

# A Popular Music Reformation

By Michael C. Molter  
Staff Writer

The quest to reveal the most popular songs in the USA has been the goal of Billboard's Hot 100 Singles chart since its inception on August 4, 1958. On that very first Hot 100, the #1 single was "Poor Little Fool" by Ricky Nelson, and, as you would expect, other rock & roll singles (by Elvis Presley and Bobby Darin, among others) were featured high on the list. They were, however, not alone. That week, the diversity of popular music was evident as singles by Duane Eddy (country), the Coasters (R&B), Perez Prado (Latin), and Peggy Lee (jazz/blues) all were in the top 10. Over the years, beginning in the early 1980s, popular music became increasingly polarized, as some genres were no longer represented on pop radio.

In the 1990s, the polarization has increased as genres have been split into sub-genres, each with their own radio format. Meanwhile, the character of the stations making up the Hot 100 radio panel has changed very little, thus making the Hot 100 less and less in tune with the diversity of American popular music. That changed with the December 5, 1998 issue of Billboard Magazine, whose charts first went public over the Internet on November 25, 1998.

## William Turner's Senior Art Exhibition Opens Dec 11 At MC

By Bethany Helton,  
Entertainment Editor

Methodist College Senior William Turner will present his senior art exhibition Dec. 11-28 in the Mallett-Rogers House on the Methodist College campus. The show will open with a public reception Friday, Dec. 11 from 6 - 9 p.m. in the Mallett-Rogers House.

Turner's interest in art originated from his love of cartoons. "I am a cartoon freak, have always been a cartoon freak, and will always be a cartoon freak. I wanted to always be able to see (cartoons)... that's how I learned to draw. I went out to the PX and bought myself one of those how-to-draw cartoons books, and taught myself to draw that way."

These days Turner draws inspiration from "the quirks in life" and by studying people. Turner credits his fascination with the warrior spirit, a theme that is prevalent in his work, to his exposure to the military and to Eastern culture.

A graduate of Seventy-First High School in Fayetteville, Turner is slated to graduate Dec. 18. His show can be viewed weekdays Dec. 14-28 from 2-4 p.m. in the Mallett-Rogers House on the Methodist College campus.

Two trends in the 1990s worked to undermine the relevance of the Hot 100 Singles chart. The first was the lack of diversity at the conventional pop radio outlets, as discussed above. The second was the increasing number of songs garnering a vast amount of radio airplay, yet not being released as commercial singles, thus making them ineligible to chart on a singles-based list. Coupling these trends with a declining singles market produced fundamental changes in the methodology used to concoct the Hot 100 Singles.

Now for the changes: first, the retail sales component of a song's chart points has been reduced from 40% to 25%, reflecting the dropping numbers of singles consumers. Second, radio-only songs now qualify after reaching the top 75 in airplay (and so dropping the word "Singles" from the chart's name). Third, new formats have been added to the traditional Hot 100 radio panel. The old panel consisted of mainstream Top 40, rhythmic Top 40, adult Top 40, adult contemporary, and modern rock formats. The new panel adds a few others: R&B, adult R&B, mainstream rock, AAA rock, and country. Fourth, so-called "double-A" sided singles, such as the recent "Adia/Angel" by Sarah McLachlan, are

now separated—a reflection of the new song-driven Hot 100.

How have the changes altered the Hot 100 from the November 28th to the December 5th chart? All of the eligible airplay-only songs entered the chart, including those on the way up ("Hands" by Jewel, "Have You Ever?" by Brandy) and those on the decline ("Iris" by Goo Goo Dolls, "Real World" by Matchbox 20). The addition of country stations to the Hot 100 panel is immediately evident as "Let Me Let Go" by Faith Hill and "It Must Be Love" by Ty Herndon open at #39 and #40, respectively, leading a class including Brooks & Dunn, George Strait, and Terri Clark. Also, because of the plethora of debuts, some songs make bizarre moves regardless of whether or not they bullet (increase in chart points). For example, "My Little Secret" by Xscape moves 25-46 despite its bullet, and "Wide Open Spaces" by Dixie Chicks climbs 96-41 without a bullet.

It will be interesting to see how these changes will affect the dynamics of songs on the chart. Will we continue to see long runs at #1 as we have from 1991-1998? It seems to suggest that, with more significant challengers present at radio and not at retail, artists will find it considerably more

difficult to maintain long runs at the top. "I'm Your Angel" by R. Kelly & Celine Dion leads the debuts this week at #1, but it seems certain that we may not see a #1 debut again. In the past, singles have debuted at #1 after building up weeks of radio airplay, then releasing the single. Combining the large amount of airplay already achieved and the single's first week sales caused it to open at #1. Under the new system, however, the song will chart based on those weeks of airplay prior to the release of the single—so a #1 debut now would truly be an event!

However controversial this new eclectic assortment may be, it was definitely necessary to include radio-only songs on the chart, just for the sake of maintaining the chart's relevance. I believe that these new changes truly recapture that eclectic taste first provided by the Hot 100 40 years ago—and that the chart's goal of making known the most popular songs in America has been achieved.

## Music Dept. Presents Winter Concert Dec. 8

Three choral groups and two instrumental groups will be featured in the Methodist College Music Department's Winter Concert Tuesday, Dec. 8, at 7:30 p.m. in Reeves Auditorium. Admission is free and the public is invited.

In this year's concert, the Chamber Ensemble (a string quintet) and the Stage Band will accompany the Concert Choir on several numbers, and both the Concert Choir and the Show Choir will process down the aisles for two selections. A varied program is planned, including classical, popular, and sacred works, as well as a Christmas carol sing-along. The concert will open with the Concert Choir singing "Adeste Fideles" and close with the Concert Choir, Show Choir and Stage Band performing John Williams' composition "Dry Your Tears, Africa" from the movie *Amistad*.

The Concert Choir and the Chamber Ensemble will perform "Regina Coelli" by Mozart.

The Stage Band will accompany the Show Choir on "Riversong" by Roger Emerson and "Make Them Hear You" from *Ragtime*. The Stage Band will perform "Blue Skies" and "Big Noise from Winetka." The 12-member vocal ensemble Rainbow's End will sing, "Trickle, Trickle" and "The Twelve Days After Christmas." The Concert Choir will sing "Heaven" and "Worthy To Be Praised."

The Concert Choir, Show Choir and Rainbow's End are directed by Mrs. Betty Neill Parsons. Dr. Mary Frances Boyce conducts the Chamber Ensemble, and Mr. J. Michael Rogers directs the Stage Band.

