

I'll Take ABBA Over Lady Gaga Any Day

By [Artemy Troitsky](#)

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It looks like very few, if any, are happy about the state of pop music in the new century.

Their frustrations come from different corners — the formerly almighty captains of the music industry complain about vanishing sales and profits. Pop stars blame Internet users for robbing them. Music purists complain that contemporary music isn't worth a dime and the last real good music we heard was in the '60s, '70s and '80s.

This all demonstrates that the whole concept of pop music — one of the most powerful cultural phenomena of the 20th century — is in big trouble.

But is it really so dramatic or even tragic?

If we consider the purely showbiz aspect of the issue, it does look like the Titanic going down. The record industry and its affiliates are headed down the path that steam engine producers or typewriter manufacturers took decades ago.

In my opinion, it's the record industry strategists themselves who are partly responsible for this collapse. They haven't invested in real talent and credible artists.

Instead, ever since the Spice Girls boom of the mid-'90s, they have put all their effort in creating myriads of disposable teeny-bop starlets — thus undermining both the quality and the spirit of music.

But the good pop, rock and hip-hop is still there, and there isn't a major talent drain, no matter what boring old melomaniacs say.

Since I am still an active radio DJ and music television presenter, I can admit without a shadow of doubt that there's plenty of beautiful new music being made today (and I don't mean Lady Gaga). But it lives an utterly different life from the one of, say, The Beatles, ABBA or Led Zeppelin.

Television and radio mean fairly little. In fact, all the past century's musical framework, except for concert activities, is going down the drain. Instead, there's the World Wide Web, which provides a direct channel between the creators of the music to the grateful listeners, easily avoiding all the go-betweens.

Is this fair? Yes. (I, too, have a record label — even four of them — and I am not complaining.)

Actually, the bottom line of all attacks on so-called Internet piracy (I wonder how something can be labeled “piracy” when there's no money involved) comes down to the fact that there's far less profits in the music business today. Well, comrades, my guess is that you'll have to live with it.

I'm sure that there never will be as much crazy money in the industry as there was in the 1990s. In a way, this will have a purging effect. Those artists and producers who, in the words of Frank Zappa, “are only in it for the money” will think twice before diving into the new musical reality.

Meanwhile, those inspired and not afraid of being pure but poor — well, OK, not that poor — will bring the spark, trust and sincerity back into the exhausted body of pop music.

Artemy Troitsky is a rock journalist and music critic. At the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, he will moderate the session “When will a New Beatles Emerge on the Music Scene?” on Friday from 5:30 to 6:45 p.m. and participate in the session “Can IP Be Protected in the Internet Age?” on Saturday from 10 to 11:15 a.m.

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