	LiBi	April 28, 2022
Bitter Camellia	Starling7	February 23, 2022
The One And Only	Accusefive	December 31, 2020
I Put Together Memories for You	Wang Erlang	November 14, 2019

Table 11: Release Dates of Top 10 Songs on QQ Music Hot Songs Chart.

Songs	Singers	Release Time
Flying Bird and Cicada	Ren Ran	July 3, 2020
Small town summer	LiBi	April 28, 2022
By your side	Sheng Zhe	May 1, 2017
Letting Go	Tanya Chua	November 18, 2011
Nobody's Island	Ren Ran	August 31, 2017
Mom's words	Zyboy	December 18, 2021
Unique Skill	Leo Ku	December 5, 2003
You Are My Magic	Accusefive	June 14, 2022
Lonely Warrior	Eason Chan	November 8, 2021
Preference	Jing Chang	May 8, 2009

Table 12: Release Dates of Top 10 Pop Songs on YouTube Music in the United States.

Songs	Singers	Release Time
Me Porto Bonito	Bad Bunny	May 6, 2022
Tití me preguntó	Bad Bunny	May 6, 2022
Alone	Rod Wave	August 9, 2022
In A Minute	Lil Baby	April 8, 2022
PROVENZA	KAROL G	April 22, 2022
Super General (freestyle)	Kevin Gates	June 9, 2022
Back End Finesse	2tymes	July 22, 2022
Super Gremlin	Kodak Black	February 5, 2022
Waddup	PGF Nuk	October 28, 2021
Fuck My Cousin, Pt. II	Lil Zay Osama	July 29, 2022

The data comparison of Table 9, Table 10, Table 11 and Table 12 shows significant differences in the release dates of popular songs between domestic and international platforms. The Chinese pop charts include a large number of songs released before 2022, with some even dating back to 2003, such as the song "Unique Skill", which is nearing its 18th anniversary. The resurgence of these older songs in popularity can be attributed to the immense popularity of short video platforms. "Unique Skill" gained widespread attention when a 23-year-old young man from Jining performed the song on a construction site during his break, causing it to go viral across the internet and bringing the song back into the public eye. Many songs on the charts have regained popularity due to their association with popular content on gaming and short video platforms. In contrast, looking at the popular music charts in the United States, almost all of the songs are newly released in 2022. The only exception this year was in late May when the fourth season of the TV series "Stranger Things" was released, and Kate Bush's 1985 song "Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God)" made it to the Billboard Top 10 chart. This demonstrates the differences between domestic and international popular music.

In China, songs occasionally become popular due to the popularity of games, short videos, and other platforms, bringing the associated music back into the public eye. It is rare for a song to immediately skyrocket to popularity upon release. People in China take some time to appreciate and evaluate popular music, and the recognition of a song's popularity requires a certain amount of time. On the other hand, in foreign markets, new songs often generate a massive influx of listeners and traffic immediately upon release. Audiences flock to these new songs. However, once the initial hype subsides or a new song is released, the previously popular songs quickly fade away and rarely make a comeback to the popular charts. Once a song falls off the charts, it is seldom able to regain its popularity and return to the top rankings.

7. Conclusion

Based on the analysis and data above, we can draw the following conclusions. First, there are certain differences in the popularity trends of music between China and the United States. In China, the popularity of music and songs is not strongly correlated with their release dates. The charts can include songs from over a decade ago as well as songs released just this year. This is because Chinese popular music is closely linked to short video platforms. When searching for older songs on the charts using search engines, it is easy to find the short videos or news articles that caused them to become popular. Most listeners come across these songs while browsing through corresponding videos, and the background music or recommended related songs in those videos attract users to search for and listen to

the songs on music platforms. This is quite different from the situation in the United States, where the influence of popular music is more time-sensitive. Although there have been instances of songs becoming popular again due to movies or TV shows in the authoritative Billboard charts, the number of such cases is limited, and they quickly drop off the charts due to the constant influx of new songs. The majority of the top ten popular songs in the United States are usually newly released in the current year, and they can quickly climb the charts shortly after their release. In summary, the influence of popular music in the United States is more time-limited, while in China, with the support of various video platforms, the influence of popular music tends to last longer.

Secondly, when comparing the influence of popular music between China and the United States, based on the data of streaming numbers alone, Chinese popular music has gained some initial influence overseas, but there is still a gap compared to American popular music. However, this gap is not significant, and with the expansion of Chinese short video platforms into international markets and the continuous rise of China's national influence, this gap will continue to narrow. On the other hand, the influence of American popular music in China is relatively small. There is a significant gap of more than ten times in popularity between American popular music and mainstream Chinese domestic music. American popular music lacks support from music labels, short video platforms, and various other aspects in China. Additionally, due to differences in audience preferences and culture, it is challenging for American popular music to gain significant influence in the domestic Chinese market.

Finally, there are differences between Chinese and American popular songs for various reasons, but the most important aspect for popular songs is their influence. In terms of expanding their influence, Chinese and American popular music share a common strategy. Chinese short video platforms such as TikTok have made significant contributions to the influence of Chinese popular music, and foreign audiences are also adopting the same music listening patterns as in China, discovering popular music through videos. Therefore, in the current competition for the influence of popular music, it is crucial to utilize various channels to expand the influence of music, thereby enhancing cultural soft power. It has become an important topic in the competition between Chinese and American popular music, and even in the competition of cultural soft power between the two countries. It is now up to all parties to make every effort and compete *vigorously*.

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