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# MAX MARTIN

## EVOLUTION

A deep dive into the trends behind  
Max Martin's Hot 100 top 10s.

HIT SONGS DECONSTRUCTED

The #1 Source for Hit Songwriting Analysis and Trends

# About this Report

*The Max Martin Evolution Report* provides an in-depth look at the trends behind Max Martin's Billboard Hot 100 top 10 hits over the past three decades. To create this report, Hit Songs Deconstructed manually analyzed every Max Martin Billboard Hot 100 top 10 hit from the 1990s through 2025. The result is a detailed look at how core elements, such as primary genres, sub-genres and influences, lyrical themes, structure, and other defining traits, have evolved throughout his career.

# About Hit Songs Deconstructed

Hit Songs Deconstructed empowers songwriters, producers, artists, and music industry professionals with the data, insights, and tools to navigate today's evolving music landscape. Through deep, data-driven analysis of today's most successful songs, we uncover the songwriting and production techniques, as well as the trends, shaping the sound of today's hits. Our findings are delivered through in-depth reports, educational masterclasses, visual analytics, and interactive song analysis tools, all designed to help creatives and industry professionals make more informed songwriting, production, and business decisions and compete at the highest level.

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The Life of  
a Showgirl



# Introduction

Max Martin rarely speaks publicly, but his music speaks volumes.

With 28 Billboard Hot 100 #1s and 89 top 10s, his influence on modern pop is unparalleled. For over three decades, Martin has quietly shaped the sound of global hits, consistently delivering songs that resonate across generations, genres, and cultures.

# Stockholm

## Roots

Born Karl Martin Sandberg on February 26, 1971, in Stockholm, Sweden, Max Martin grew up in a country with a legacy in pop music. Sweden had already produced global sensations like ABBA and Roxette, and the nation's public music education system provided a fertile ground for young talents to explore songwriting and performance.



*"I would not be standing in this place today if it weren't for the public music school."*

*- Max Martin, New Yorker, 2015*





## ***It's Alive***

In his teenage years, Max Martin gravitated toward glam and hard rock, playing in several garage bands before eventually forming *It's Alive*, where he served as a lead singer.

The band embraced a melodic hard rock style reminiscent of 1980s glam, and they earned a recording contract with Cheiron Records. In 1993, *It's Alive* released *Earthquake Visions*. The album sold around 30,000 copies in Sweden but did not gain international attention.

Despite this, the project brought Martin into contact with Denniz Pop, the influential producer behind Cheiron Studios, who would become a key mentor and guide in launching his career as a songwriter and producer.

# LEARN THE CRAFT BEHIND MAX MARTIN'S HITS

Gain unparalleled insight into the signature techniques that Max Martin has used to shape the sound of pop music for three decades.

## THE MELODY & HOOK WRITING OF MAX MARTIN

- Structures melodies using the principles behind melodic math
- Crafts hooks and arranges them for maximum impact
- Aligns melody with lyrics to bring the storyline to life and deepen audience connection
- Foreshadows and reinforces hooks so the chorus feels familiar before it arrives
- Employs Nano Hooks to embellish and energize the arrangement
- And much more!

## THE MAX MARTIN ARRANGEMENT PLAYBOOK

- Strategically structures song sections to create a solid foundation for his songs
- Maximizes the impact of song sections ensuring each moment serves a purpose
- Designs dynamic energy flows that keeps the listeners engaged from start to finish
- Creates standout, attention-grabbing moments throughout the song
- Utilizes in-section, like-section, and cross-section arrangement strategies to maximize both memorability and interest
- And much more!



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# Cheiron Studios

and the Teen Pop Revolution

(1993–2000)

(1993–2000)



Max Martin began his journey at Cheiron Studios in 1993 under the mentorship of Denniz Pop. The studio soon emerged as the epicenter of the late '90s teen pop phenomenon. Collaborating with Rami Yacoub, Kristian Lundin, Herbie Crichlow, Andreas Carlsson, and others, Martin honed a songwriting and production approach characterized by catchy pop and R&B grooves, captivating introductions, powerful choruses, and meticulously structured compositions.

The themes in these early songs predominantly revolved around love and relationships, conveyed with a heightened sense of teenage melodrama and youthful exuberance that resonated deeply with audiences worldwide.

(1993–2000)

## “...Baby One More Time”

**Max Martin's 1st *Billboard* Hot 100 #1 Hit**

“I wrote this in my head in the middle of the night. I remember getting up and recording a sleepy voice version of it so as not to lose it!”

- Max Martin, *Time Out*, 2019

# Behind the Scenes

## “...Baby One More Time”

Britney Spears initially recorded a softer ballad for her debut, but producers Max Martin and Rami Yacoub encouraged a punchier, uptempo track to make a stronger impact. They pitched “...Baby One More Time,” which had originally been turned down by TLC, and reworked it with Spears into a polished, high-energy pop song. Released in 1998, it became her debut single, topping charts worldwide and quickly establishing her as a pop sensation.

The song's music video, featuring Spears as a schoolgirl dancing through a high school, became an instant cultural phenomenon and helped cement her image as a defining pop icon of the late '90s. “...Baby One More Time” remains one of the best-selling singles of all time and is widely recognized as a milestone in pop music history.

(1993–2000)

# Key Collaborators

2+ Hot 100 Top 10 Hits



Andreas Carlsson



Denniz Pop



Herbie Crichlow



Kristian Lundin



Rami Yacoub



Britney Spears



Backstreet Boys



Robyn

Britney Spears

(1993–2000)

# Top 10 Hits

(Number One Hit\*)



Backstreet Boys: "Everybody (Backstreet's Back)"

Backstreet Boys: "I Want It That Way"

Backstreet Boys: "Quit Playing Games (with My Heart)"

Backstreet Boys: "Shape of My Heart"

Backstreet Boys: "Show Me the Meaning of Being Lonely"

Britney Spears: "(You Drive Me) Crazy"

Britney Spears: "Baby One More Time" \*

Britney Spears: "Oops!... I Did It Again"

Celine Dion: "That's the Way It Is"

NSYNC: "It's Gonna Be Me" \*

Robyn: "Do You Know (What It Takes)"

Robyn: "Show Me Love"

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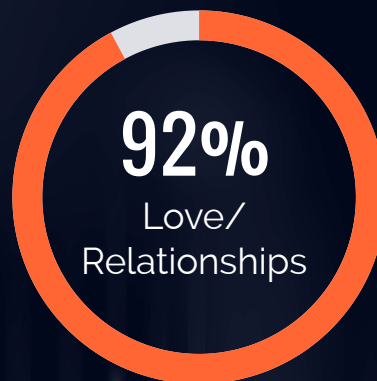
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# **Cheiron Studios and the Teen Pop Revolution**

**Most Popular Characteristics**

(1993–2000)

(1993–2000)

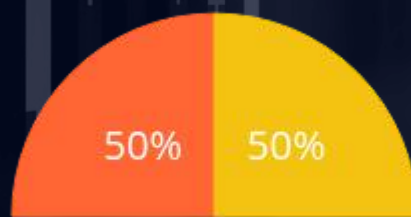


### First Section



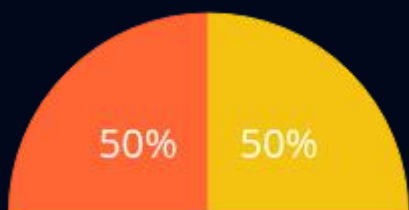
Intro Chorus

### Last Section



Chorus Outro

### Key (Major/Minor)



Major Minor

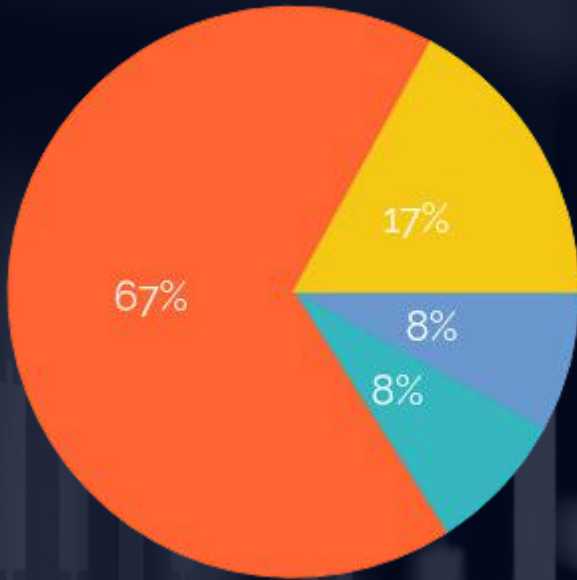
### Tempo Range



80 - 99 100 - 119

(1993–2000)

### First Chorus: Time Into Song Range



■ Kickoff ■ 0:20 - 0:39 ■ 0:40 - 0:59 ■ 1:00+

100%

Bridge

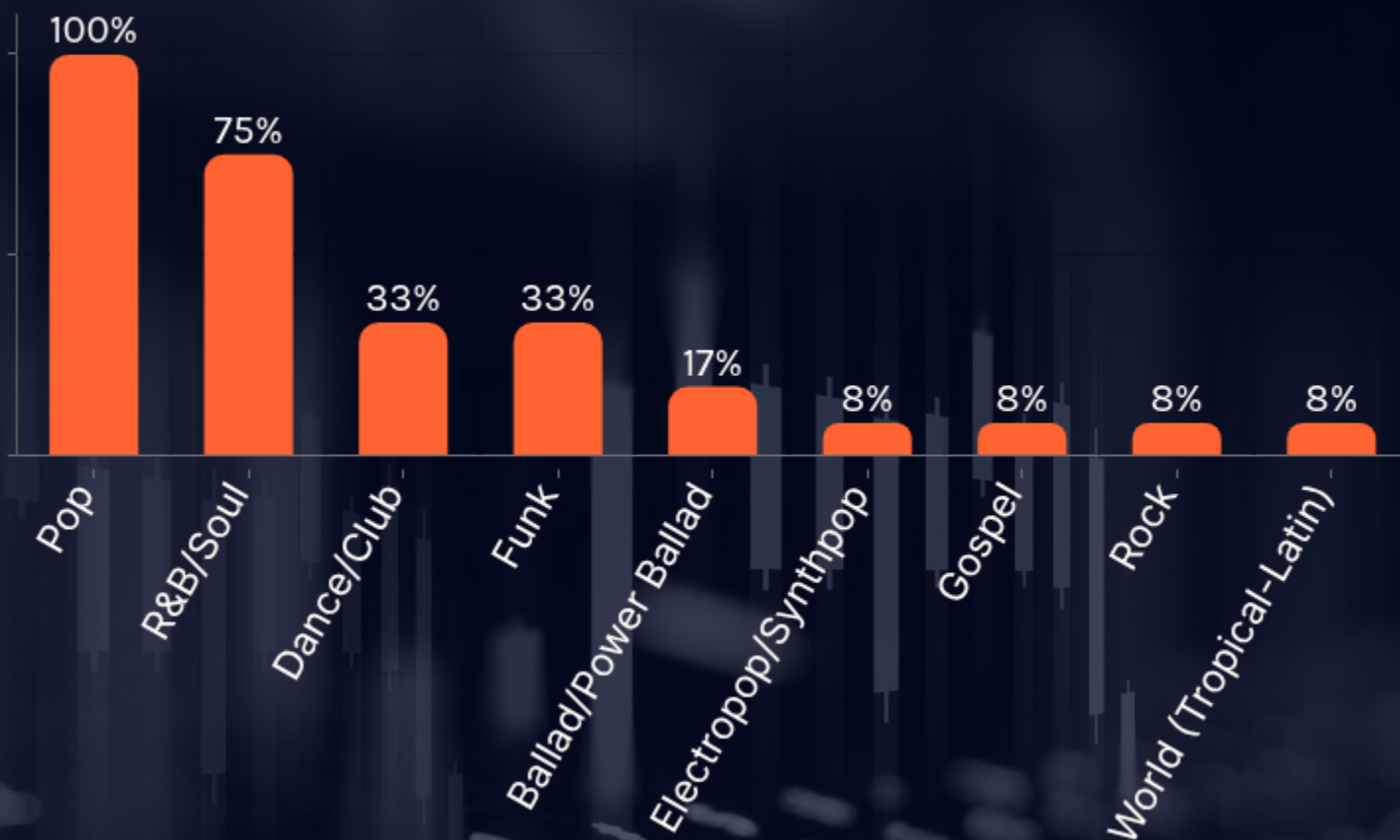
67%

Pre-Chorus

### Song Length Range



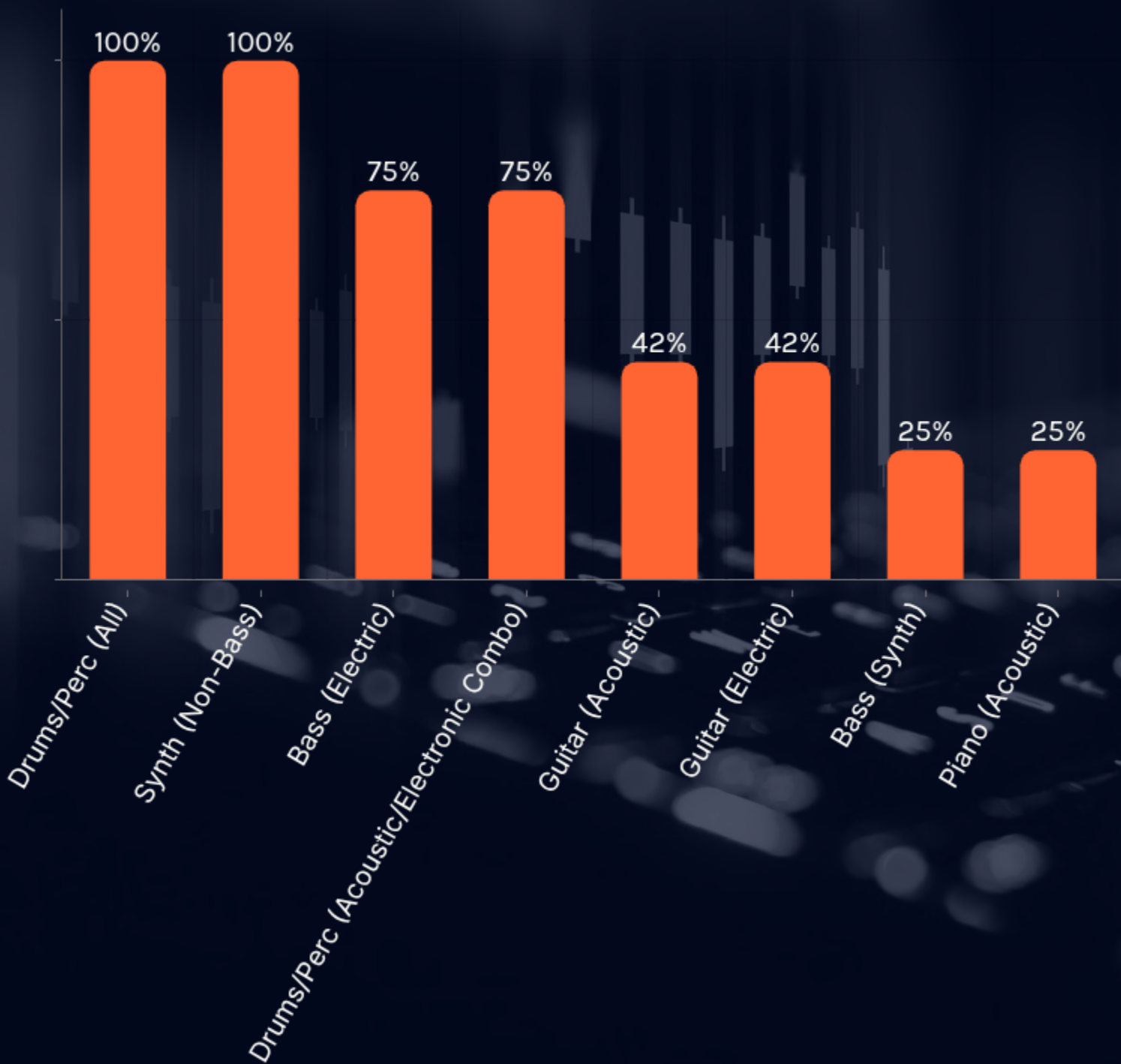
### Sub-Genres & Influences



(1993–2000)

## Prominent Instruments

(Present in 20% of songs or more.)



# Maratone Studios

and the Pop-Rock Evolution

(2001–2009)

Following Denniz Pop's passing and Cheiron's closure, Max Martin co-founded Maratone Studios and reinvented his sound for the new decade. He fused his hallmark pop sensibility with gritty, energized rock dynamics, creating a bold departure from the glossy Cheiron years.

Complementing this rawer sound was a shift in lyrical direction. While love and relationships remained the central theme, the subject matter expanded to include rebellion and empowerment (Kelly Clarkson's "Since U Been Gone," P!nk's "So What") as well as more provocative, hookup-driven themes (Katy Perry's "I Kissed a Girl," Britney Spears' "3").

During this period, Martin also began mentoring Dr. Luke and Shellback, two collaborators who would become central to his next phase of success.

# Behind the Scenes

## "Since U Been Gone"

Kelly Clarkson was initially hesitant about recording "Since U Been Gone" because of its rock-infused sound, which was a departure from her earlier pop-oriented material. Producers Max Martin and Dr. Luke transformed the song into a powerful pop-rock anthem by using a quiet verse/loud chorus structure, a technique designed to maximize emotional impact. Released in 2004, the track became a defining hit for Clarkson and established a blueprint for 2000s pop-rock, influencing songs by Pink, Avril Lavigne, and other artists. Its combination of catchy hooks, driving guitars, and dynamic structure helped cement Martin's reputation for shaping modern pop music.

(2001–2009)

# Key Collaborators

2+ Hot 100 Top 10 Hits



Dr. Luke



Shellback



Katy Perry



Kelly Clarkson



Pink

(2001–2009)

# Top 10 Hits

(\* Number One Hit)



Adam Lambert: "Whataya Want From Me"

Britney Spears: "3" \*

Katy Perry: "Hot n Cold"

Katy Perry: "I Kissed a Girl" \*

Kelly Clarkson: "Behind These Hazel Eyes"

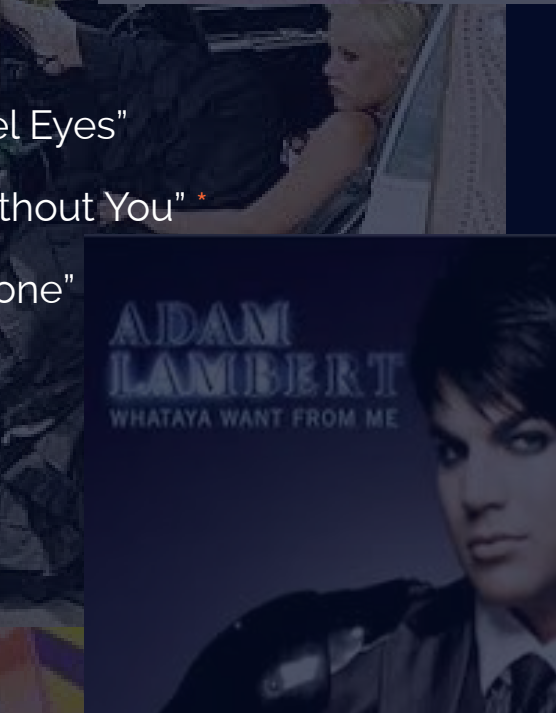
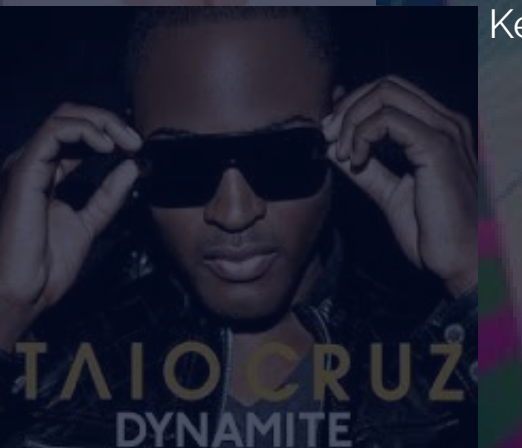
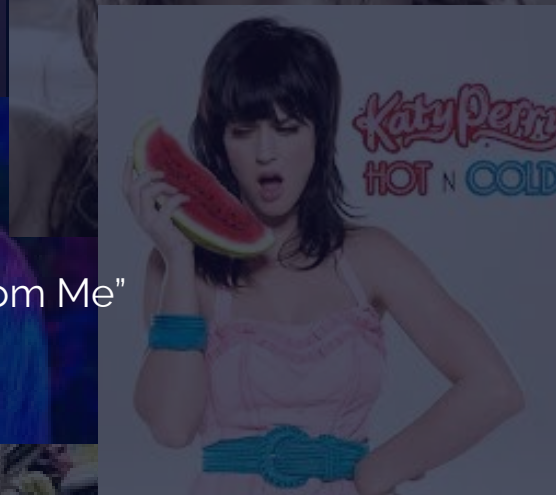
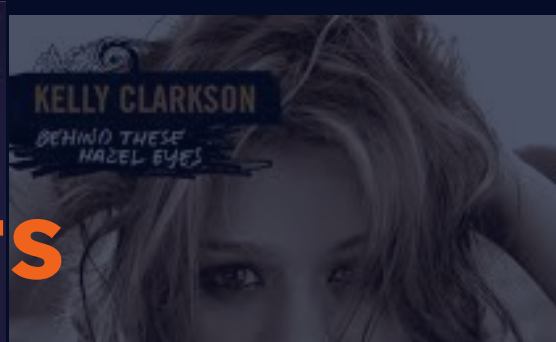
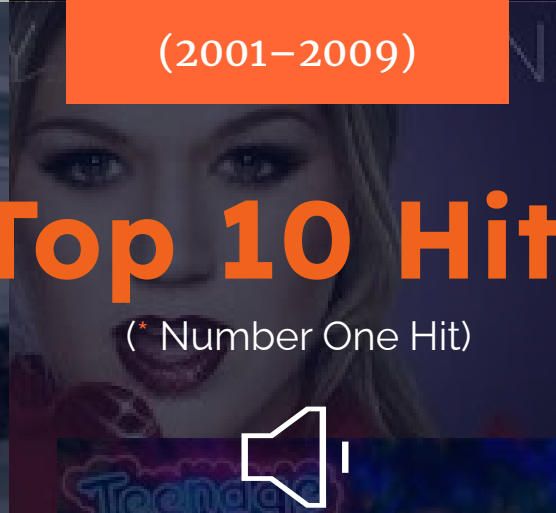
Kelly Clarkson: "My Life Would Suck Without You" \*

Kelly Clarkson: "Since U Been Gone"

Pink: "So What" \*

Pink: "U + Ur Hand"

Pink: "Who Knew"



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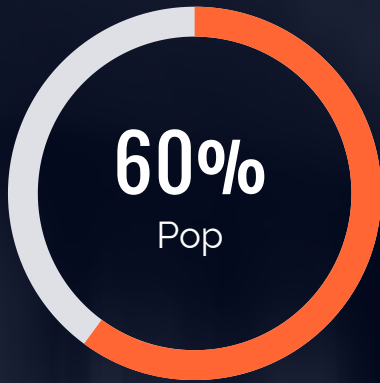
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# Maratone Studios and the Pop-Rock Evolution

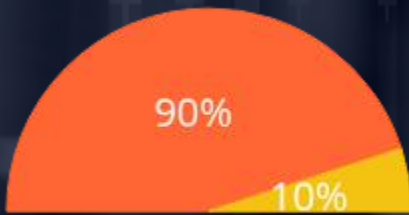
Most Popular Characteristics

(2001–2009)

(2001–2009)

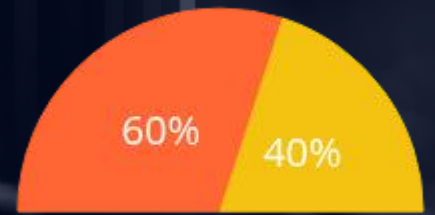


### First Section



Intro Chorus

### Last Section



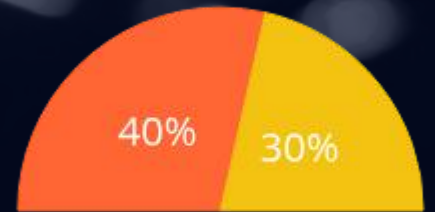
Chorus Outro

### Key (Major/Minor)



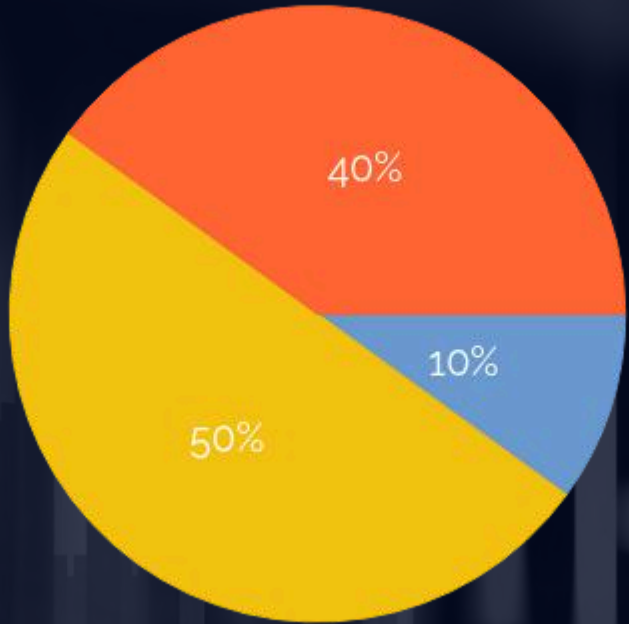
Major Minor Both

### Tempo Range



130 - 139 140 - 149

### First Chorus: Time Into Song Range



■ Kickoff ■ 0:20 - 0:39 ■ 0:40 - 0:59

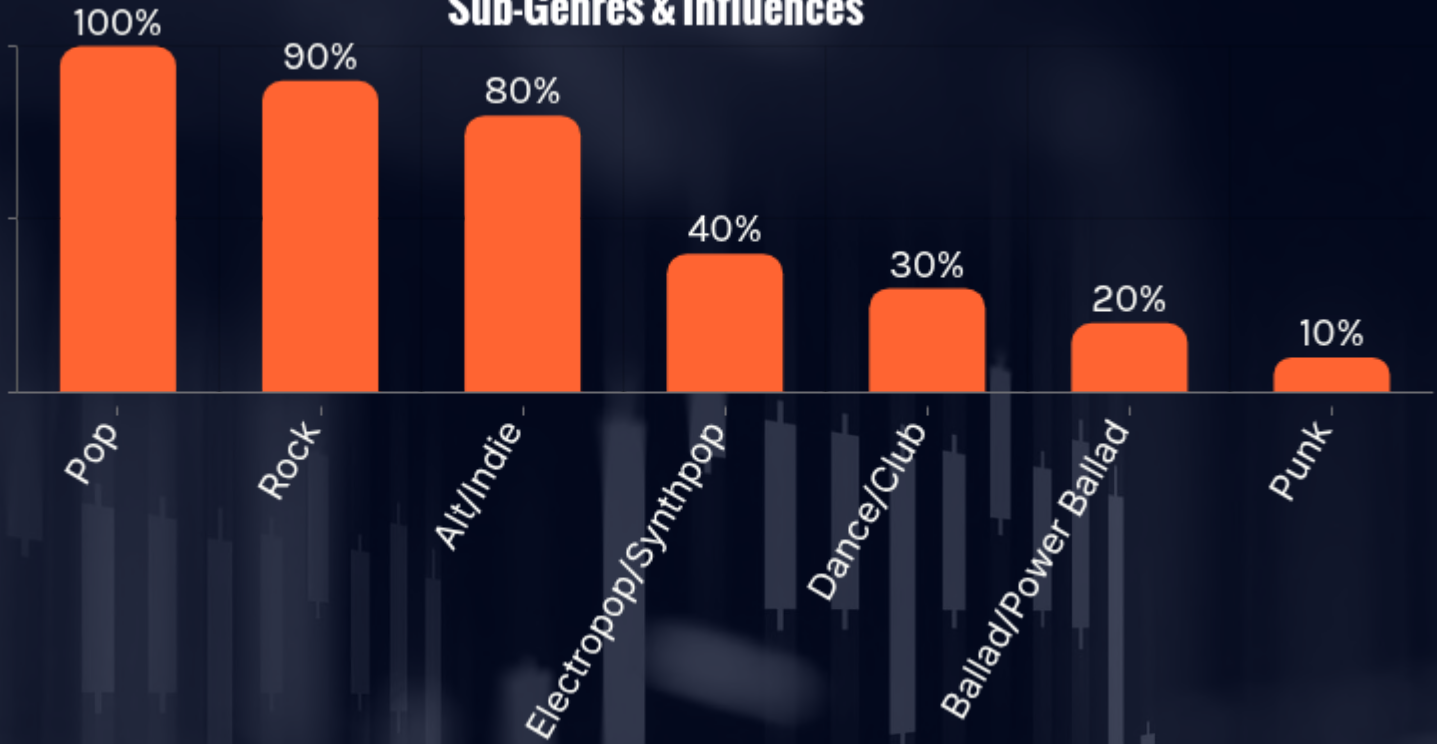


### Song Length Range



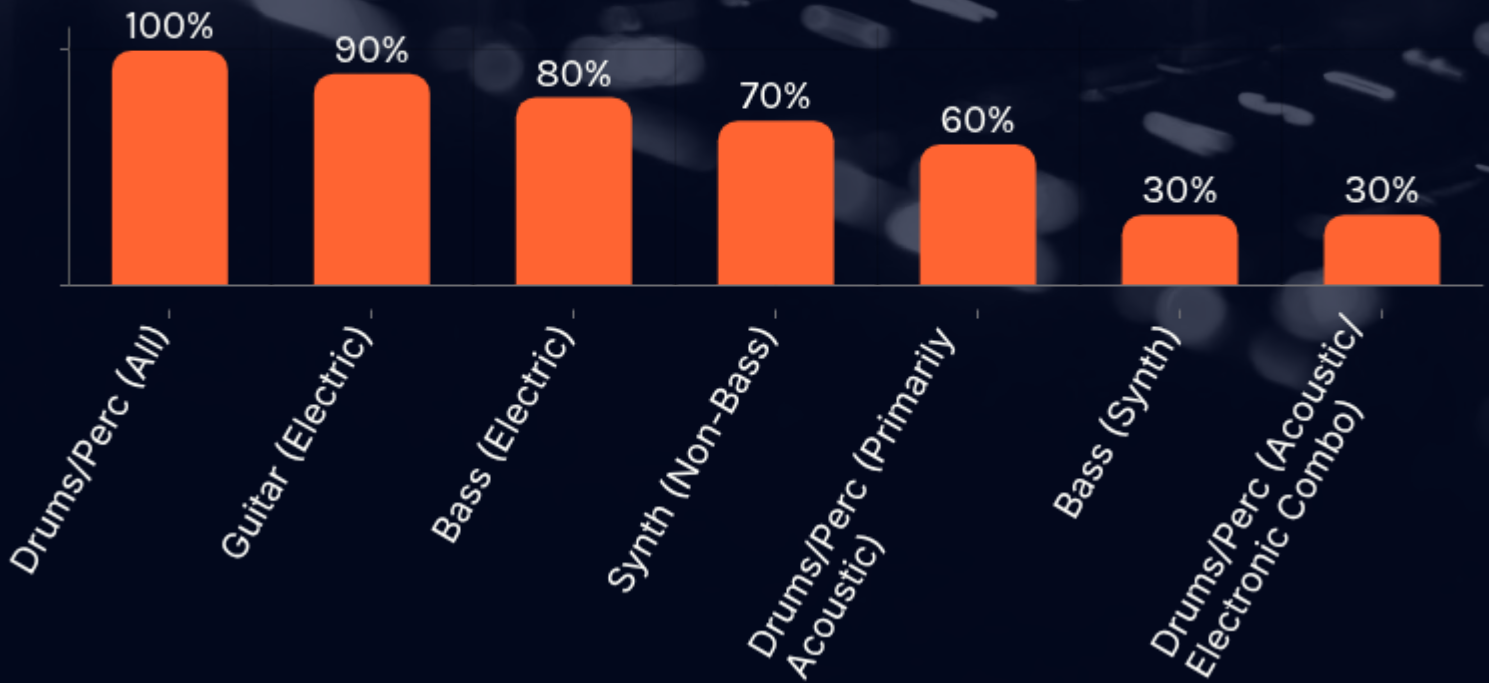
(2001–2009)

### Sub-Genres & Influences



### Prominent Instruments

(Present in 20% of songs or more.)



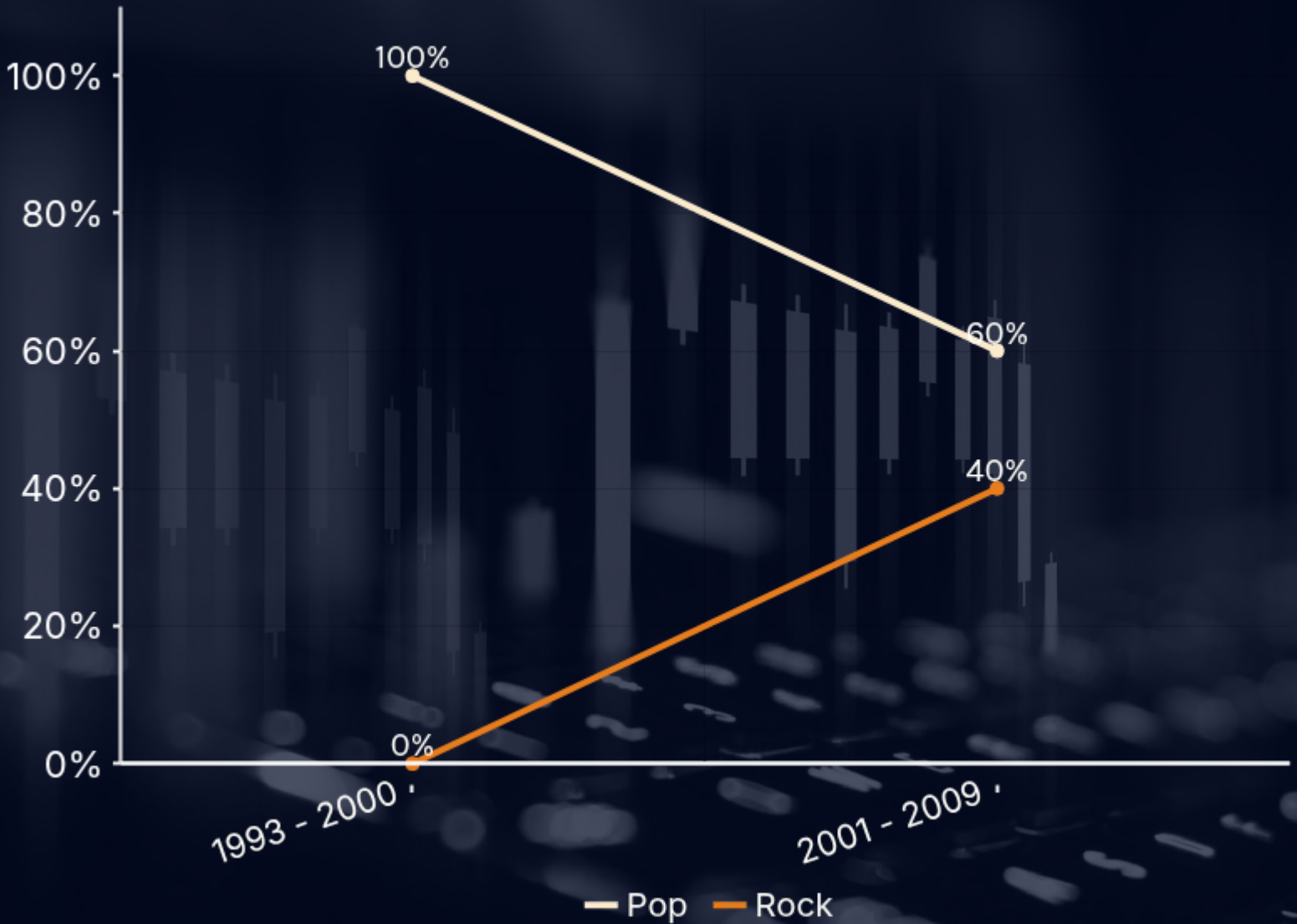
# Maratone Studios and the Pop-Rock Evolution

Notable Shifts

(2001–2009)

(2001–2009)

## Primary Genres



**Increased**

Rock (0% → 40%)

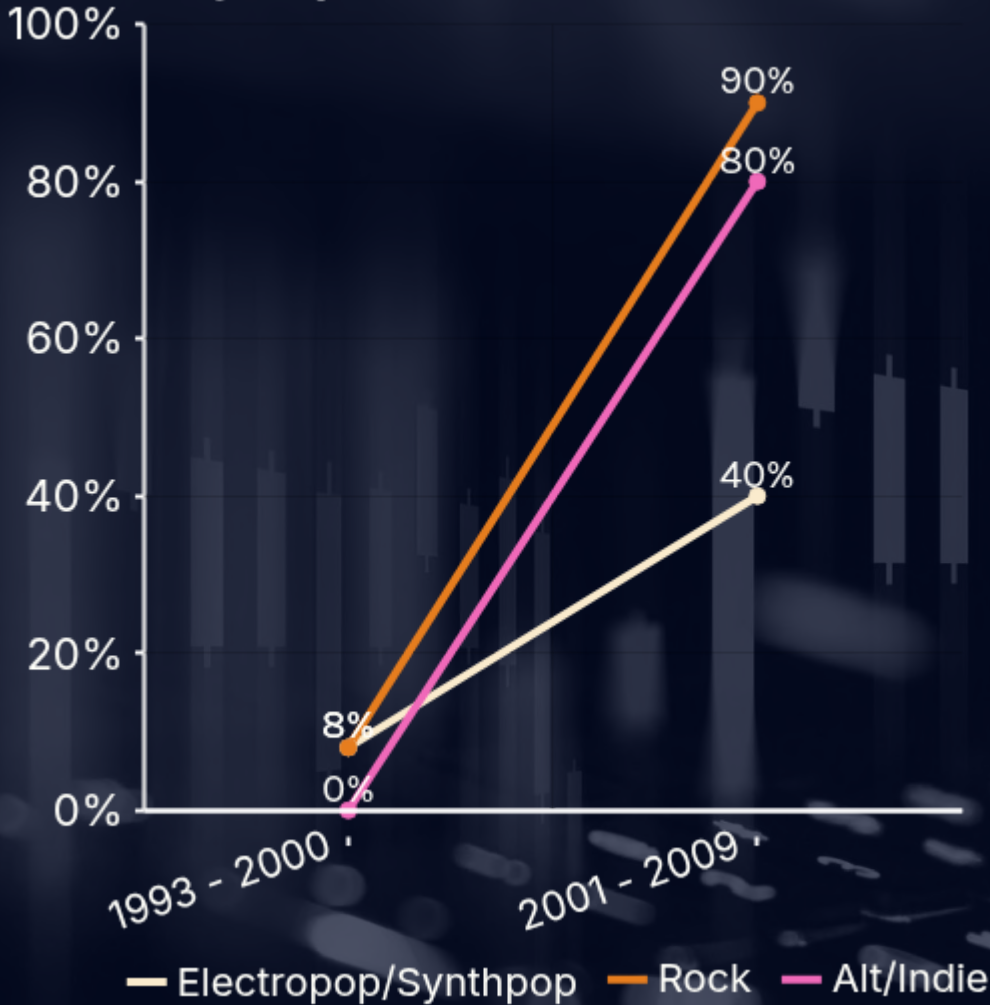


**Decreased**

Pop (100% → 60%)

(2001-2009)

## Sub-Genres/Influences



### Increased

- Rock  
(8% → 90%)
- Alt/Indie  
(0% → 80%)
- Electropop/Synthpop  
(8% → 40%)

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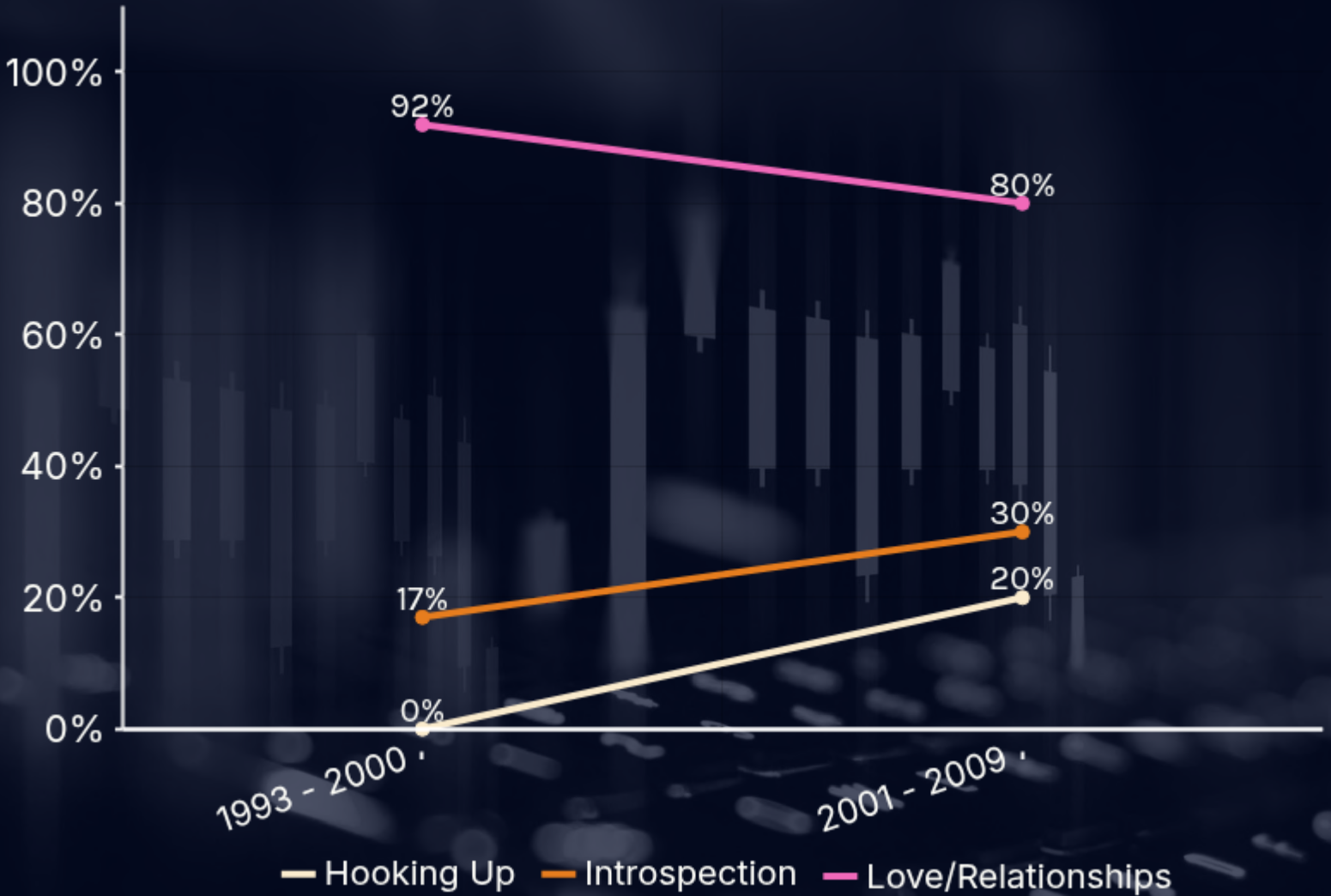
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## Lyrical Themes



### Increased

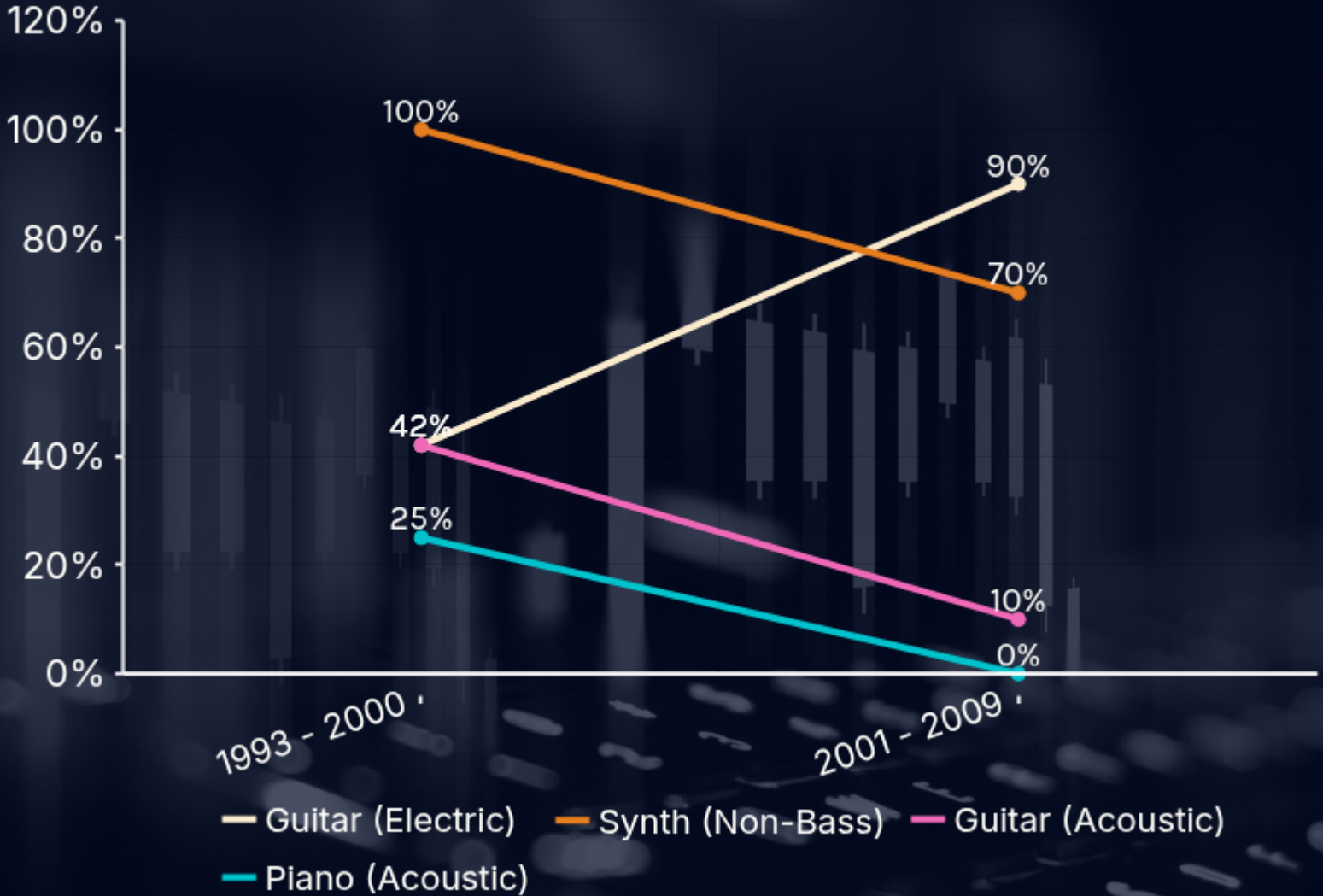
Hooking Up (0% → 20%)  
Introspection (17% → 30%)



### Decreased

Love/Relationships  
(92% → 80%)

## Prominent Instruments



### Increased

Guitar (Electric)  
(42% → 90%)

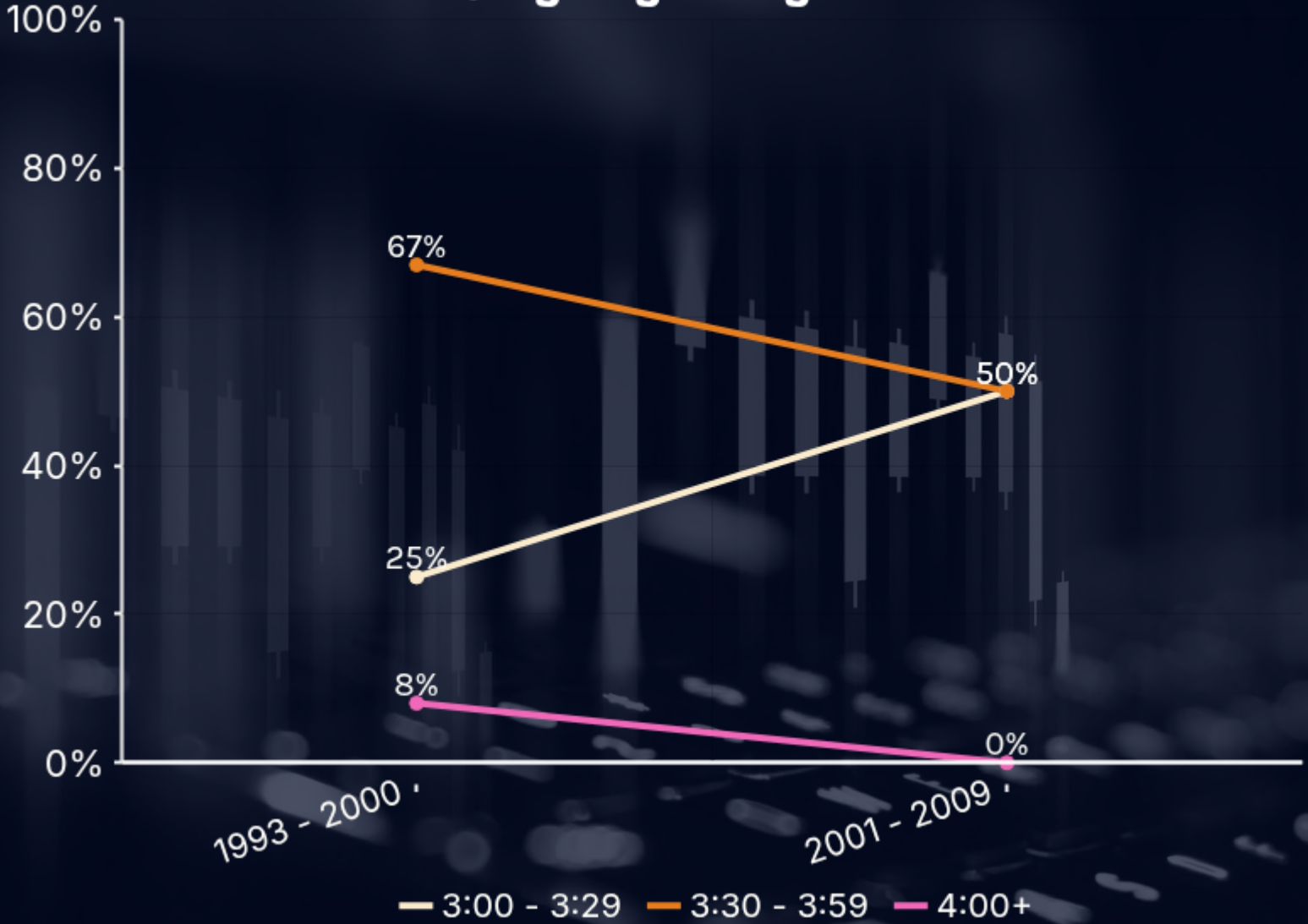


### Decreased

Synth (Non-Bass) (100% → 70%)  
Guitar (Acoustic) (42% → 10%)  
Piano (Acoustic) (25% → 0%)

(2001-2009)

## Song Length Range



**Increased**

3:00 - 3:29 (25% → 50%)

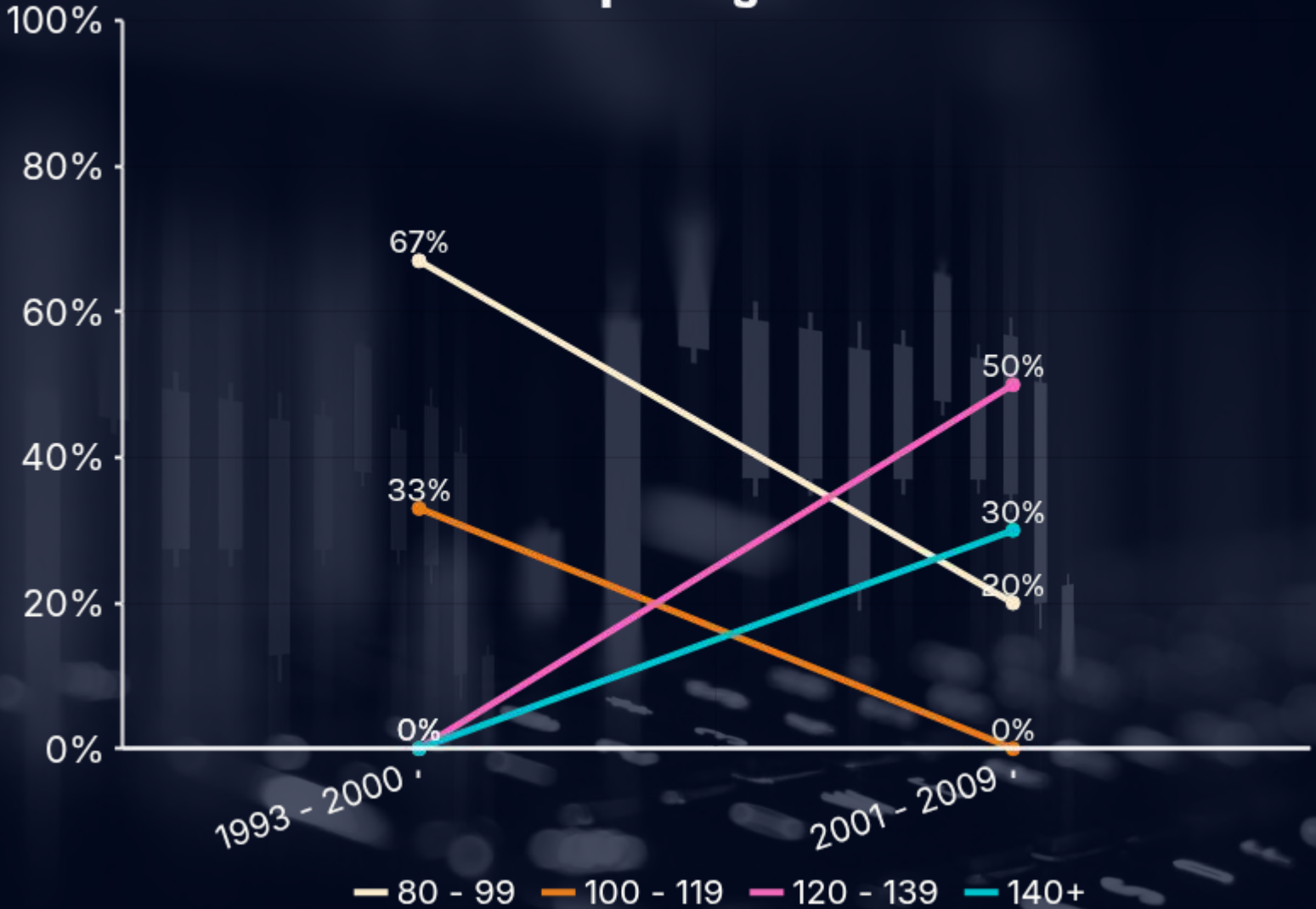


**Decreased**

3:30 - 3:59 (67% → 50%)  
4:00+ (8% → 0%)

(2001-2009)

## Tempo Range



### Increased

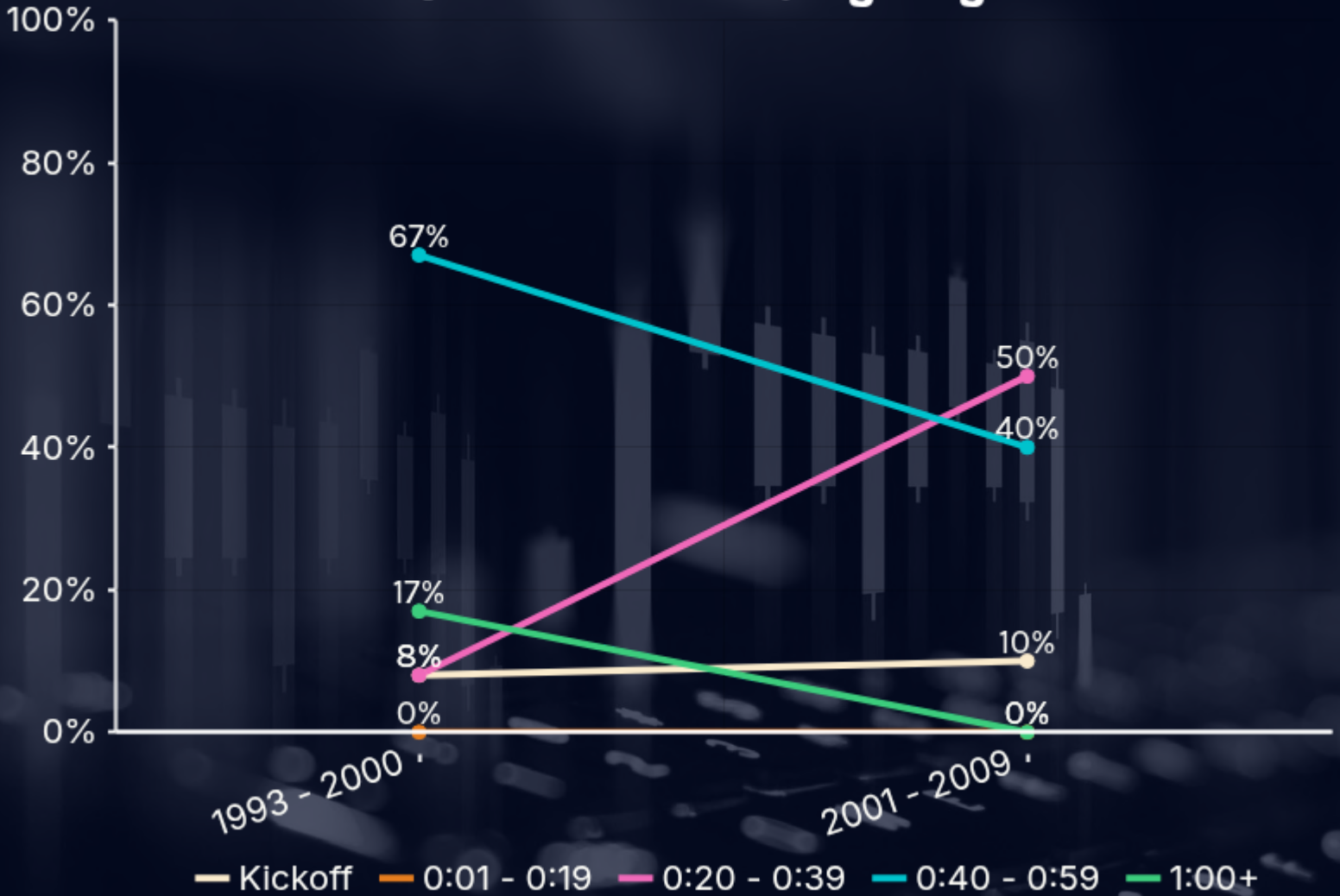
120 - 139 BPM (0% → 50%)  
140+ (0% → 30%)



### Decreased

80 - 99 BPM (67% → 20%)  
100 - 119 BPM (33% → 0%)

## First Chorus: Time Into Song Range



**Increased**

0:20 - 0:39 (8% → 50%)

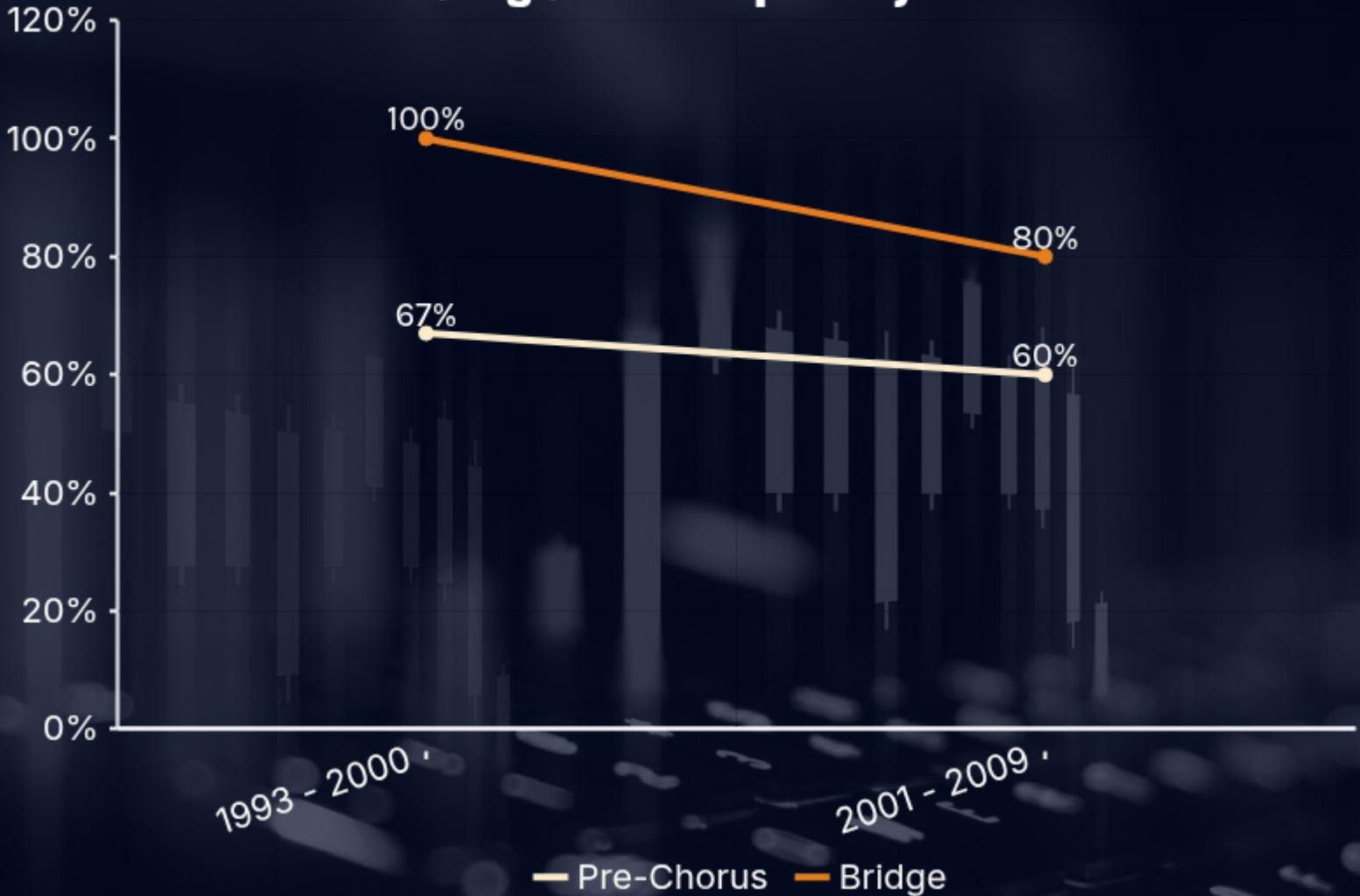


**Decreased**

0:40 - 0:59 (67% → 40%)  
1:00+ (17% → 0%)

(2001–2009)

## Song Section Popularity



**Decreased**

Bridge (100% → 80%)  
Pre-Chorus (67% → 60%)

# Electropop

## Explosion

(2010–2012)

In the early 2010s, Max Martin pivoted once again, moving away from edgy pop-rock toward a sound defined by high-gloss electropop and dance-driven beats. Collaborating with Dr. Luke, Shellback, Benny Blanco, and others, he delivered songs built on layered synths, relentless hooks, and an atmosphere of pop maximalism, where nearly every section felt like a chorus.

Lyrical themes leaned heavier toward escapism, partying, and hooking up, epitomized by hits including Britney Spears' "Hold It Against Me," Usher's "DJ Got Us Fallin' in Love," and Kesha's "Blow." Perhaps most notable was Martin's continued partnership with Katy Perry on "Teenage Dream", which yielded five #1 singles and tied Michael Jackson's record for most chart-toppers from a single album.

This era also marked the beginning of Martin's collaboration with Taylor Swift on "We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together" (2012), a pivotal single that signaled her first full step into mainstream pop.

# Behind the Scenes

## “Wide Awake”

While Max Martin, Dr. Luke, Cirkut, and Bonnie McKee were working on what would eventually become “Wide Awake,” the team was reviewing a demo Martin had recorded. The chorus on that original demo featured the lyrics “No Matter What.” When McKee listened back, she misheard the line, which she later explained was due to Martin’s Swedish accent, as “I’m wide awake, I’m born again.”

She developed the misheard phrase into a full hook, ultimately reshaping the song’s direction. Years later, she posted a photo of her original lyric notebook on Twitter, showing the handwritten pages where the idea took shape - a glimpse into the small, serendipitous moment that helped define one of Katy Perry’s most resonant pop ballads.

# Behind the Scenes

## "We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together"

During one of her studio sessions, Taylor Swift found herself unexpectedly motivated to create "We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together." This inspiration struck after a friend of her former boyfriend visited and hinted at speculations about them getting back together. Once the friend left, Swift grabbed her guitar and humorously began to sing a catchy hook that would later define the song. Both Martin and Shellback quickly saw its promise, leading the trio to finish the breakup anthem in less than half an hour.

(2010–2012)

# Key Collaborators

2+ Hot 100 Top 10 Hits



Adam Levine



Benny Blanco



Britney Spears



Cirkut



Dr. Luke



Kesha



Katy Perry



Pink



Savan Kotecha



Shellback



Taylor Swift



Usher

(2010–2012)

# Top 10 Hits



(Number One Hit\*)

Britney Spears: "Hold It Against Me" \*

Britney Spears: "I Wanna Go"

Britney Spears: "Till the World Ends"

Glee Cast: "Loser Like Me"

Jessie J: "Domino"

Justin Bieber featuring Nicki Minaj: "Beauty and a Beat"

Katy Perry featuring Kanye West: "E.T." \*

Katy Perry featuring Snoop Dogg: "California Gurls" \*

Katy Perry: "Last Friday Night (T.G.I.F.)" \*

Katy Perry: "Part of Me" \*

Katy Perry: "Teenage Dream" \*

Katy Perry: "The One That Got Away"

Katy Perry: "Wide Awake"

Kesha: "Blow"

Maroon 5: "Daylight"

Maroon 5: "One More Night"

Pink: "F\*\*\*in' Perfect"

Pink: "Raise Your Glass" \*

Taio Cruz: "Dynamite"

Taylor Swift: "I Knew You Were Trouble."

Taylor Swift: "We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together" \*

Usher featuring Pitbull: "DJ Got Us Fallin' in Love"

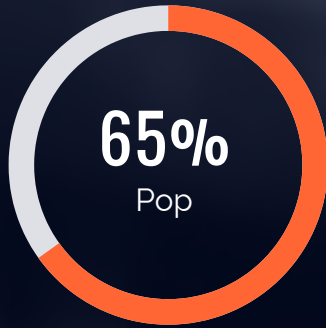
Usher: "Scream"

# Electropop Explosion

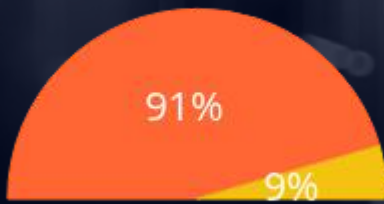
## Most Popular Characteristics

(2010–2012)

(2010–2012)

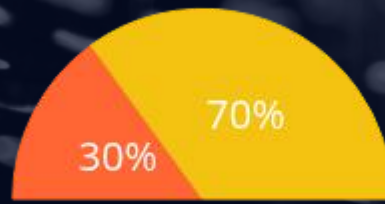


### First Section



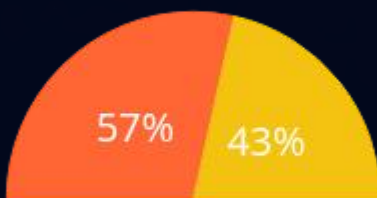
Intro Chorus

### Last Section



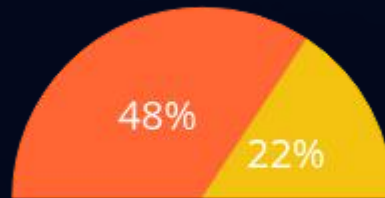
Chorus Outro

### Key (Major/Minor)



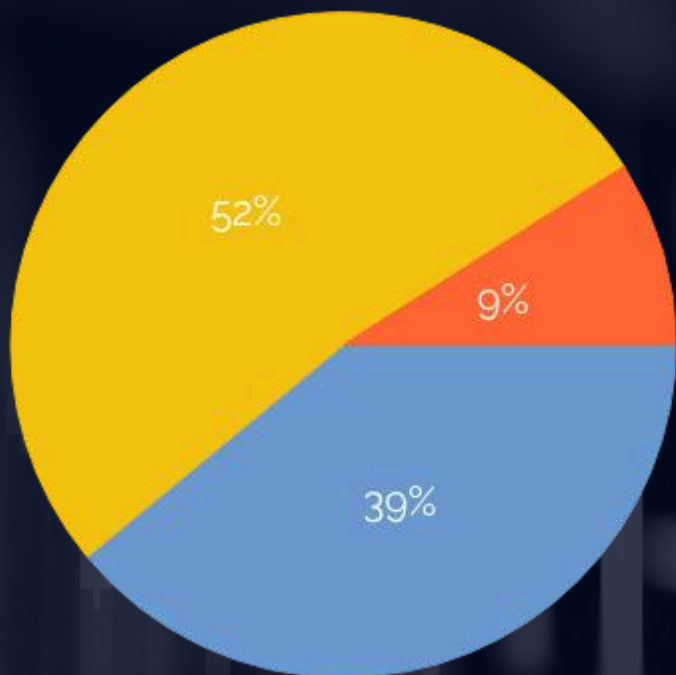
Major Minor

### Tempo Range

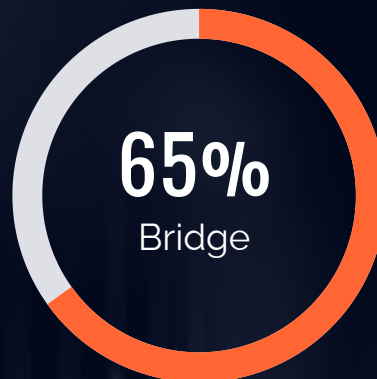


120 - 129 130 - 139

### First Chorus: Time Into Song Range



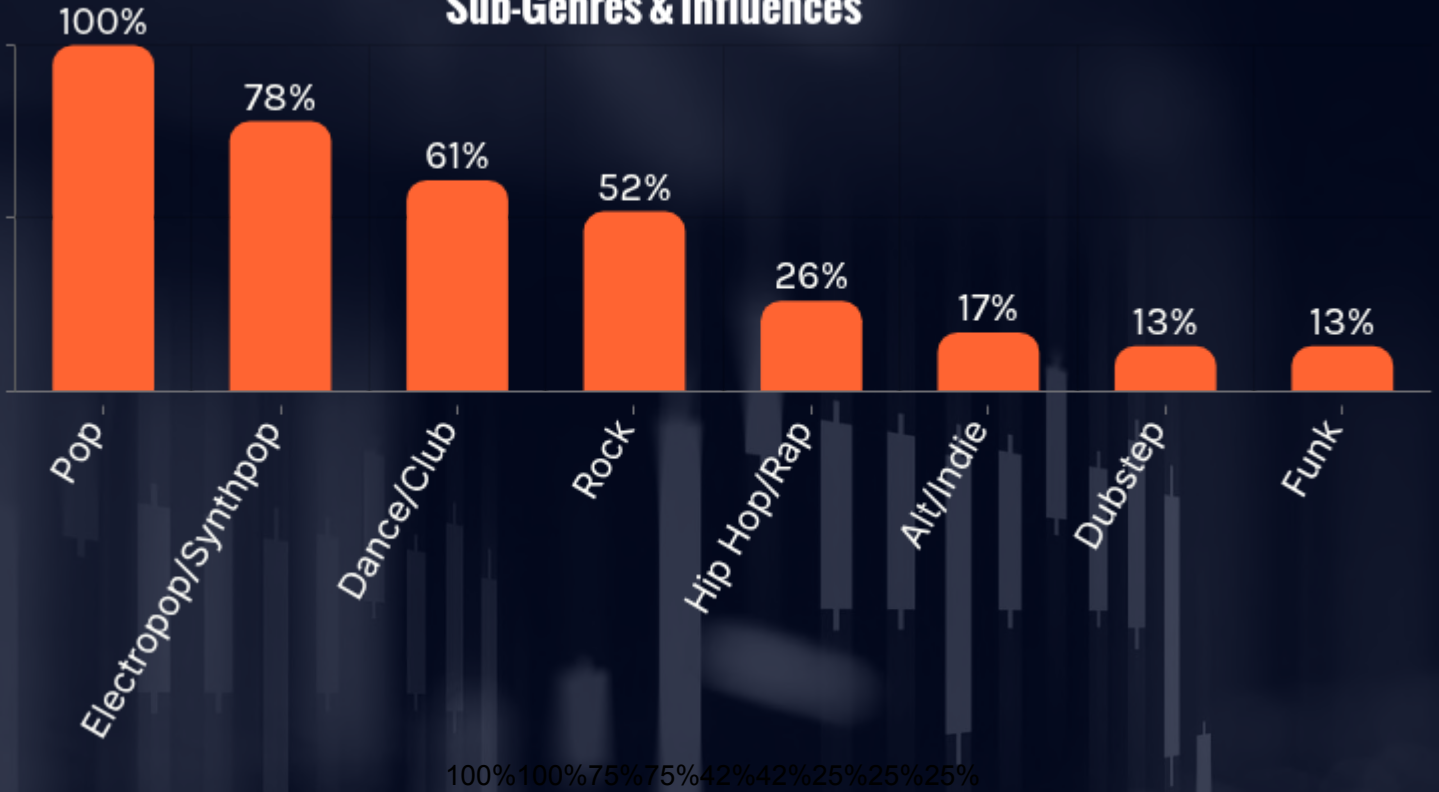
■ 0:20 - 0:39 ■ 0:40 - 0:59 ■ 1:00+



### Song Length Range

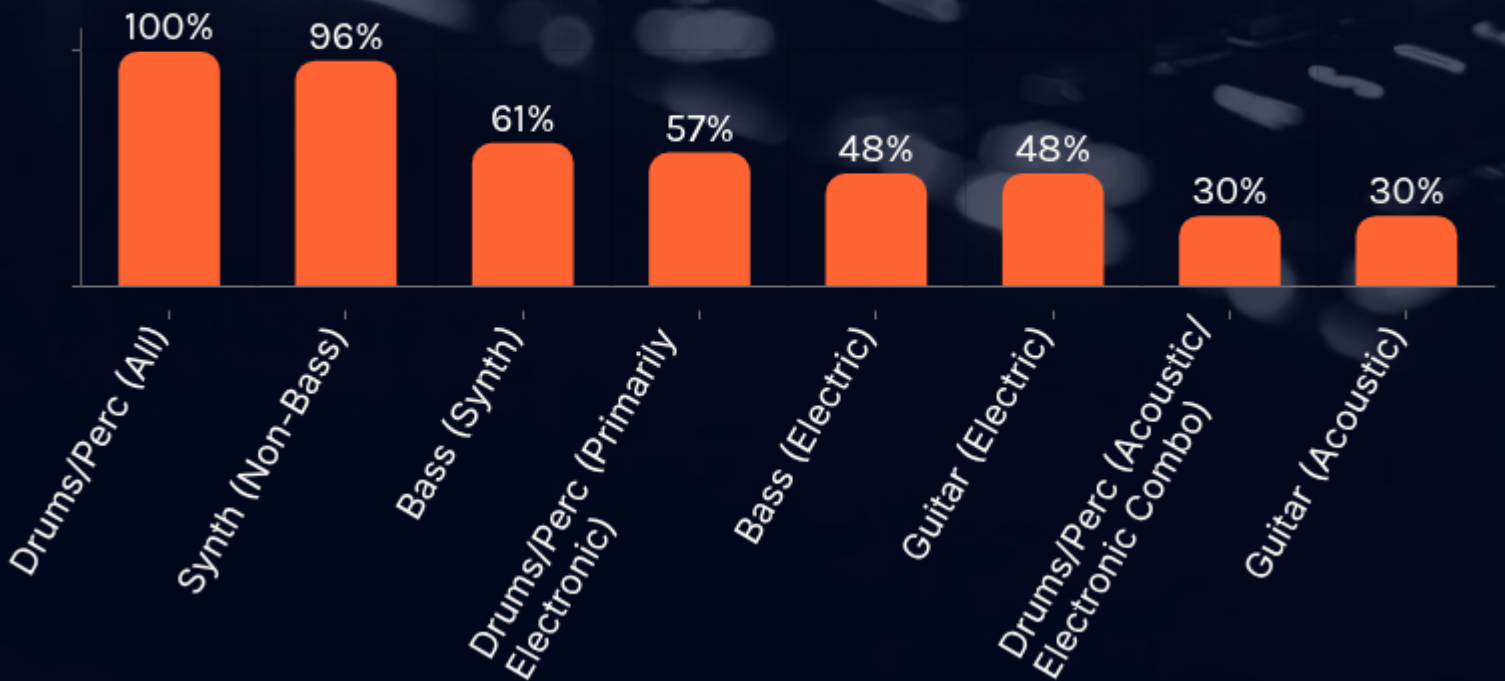


### Sub-Genres & Influences



### Prominent Instruments

(Present in 20% of songs or more.)

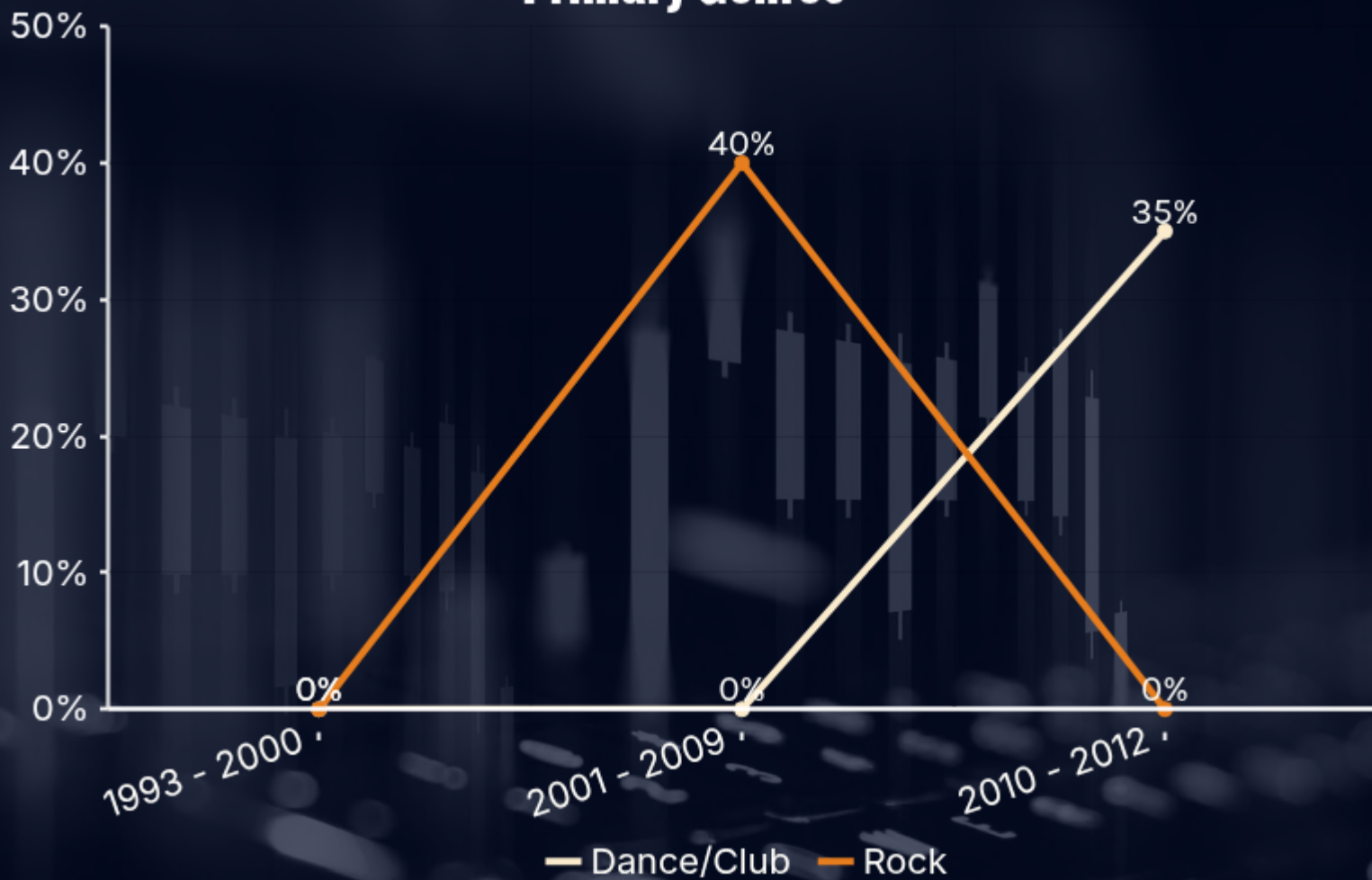


# Electropop Explosion

## Notable Shifts

(2010–2012)

## Primary Genres



### Increased

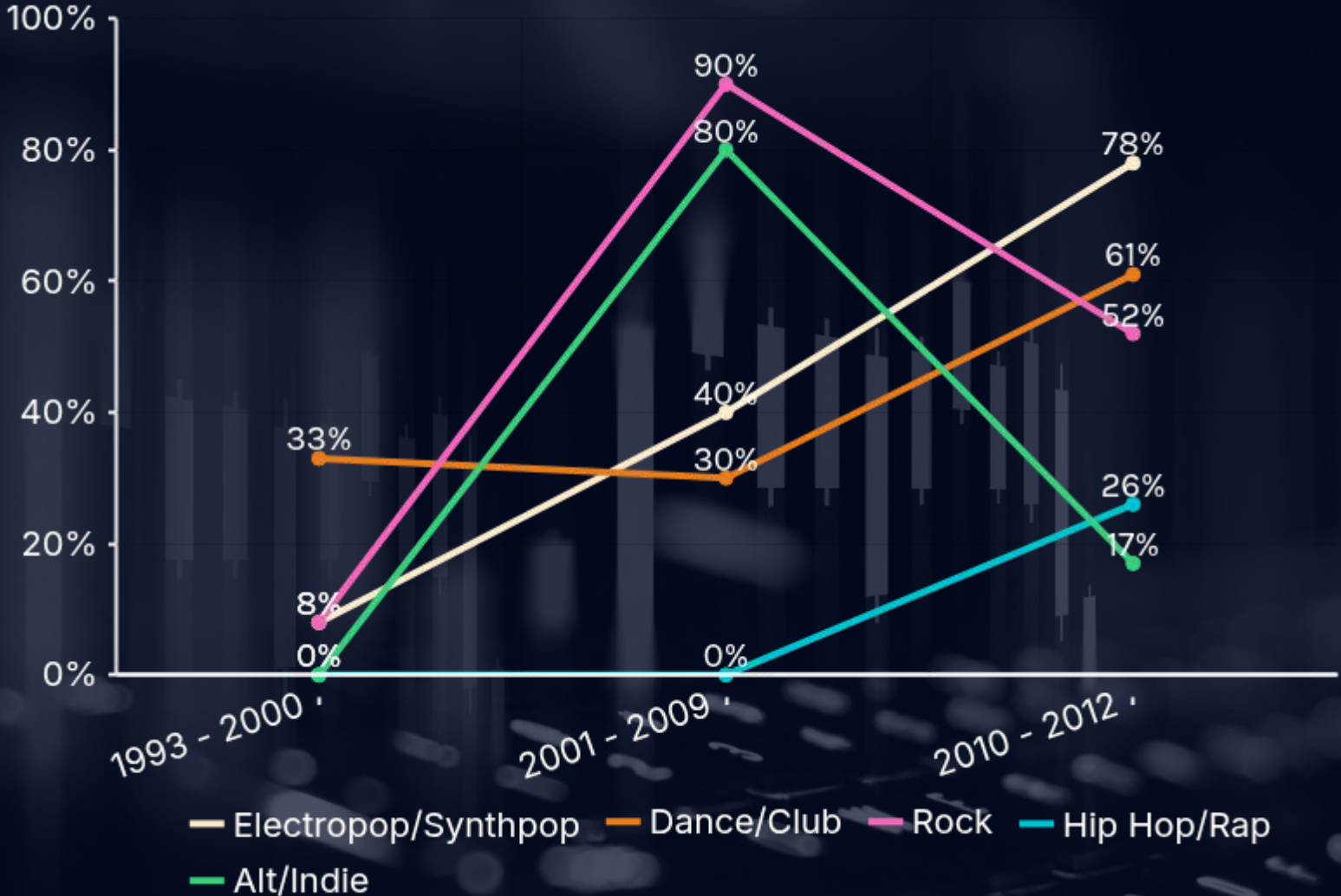
Dance/Club  
(0% → 35%)



### Decreased

Rock (40% → 0%)

## Sub-Genres/Influences



### Increased

Electropop/Synthpop  
(40% → 78%)

Dance/Club (30% → 61%)

Hip Hop/Rap (0% → 26%)

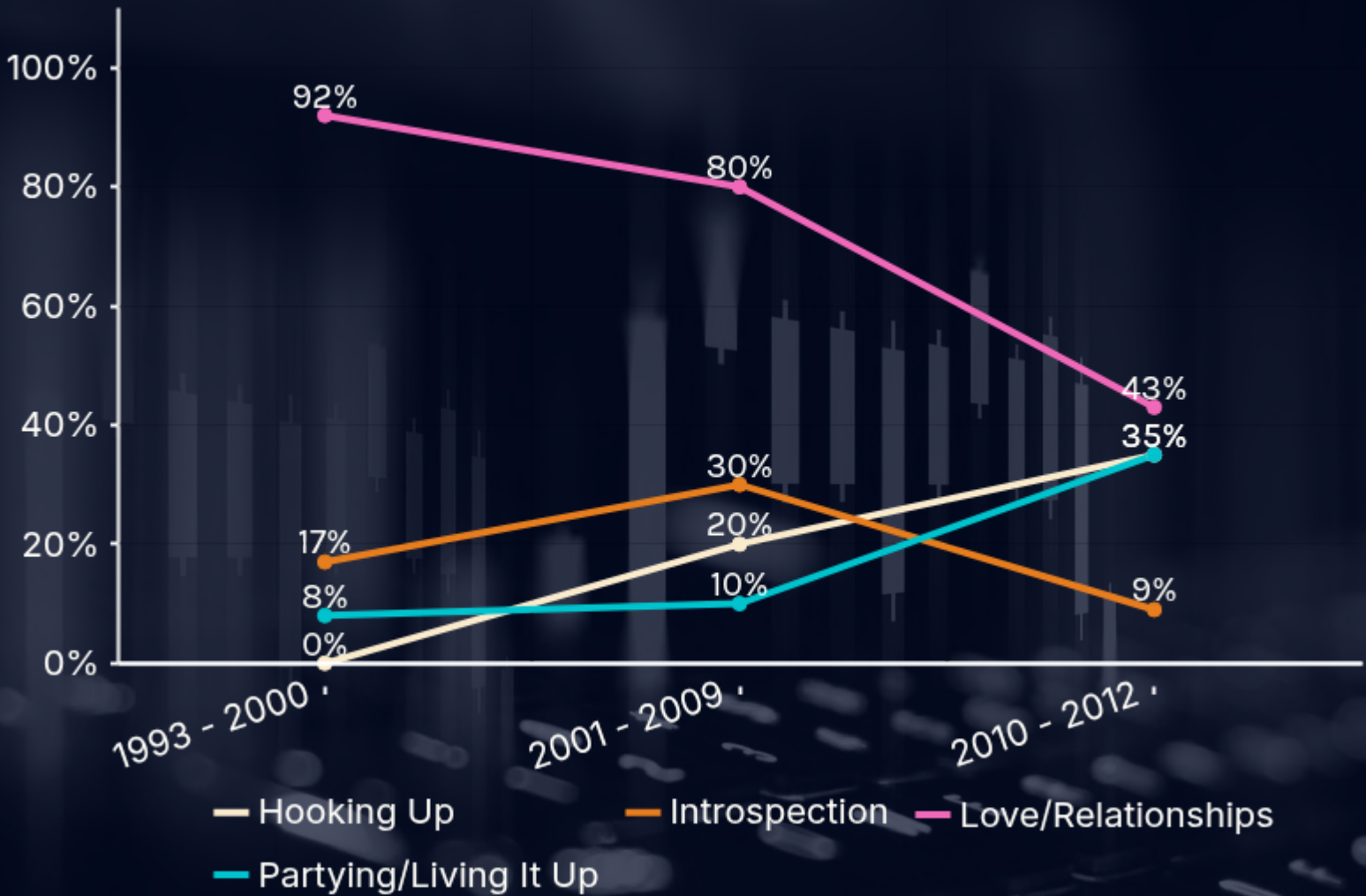


### Decreased

Rock (90% → 52%)

Alt/Indie (80% → 17%)

## Lyrical Themes



### Increased

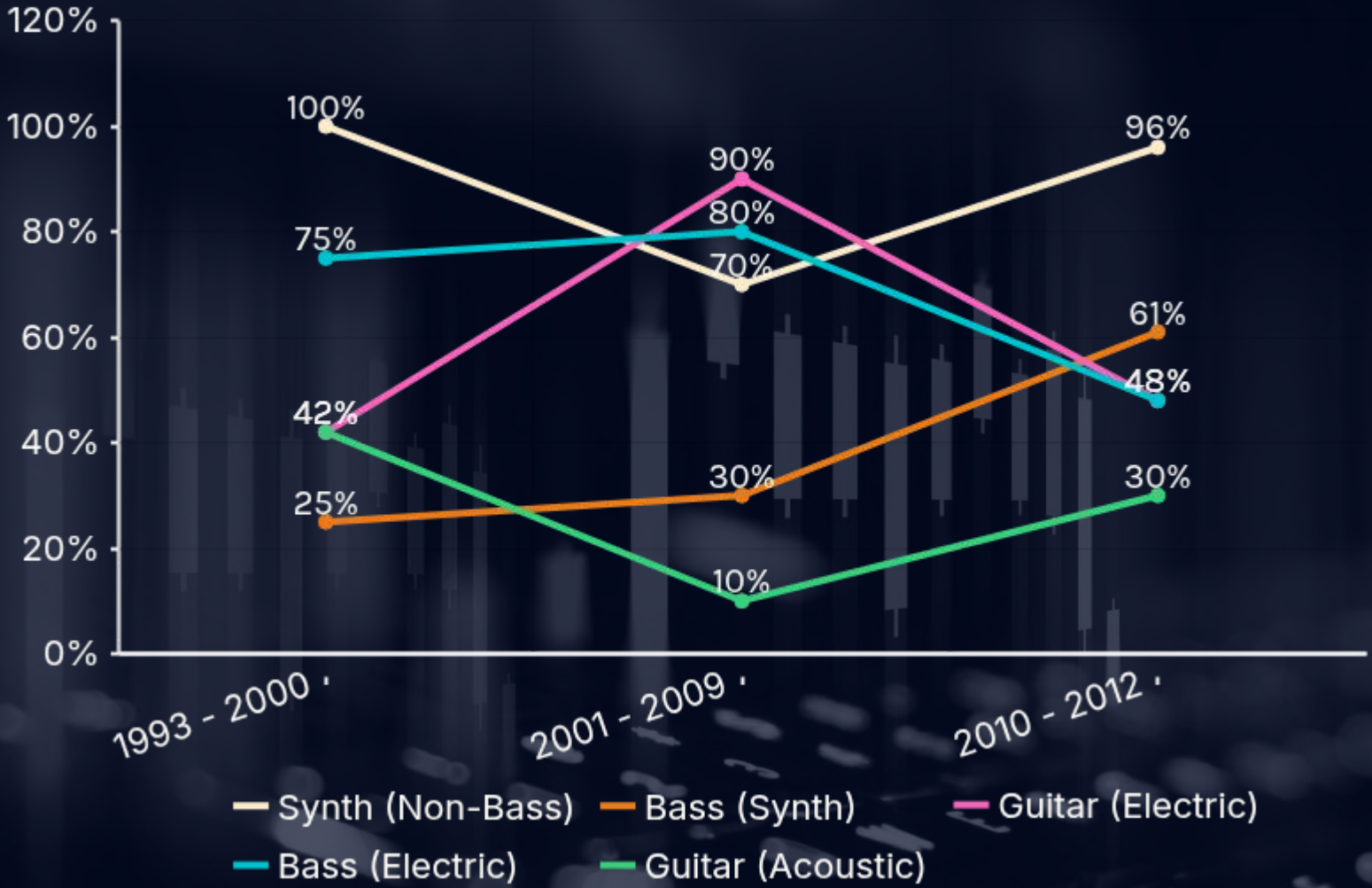
Hooking Up (20% → 35%)  
Partying/Living It Up  
(10% - 35%)



### Decreased

Love/Relationships  
(80% → 43%)  
Introspection (30% → 9%)

## Prominent Instruments



### Increased

Synth (Non-Bass)  
(70% → 96%)

Bass (Synth) (30% → 61%)

Guitar (Acoustic) (10% → 30%)

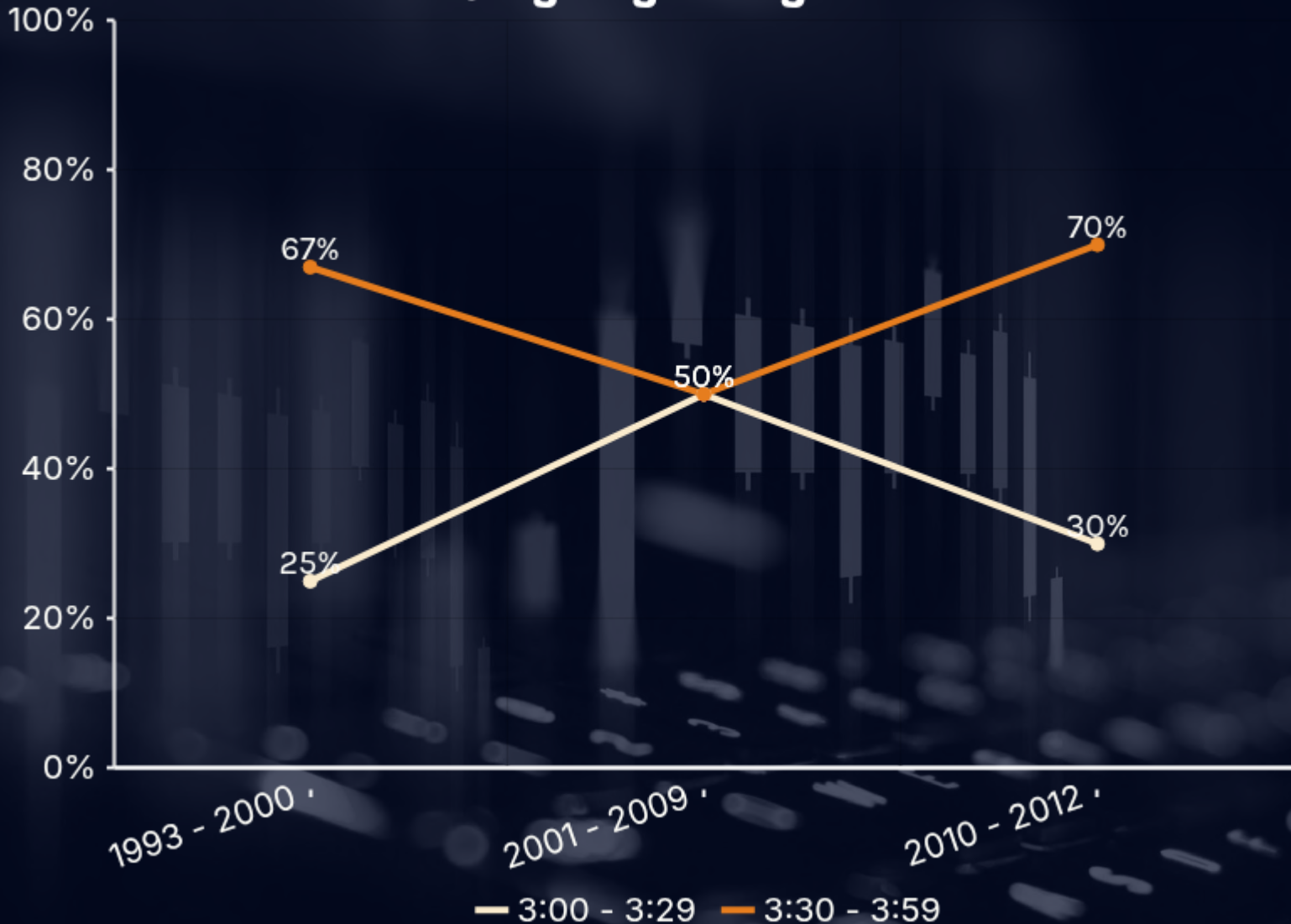


### Decreased

Guitar (Electric) (90% → 48%)

Bass (Electric) (80% → 48%)

## Song Length Range



**Increased**

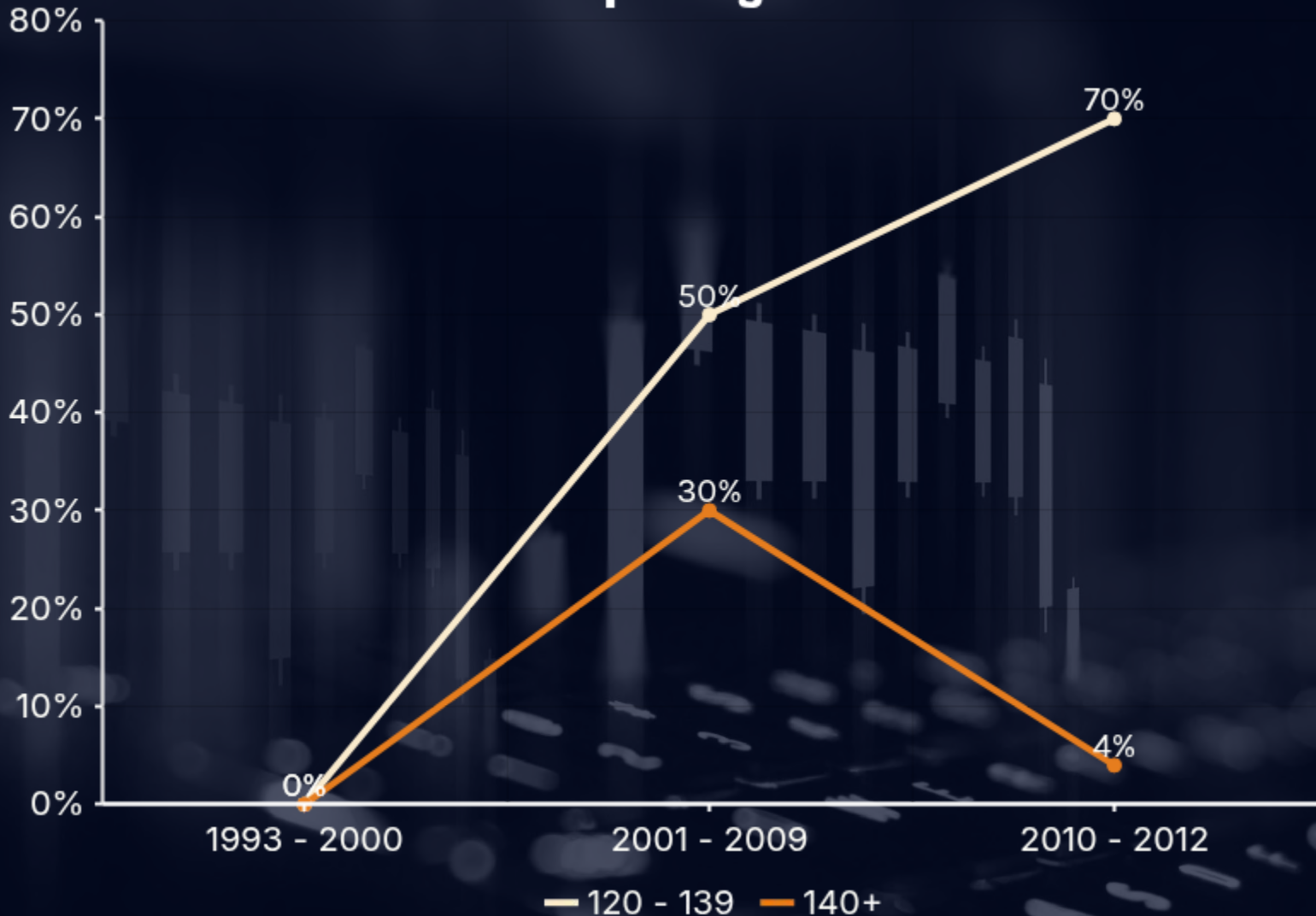
3:30 - 3:59 (50% → 70%)



**Decreased**

3:00 - 3:29 (50% → 30%)

## Tempo Range



### Increased

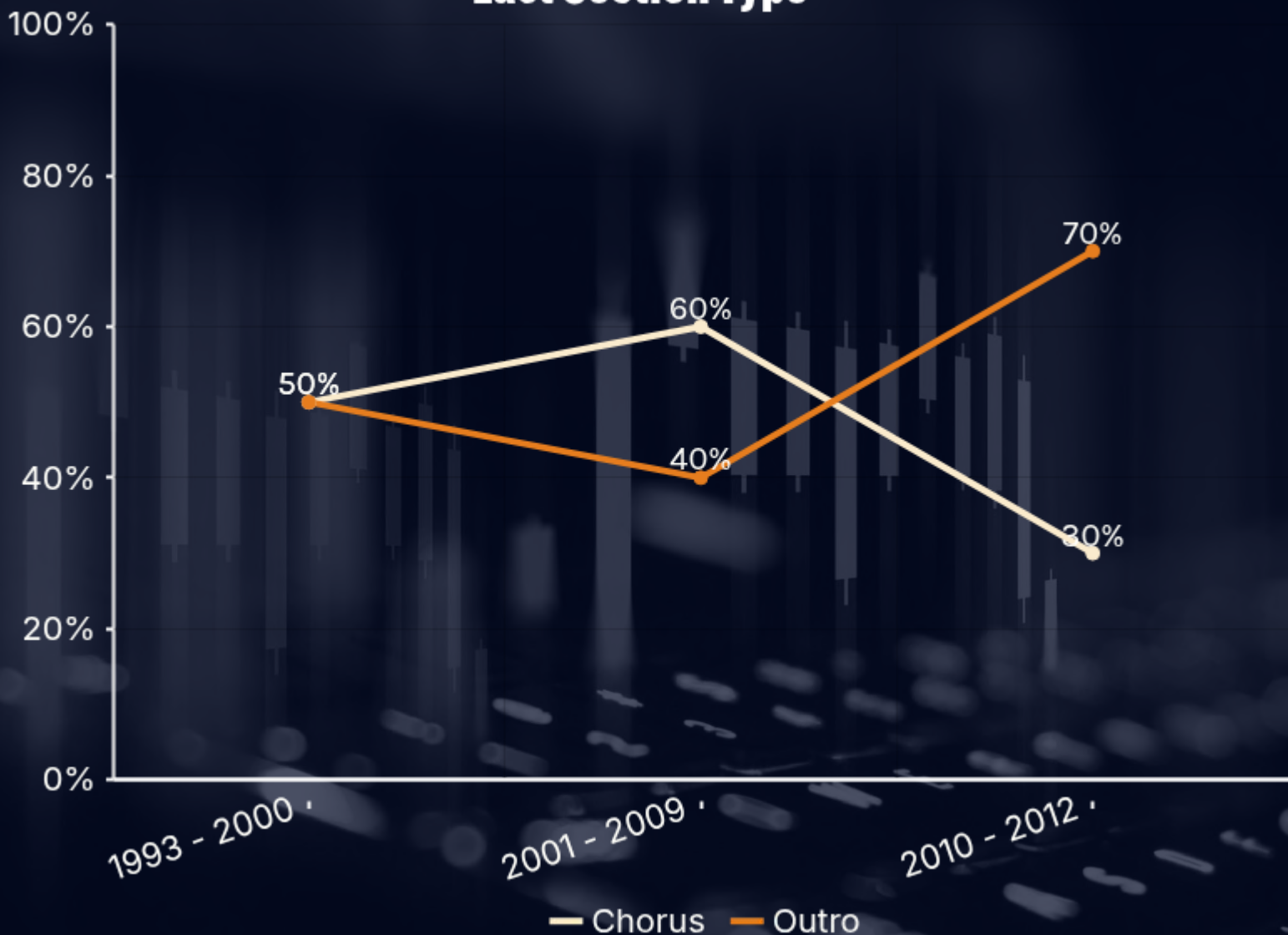
120 - 139 BPM  
(50% → 70%)



### Decreased

140+ (30% → 4%)

## Last Section Type



**Increased**

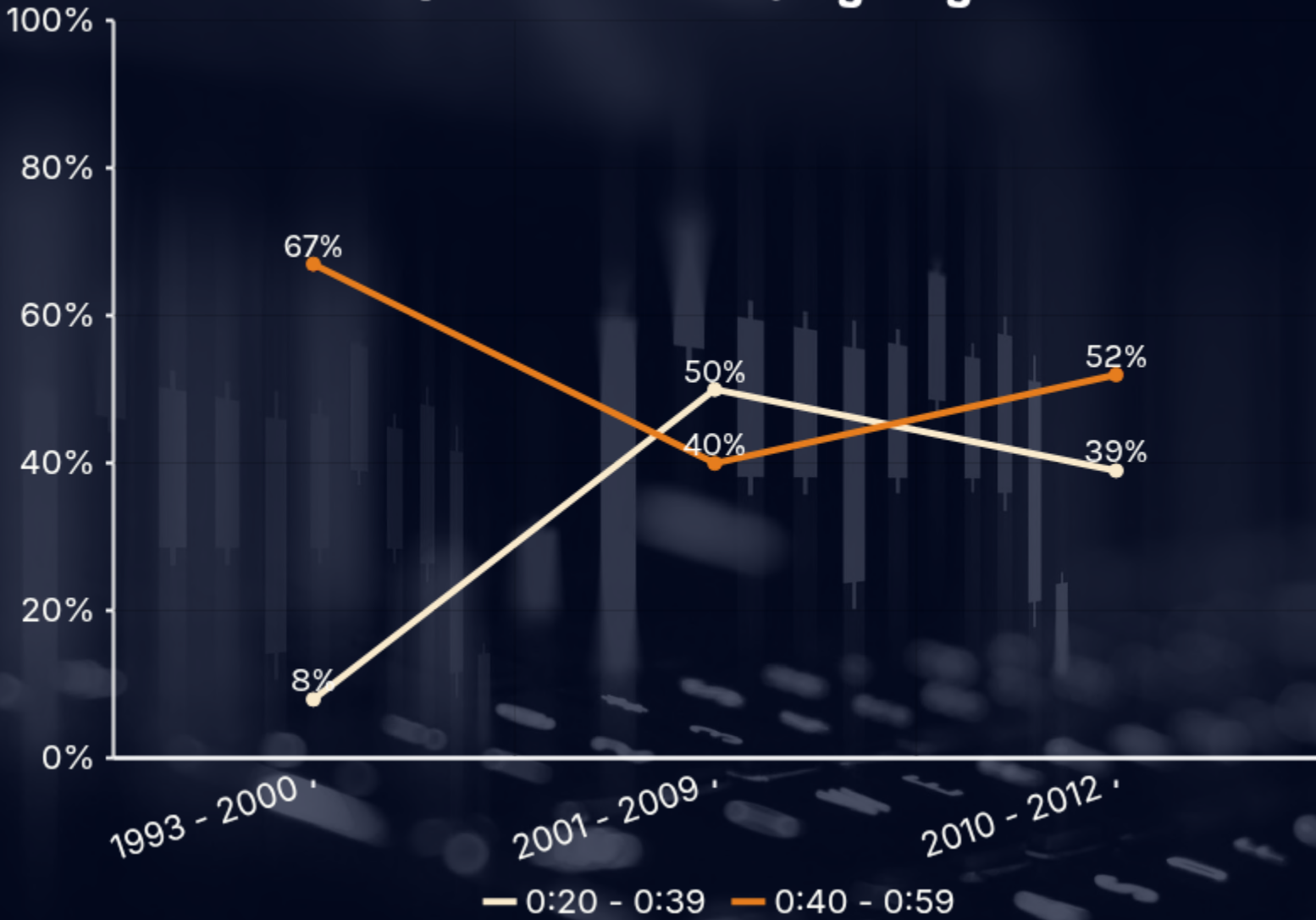
Last Section: Outro  
(40% → 70%)



**Decreased**

Last Section: Chorus  
(60% → 30%)

## First Chorus: Time Into Song Range



**Increased**

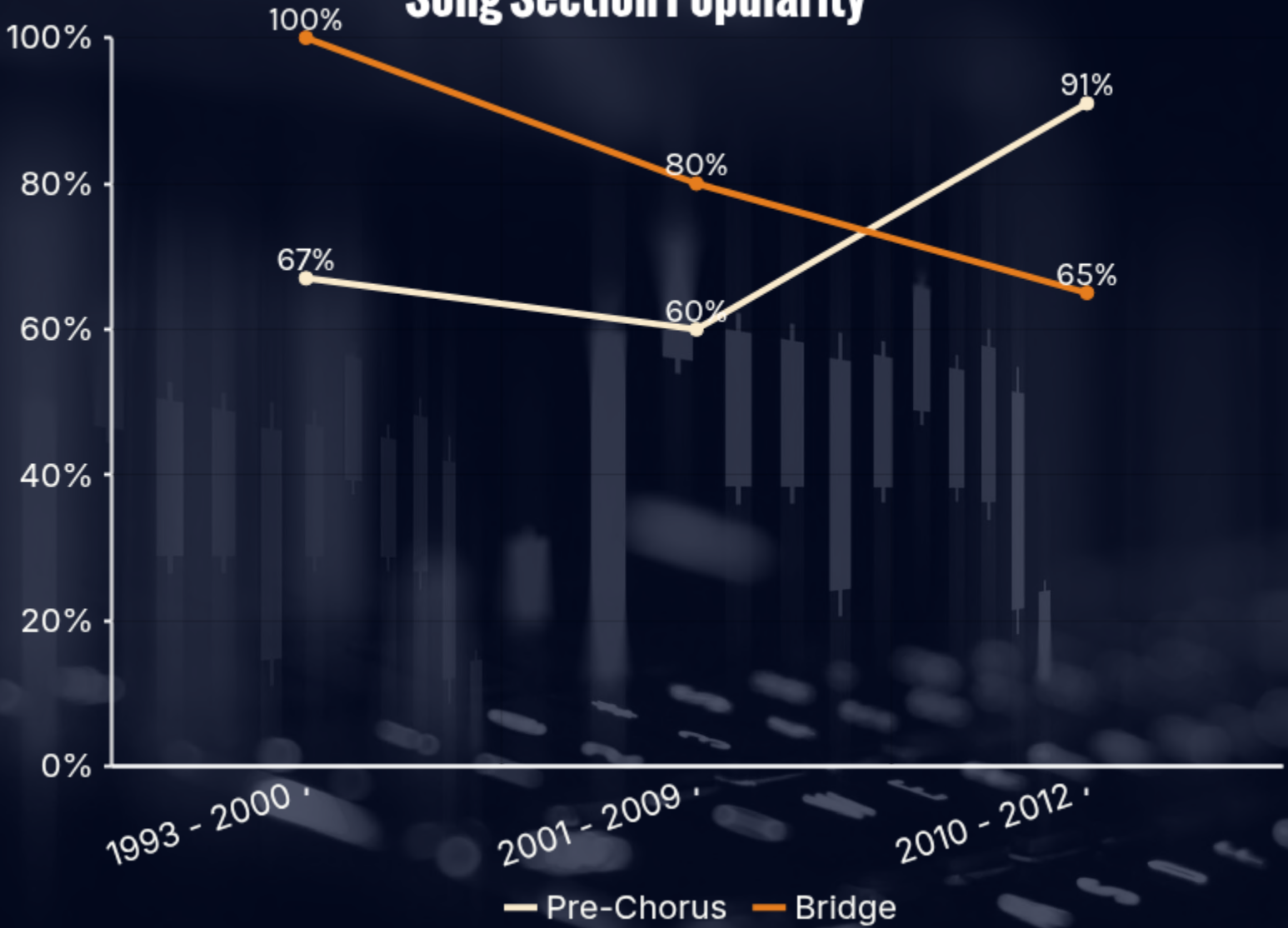
0:40 - 0:59 (40% → 52%)



**Decreased**

0:20 - 0:39 (50% → 39%)

## Song Section Popularity



**Increased**

Pre-Chorus (60% → 91%)



**Decreased**

Bridge (80% → 65%)

# MUSIC BIZ 2026

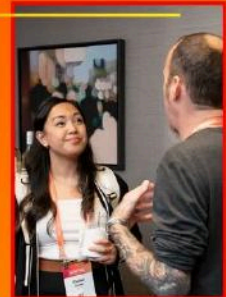
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# Minimalist Edge

and Persona Pop

(2013–2017)

Between 2013 and 2017, Max Martin pared back the maximalist electropop of the early 2010s in favor of a more streamlined, spacious production style. Songs leaned into mid-tempo grooves and sleeker arrangements, shaped by growing influences from R&B/Soul, Hip-Hop/Rap, and retro sounds.

This was also a period where the artist's persona became as central as the production, with Martin adapting his sound to highlight individuality and emotional depth. His work with Taylor Swift on *1989* exemplified the shift: tracks like “Blank Space” and “Style” showcased stripped-down clarity and lyrical wit, allowing Swift's evolving identity to take center stage. Meanwhile, his collaboration with The Weeknd on “Can't Feel My Face” showcased his versatility, blending atmospheric depth with sleek, vintage-inspired textures and modern polish, capturing both darkness and pop sensibility. Similarly, his work with Ariana Grande leaned into breathy textures, sensual minimalism, and dynamic vocal control - emphasizing her signature sound.

# Behind the Scenes

## “Problem”

When producing Ariana Grande's "Problem", Max Martin and Shellback experimented with vocal layering, horn arrangements, and pre-chorus tension to create a bold, radio-ready sound. The song's opening sax riff and punchy beat were carefully designed to grab attention immediately, while Martin meticulously adjusted Grande's vocal takes to maximize energy and clarity. The process involved multiple iterations of melody, rhythm, and backing vocals, reflecting Martin's trademark precision in crafting hits.

# Behind the Scenes

## “Blank Space”

Taylor Swift wrote Blank Space as a satirical response to media portrayals of her as a serial dater. Collaborating with Max Martin and Shellback, she crafted a pop song with a minimalist arrangement that amplifies its biting lyrical irony.

"I had more fun writing "Blank Space" than any song I'd written before, I had, over time, compiled lists of lyrics, zingers, and potential Twitter comebacks to criticisms and jokes people had made at my expense. When I finally came up with the chorus and hook for the song, I just went through that list on my phone and one by one slotted them into the song. It was the first time I had ever used songwriting as a humorous coping mechanism for an overly harsh depiction of me in the media, but it wouldn't be the last."

- Taylor Swift, Billboard, November 2019

(2013–2017)

# Behind the Scenes

## “Can’t Feel My Face”

“Can’t Feel My Face” marked Max Martin’s first-ever Hot 100 #1 with a solo male artist. He co-wrote and produced the track for The Weeknd, blending dark, atmospheric, disco-pop funk with retro 1980s influences. The song was created quickly (The Weeknd described writing it in about 40 minutes) and became one of his most successful singles.

(2013–2017)

# Key Collaborators

2+ Hot 100 Top 10 Hits



Ali Payami



Ariana Grande



Cirkut



Dr. Luke



Ilya



Katy Perry



Nicki Minaj



Peter Svensson



Savan Kotecha



Shellback



Taylor Swift



The Weeknd

# Top 10 Hits



(Number One Hit\*)

Adele: "Send My Love (To Your New Lover)"

Ariana Grande & The Weeknd: "Love Me Harder"

Ariana Grande, Jessie J & Nicki Minaj: "Bang Bang"

Ariana Grande: "Break Free" (feat. Zedd)

Ariana Grande: "Dangerous Woman"

Ariana Grande: "Focus"

Ariana Grande: "Problem" (feat. Iggy Azalea)

Ariana Grande: "Side to Side" (feat. Nicki Minaj)

Ellie Goulding: "Love Me Like You Do"

Justin Timberlake: "Can't Stop the Feeling!" \*

Katy Perry: "Chained to the Rhythm" (feat. Skip Marley)

Katy Perry: "Dark Horse" (feat. Juicy J) \*

Katy Perry: "Roar" \*

Pink: "Just Like Fire"

Selena Gomez: "Hands to Myself"

Taylor Swift: "Bad Blood" (feat. Kendrick Lamar) \*

Taylor Swift: "Ready for It"

Taylor Swift: "Shake It Off" \*

Taylor Swift: "Style"

Taylor Swift: "Wildest Dreams"

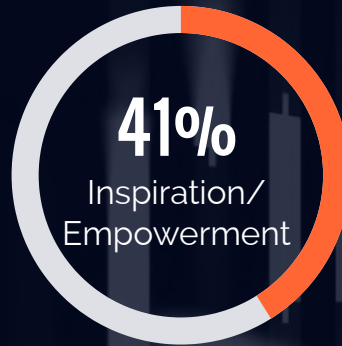
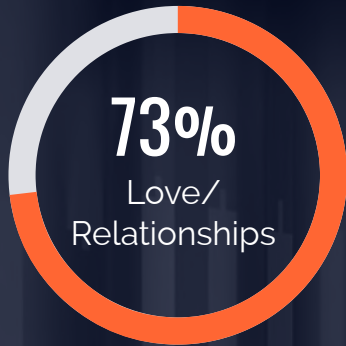
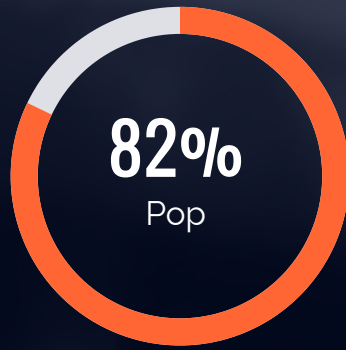
The Weeknd: "Can't Feel My Face" \*

# Minimalist Edge and Persona Pop

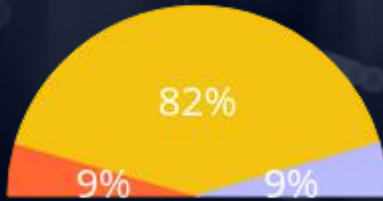
Most Popular Characteristics

(2013–2017)

(2013–2017)

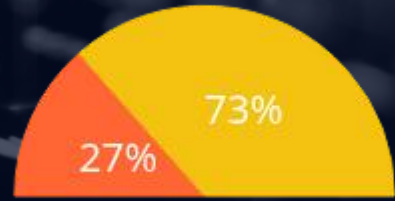


### First Section



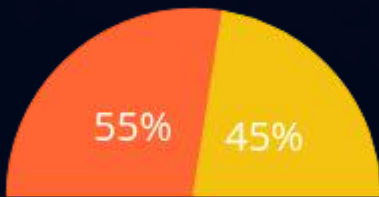
Chorus Intro Verse

### Last Section



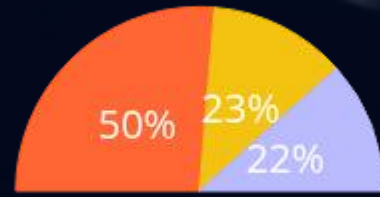
Chorus Outro

### Key (Major/Minor)



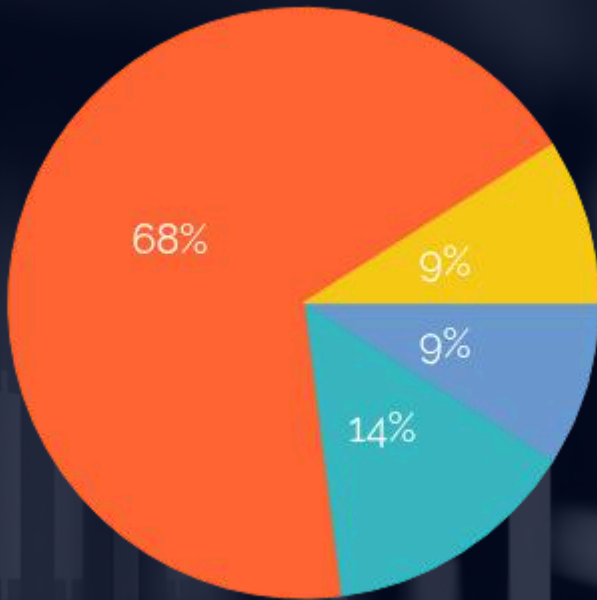
Major Minor

### Tempo Range



80 - 99 100 - 119 130 - 139

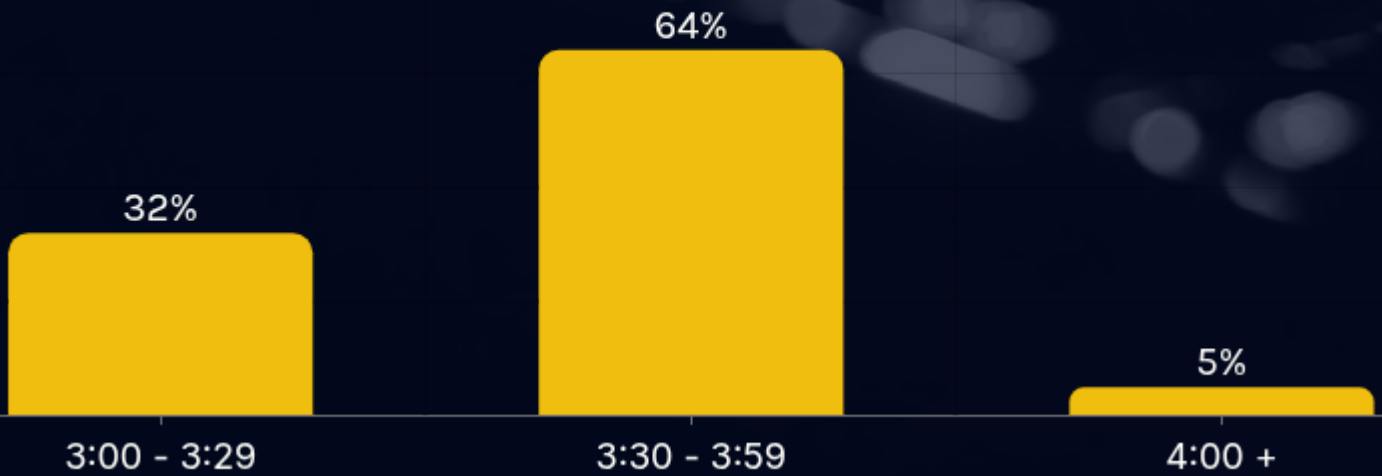
### First Chorus: Time Into Song Range



■ Kickoff ■ 0:20 - 0:39 ■ 0:40 - 0:59 ■ 1:00+

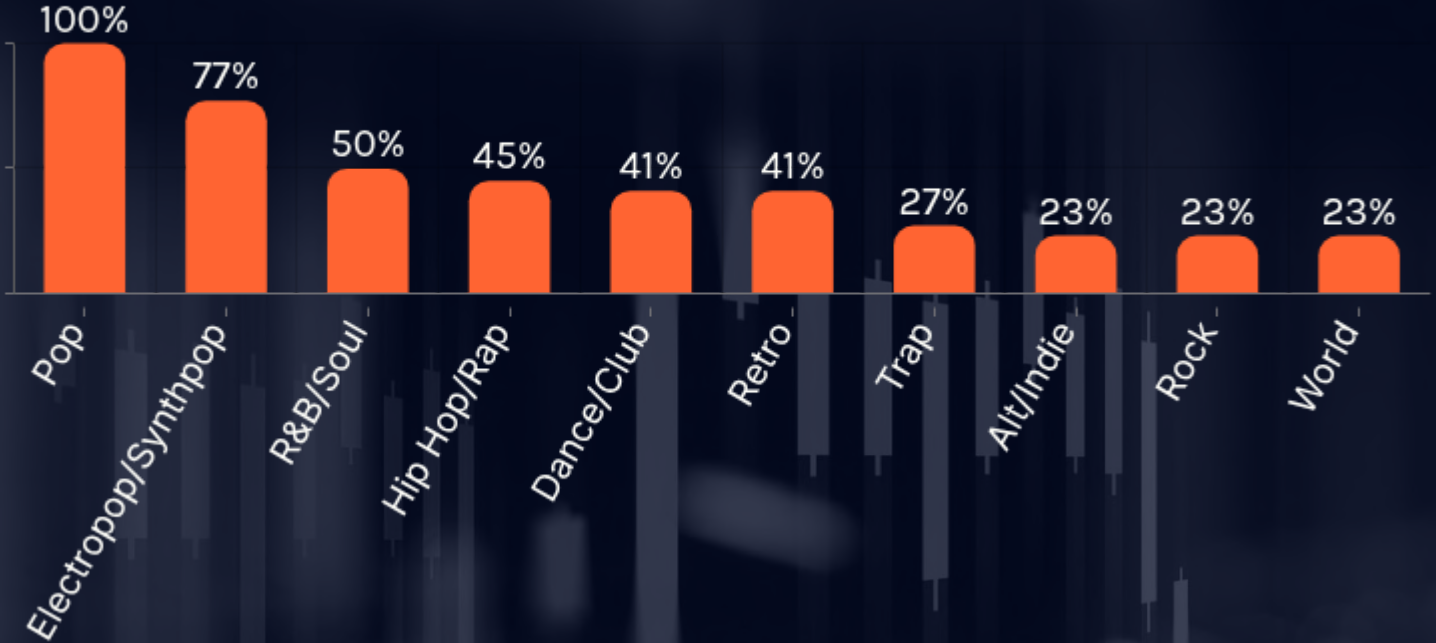


### Song Length Range



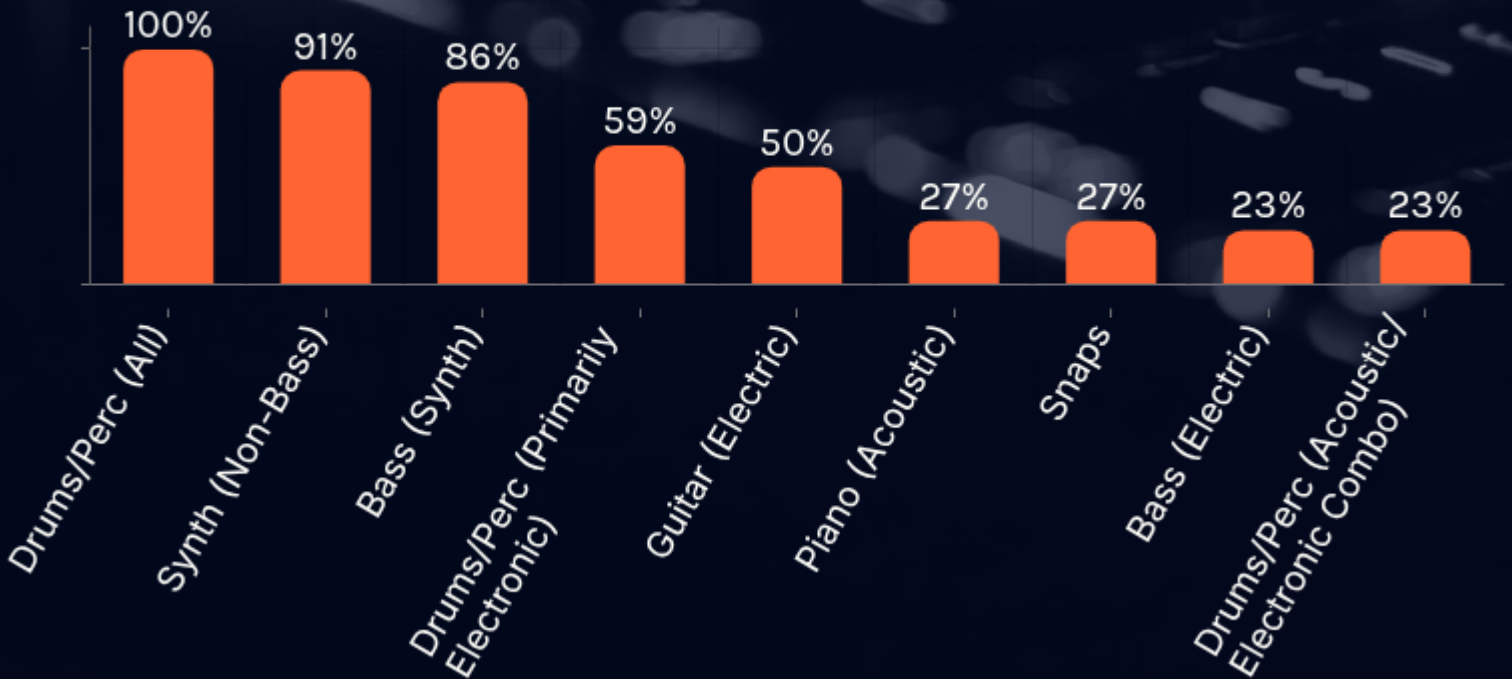
### Sub-Genres & Influences

(Present in 20% of songs or more.)



### Prominent Instruments

(Present in 20% of songs or more.)



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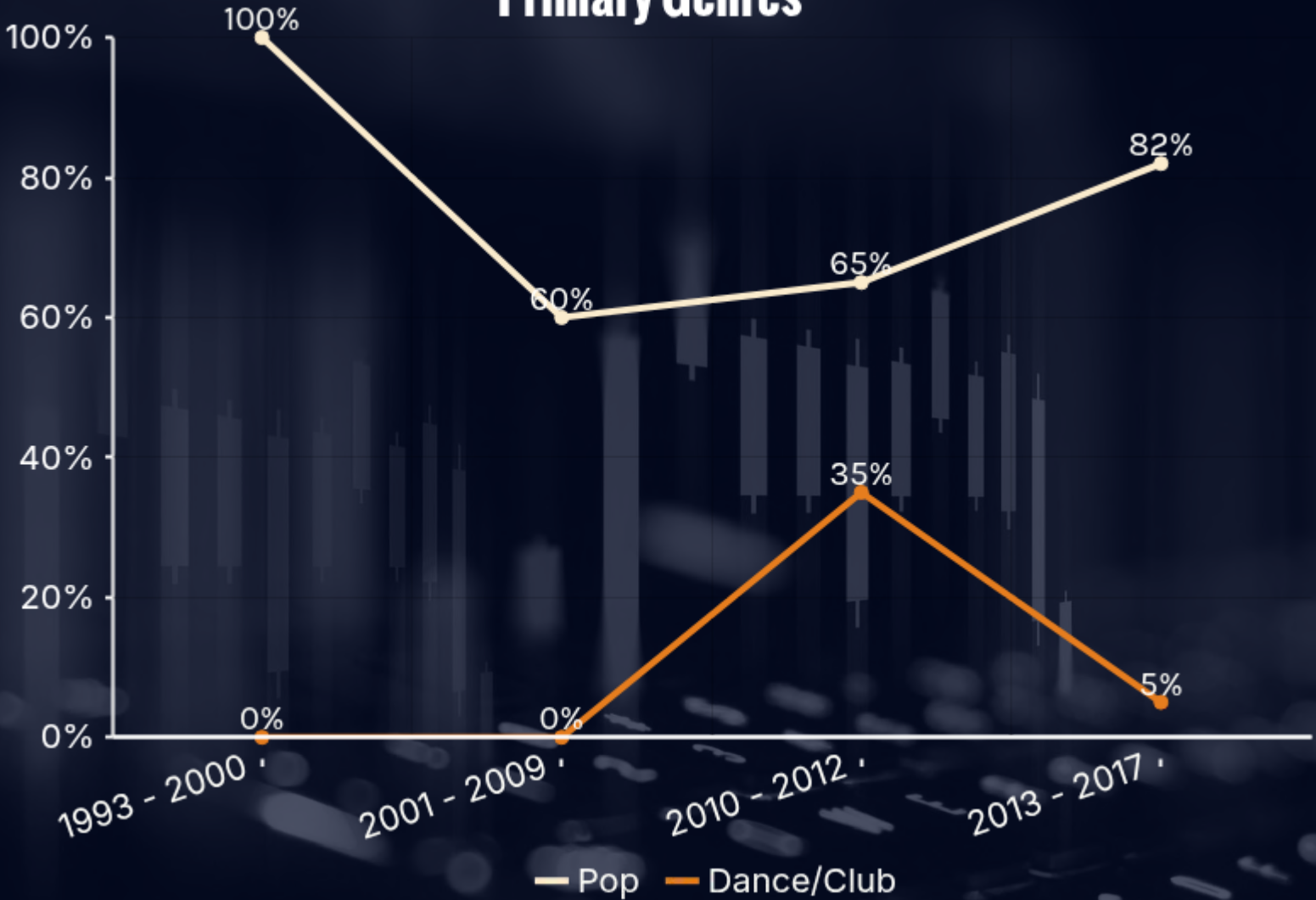
[mypart.ai](https://mypart.ai)

# Minimalist Edge and Persona Pop

## Notable Shifts

(2013–2017)

## Primary Genres



**Increased**

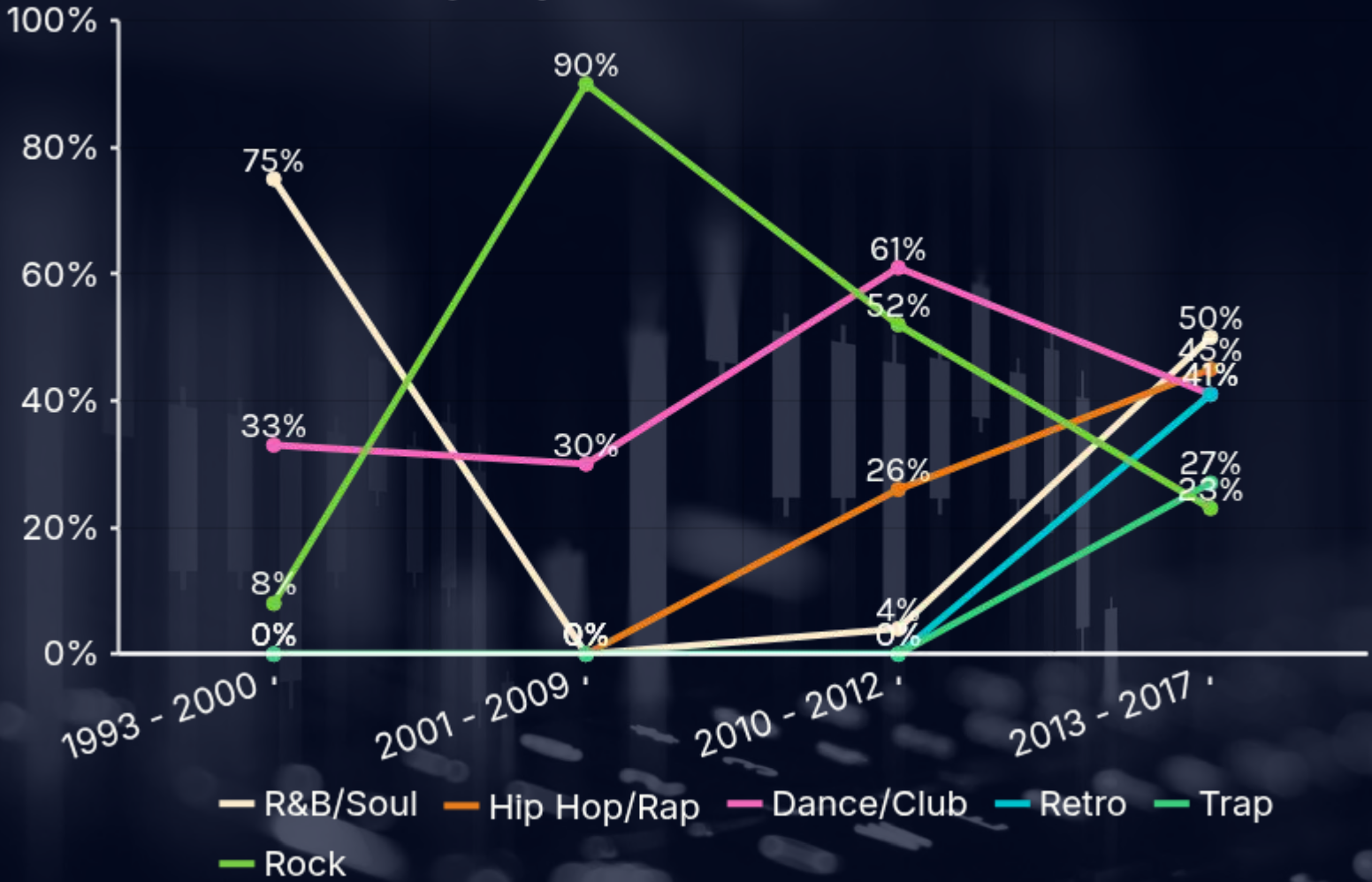
Pop  
(65% → 82%)



**Decreased**

Dance/Club  
(35% → 5%)

## Sub-Genres/Influences



### Increased

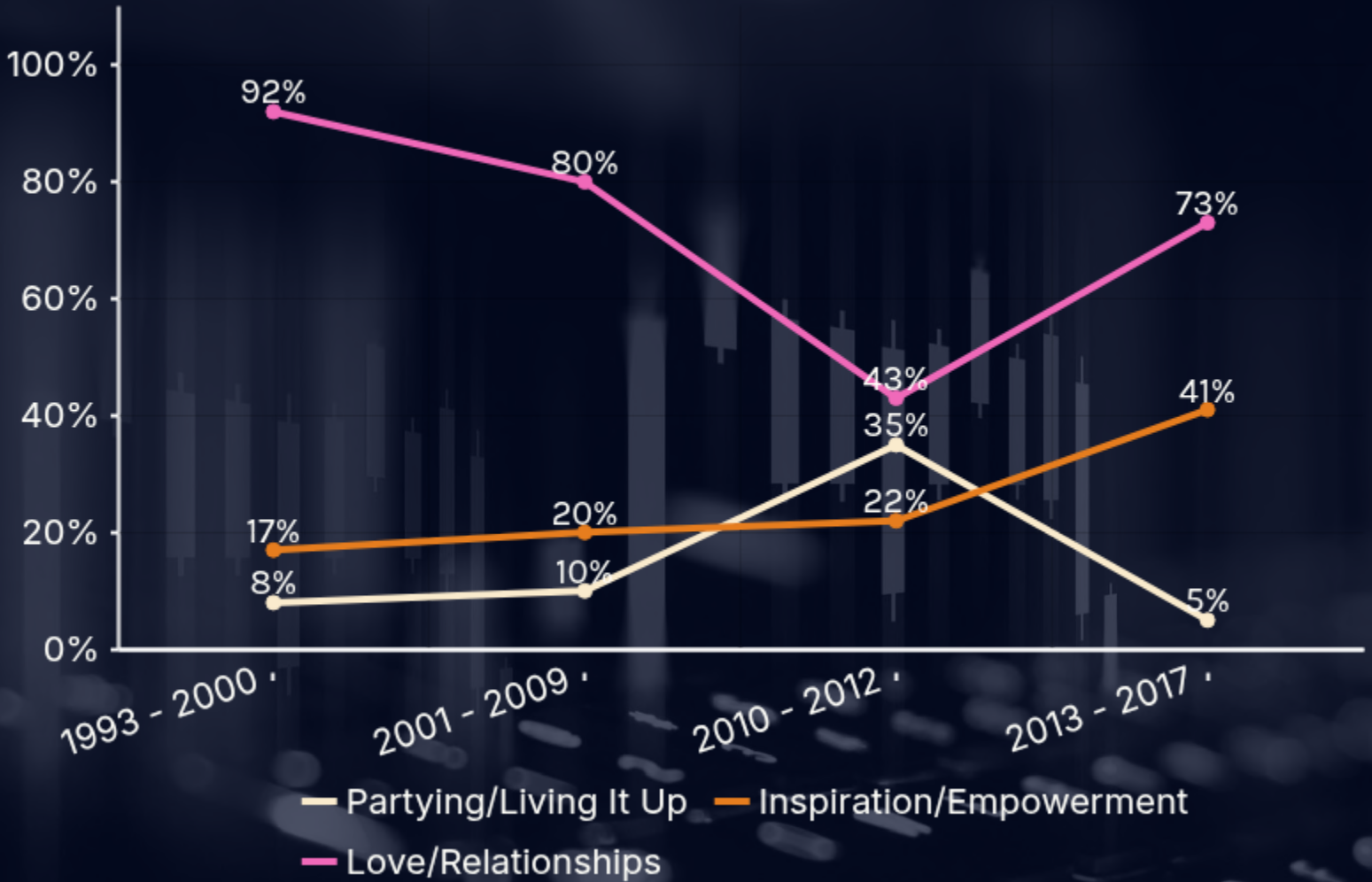
- R&B/Soul (4% → 50%)
- Hip Hop/Rap (26% → 45%)
- Retro (0% → 41%)
- Trap (0% → 27%)



### Decreased

- Dance/Club (61% → 41%)
- Rock (52% → 23%)

## Lyrical Themes



### Increased

Love/Relationships  
(43% → 73%)

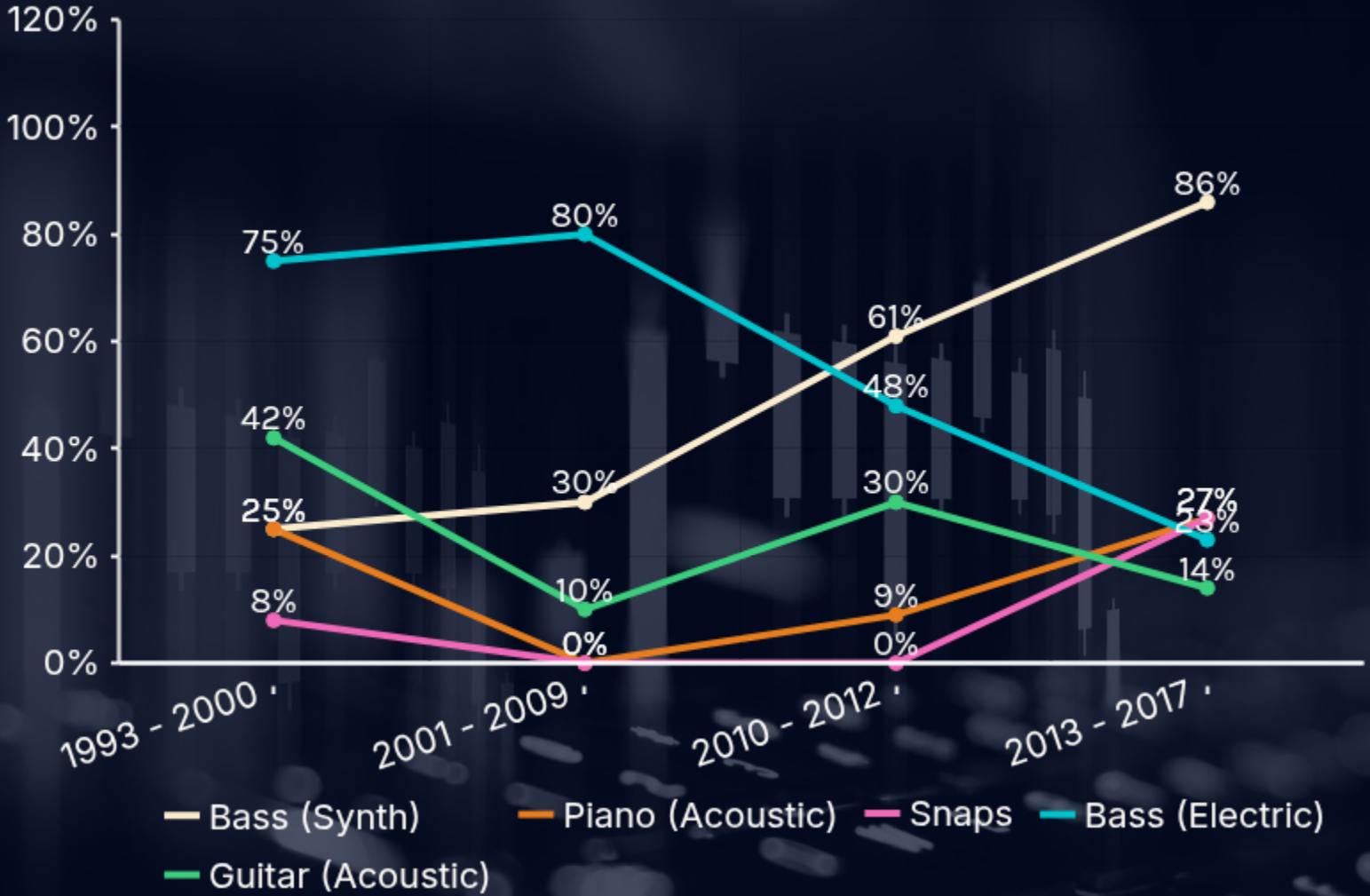
Inspiration/Empowerment  
(22% → 41%)



### Decreased

Partying/Living It Up  
(35% - 5%)

## Prominent Instruments



### Increased

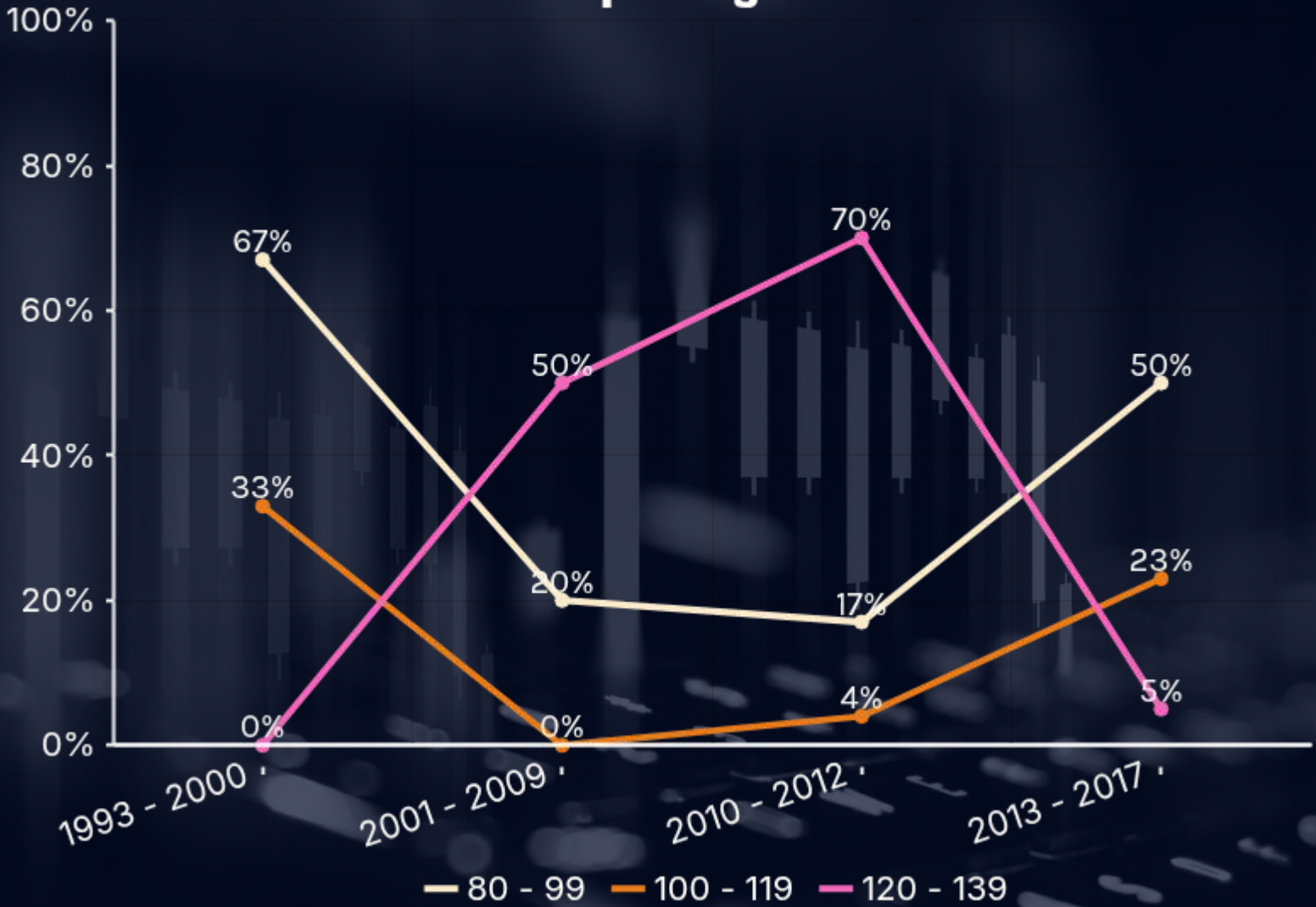
Bass (Synth) (61% → 86%)  
Piano (Acoustic) (9% → 27%)  
Snaps (0% → 27%)



### Decreased

Bass (Electric) (48% → 23%)  
Guitar (Acoustic) (30% → 14%)

## Tempo Range



### Increased

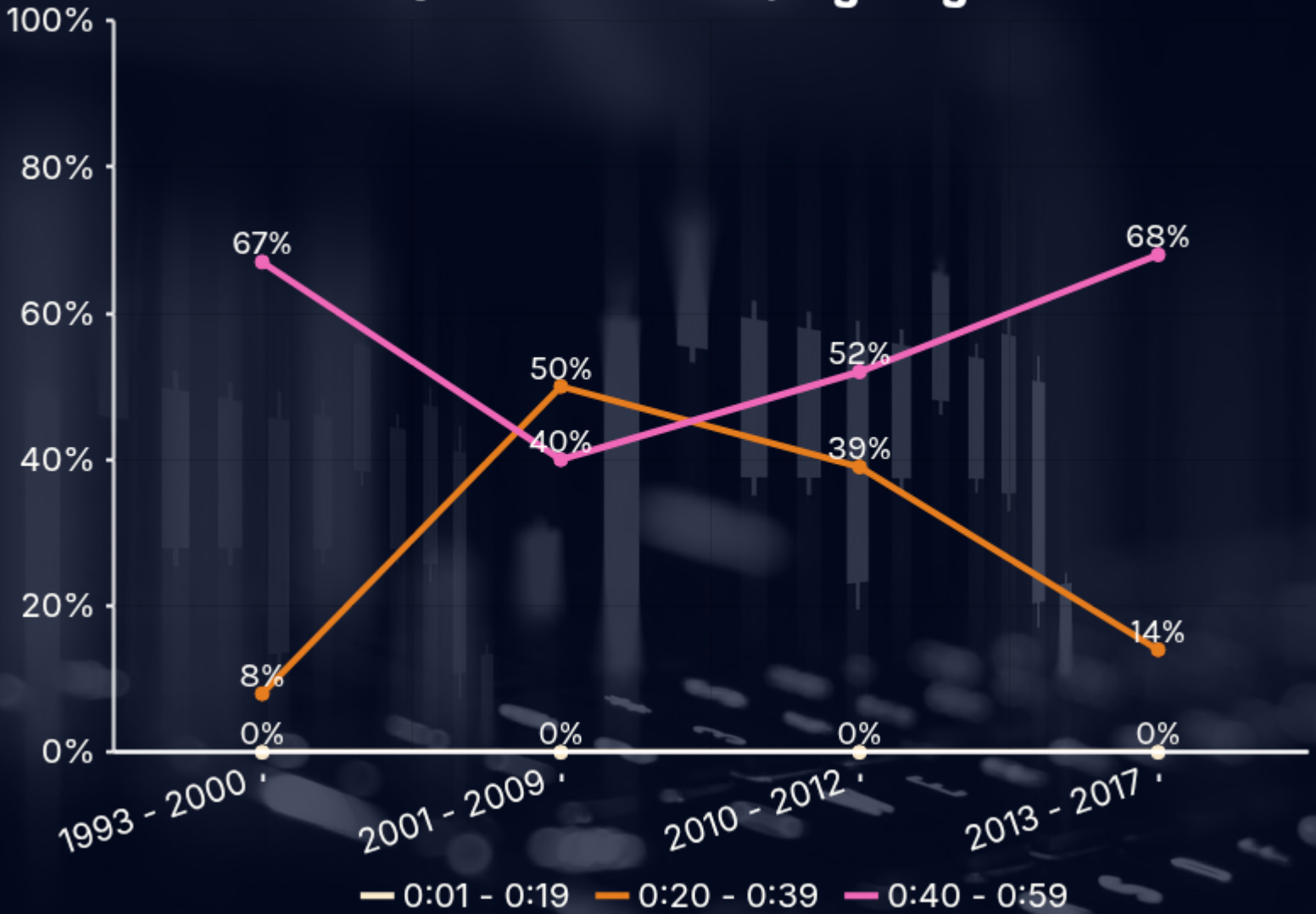
80 - 99 BPM (17% → 50%)  
100 - 119 BPM (4% → 23%)



### Decreased

120 - 139 BPM (70% → 5%)

## First Chorus: Time Into Song Range



**Increased**

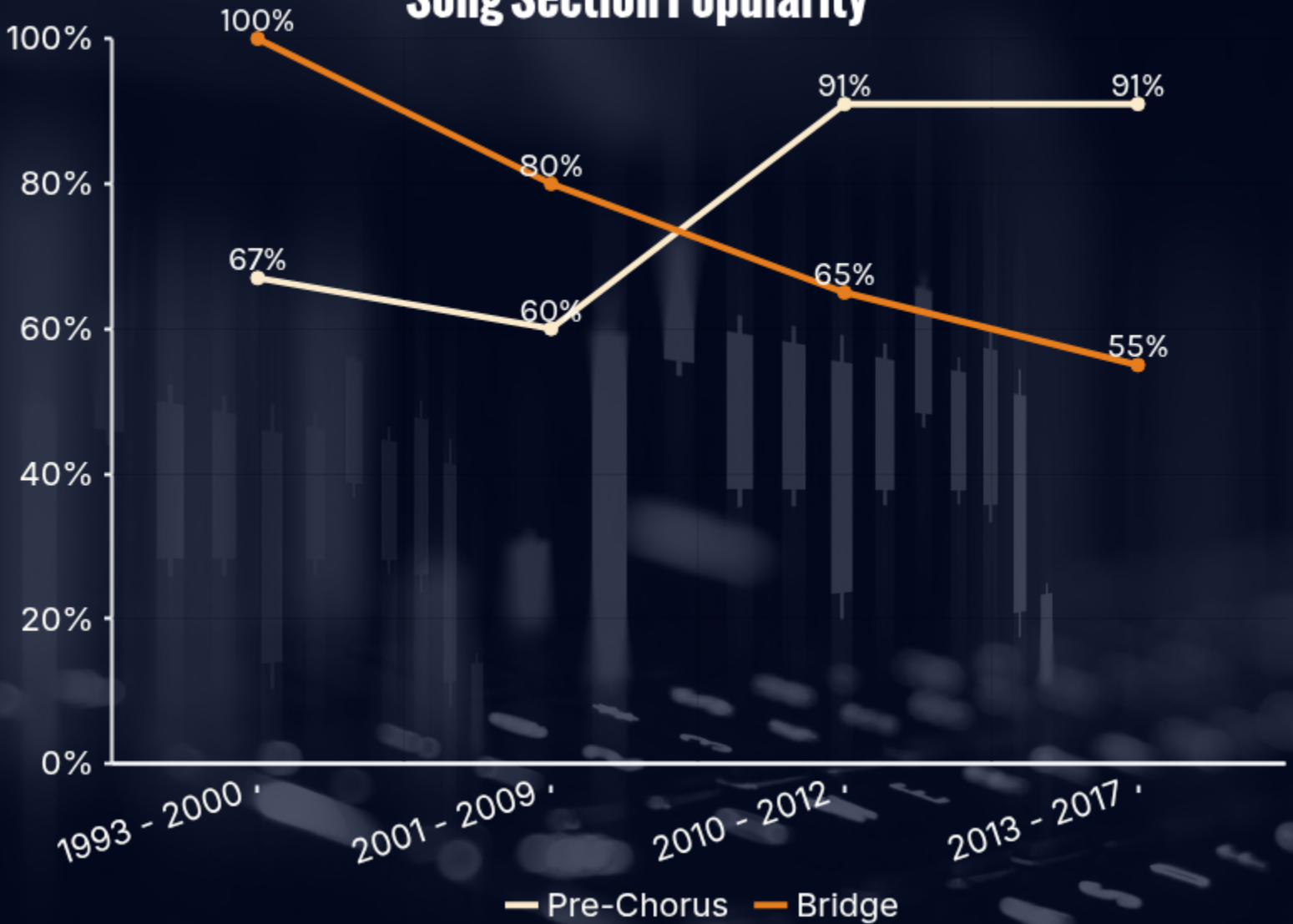
0:40 - 0:59 (52% → 68%)



**Decreased**

0:20 - 0:39 (39% → 14%)

## Song Section Popularity



**Decreased**

Bridge (65% → 55%)



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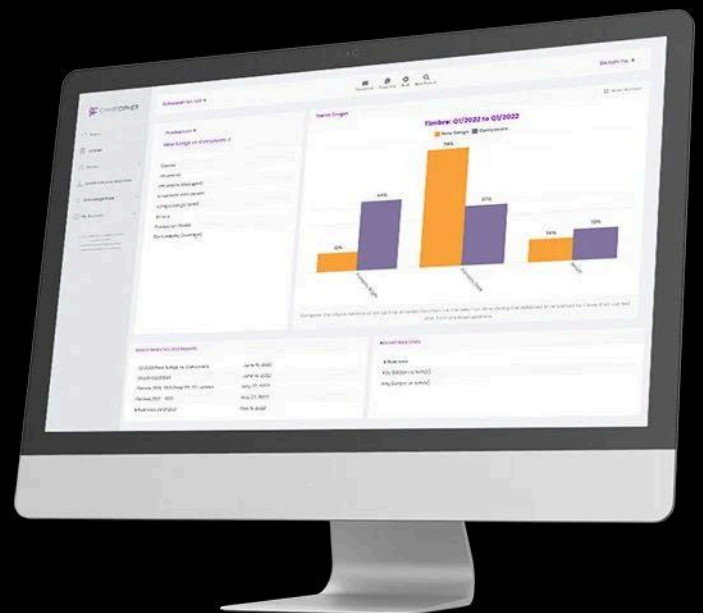
*Only tell part of the story...*



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# Streaming Supremacy

to the Broadway Stage

(2018–2024)

During the 2020's, Max Martin extended and deepened the stylistic path established in the mid-2010s. This period was marked by a sharper focus on retro, synth-driven textures often infused with rhythmic, danceable energy, and by the creative dominance of two key collaborators: The Weeknd and Ariana Grande.

With The Weeknd, Martin crafted “Blinding Lights,” a career-defining hit that became the most-streamed song of all time on Spotify, surpassing five billion plays and cementing its place as one of the most impactful pop songs of the 21st century. Its fusion of '80s synth-pop nostalgia with sleek modern polish not only topped charts but helped cement the retro-pop wave as a signature sound of the early 2020s. Follow-ups like “Save Your Tears” and “Take My Breath” reinforced this sonic direction, showcasing Martin's ability to balance atmosphere and emotional depth with commercial appeal.

At the same time, Martin's long-running collaboration with Ariana Grande thrived, producing standout singles like “No Tears Left to Cry,” “God Is a Woman,” and “We Can't Be Friends.” Across these tracks, Martin adapted his meticulous pop craftsmanship to align with Grande's evolving artistry, balancing lush, genre-blending production with moments of atmospheric minimalism. These songs spotlighted her dynamic vocal range and emotional nuance while underscoring Martin's versatility in shaping sound around an artist's identity.

While Grande and The Weeknd were central to this period, Martin also collaborated on Lady Gaga's “Stupid Love” and Coldplay × BTS's “My Universe.” Beyond the pop charts, his catalog took on new life with & Juliet, a West End production that premiered in London and later opened on Broadway.

# Behind the Scenes

## “Blinding Lights”

The Weeknd recorded “Blinding Lights” in 2019 at MXM Studios in Los Angeles with producers Max Martin and Oscar Holter. Reflecting on the track in a Vanity Fair interview, he admitted, “I thought ‘Blinding Lights’ was gonna be a flop.” At best, he believed it might resonate with younger fans as a deeper cut, one that could lead them to explore his earlier, darker work, rather than emerge as a mainstream hit. However, its infectious hooks and the rise of a viral TikTok dance challenge helped propel the song to unprecedented success. “Blinding Lights” ultimately became the longest-running No. 1 in Billboard Hot 100 history and the most-streamed song of all time on Spotify.

(2018–2024)

# Key Collaborators

2+ Hot 100 Top 10 Hits



Ariana Grande



Belly



DaHeala



Ilya



Savan Kotecha



Oscar Holter



The Weeknd

(2018–2024)

# Top 10 Hits

(Number One Hit\*)

Ariana Grande & The Weeknd: "Save Your Tears (Remix)" \*

Ariana Grande: "We Can't Be Friends (Wait for Your Love)" \*

Ariana Grande: "Yes, And?" \*

Ariana Grande: "Break Up With Your Girlfriend, I'm Bored"

Ariana Grande: "God Is a Woman"

Ariana Grande: "No Tears Left to Cry"

Ed Sheeran & Justin Bieber: "I Don't Care"

Lady Gaga: "Stupid Love"

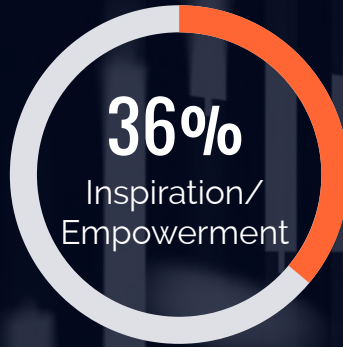
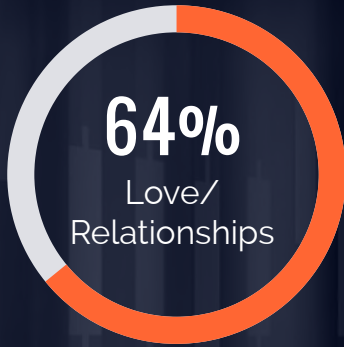
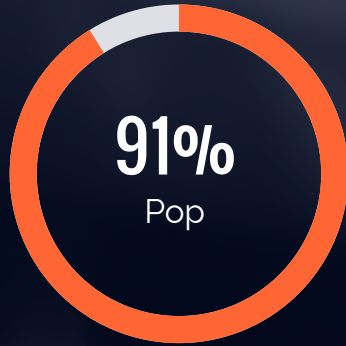
The Weeknd: "Take My Breath"

The Weeknd: "Blinding Lights" \*

# Streaming Supremacy to the Broadway Stage

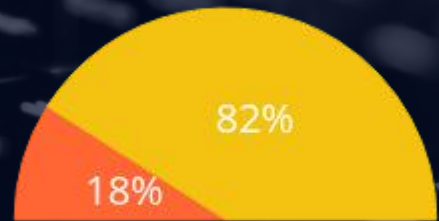
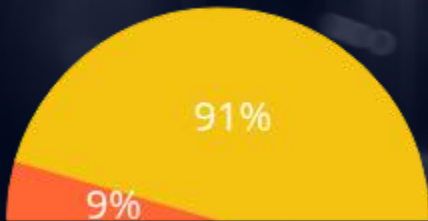
Most Popular Characteristics

(2018–2024)



**First Section**

**Last Section**

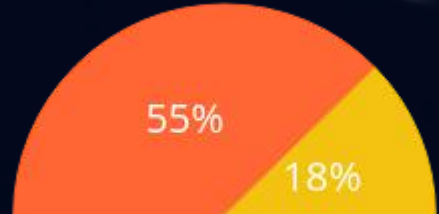
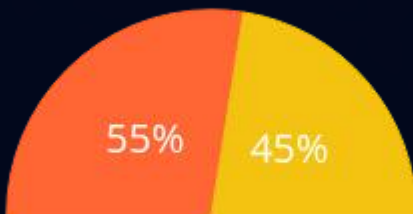


Chorus Intro

Chorus Outro

**Key (Major/Minor)**

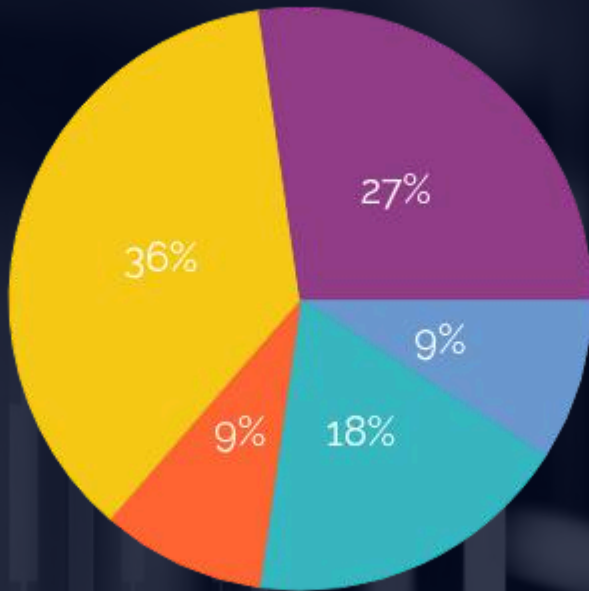
**Tempo Range**



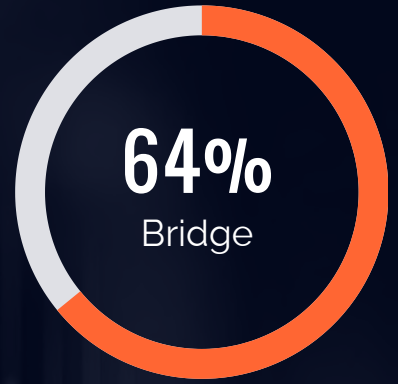
Major Minor

100 - 119 120 - 139

### First Chorus: Time Into Song Range



■ Kickoff ■ 0:01 - 0:19 ■ 0:20 - 0:39 ■ 0:40 - 0:59 ■ 1:00+

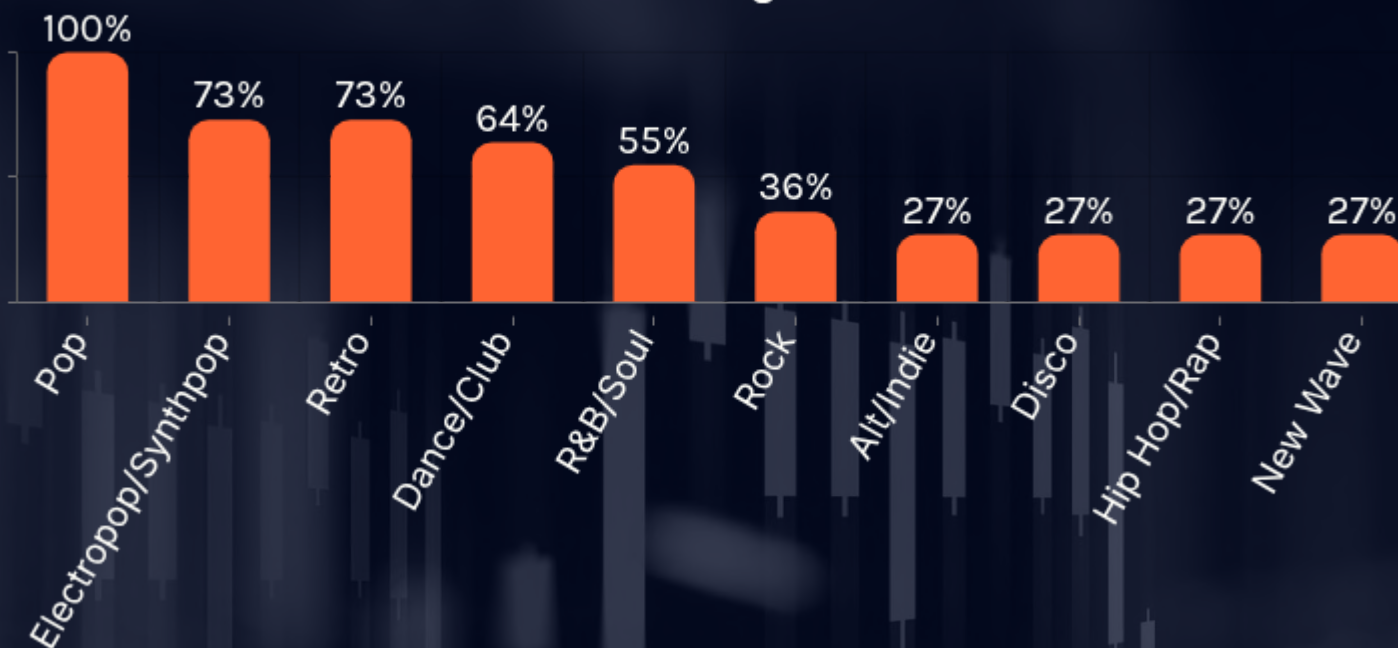


### Song Length Range



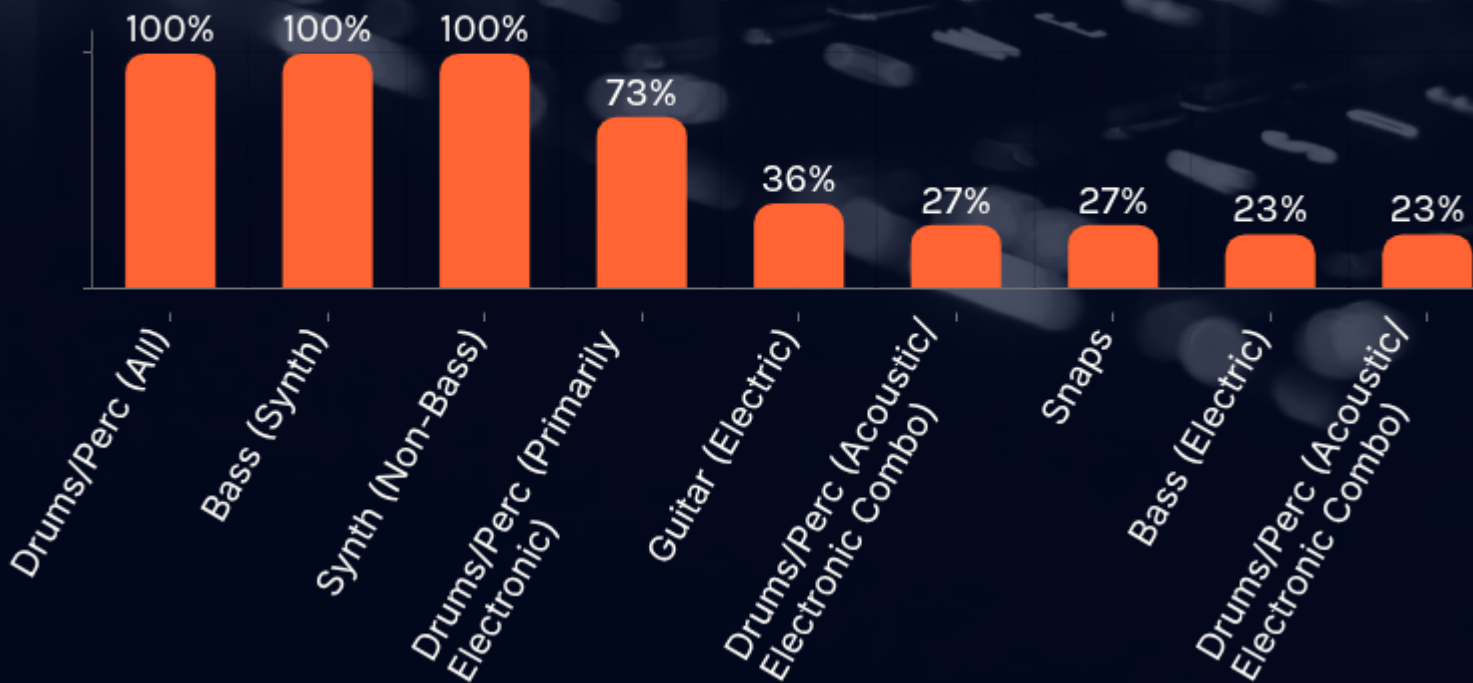
### Sub-Genres & Influences

(Present in 20% of songs or more.)



### Prominent Instruments

(Present in 20% of songs or more.)



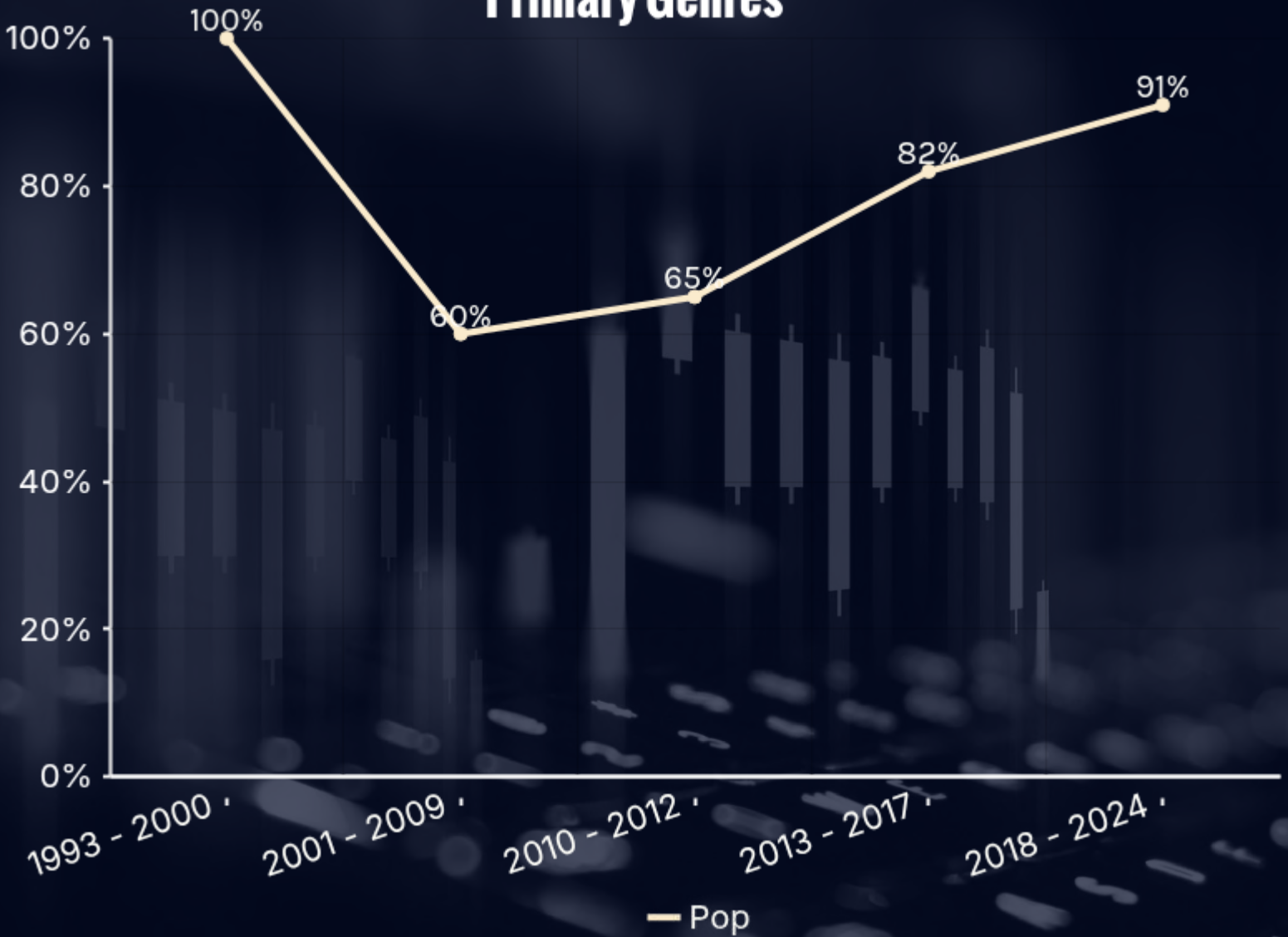
# Streaming Supremacy to the Broadway Stage

## Notable Shifts

(2018–2024)

(2018–2024)

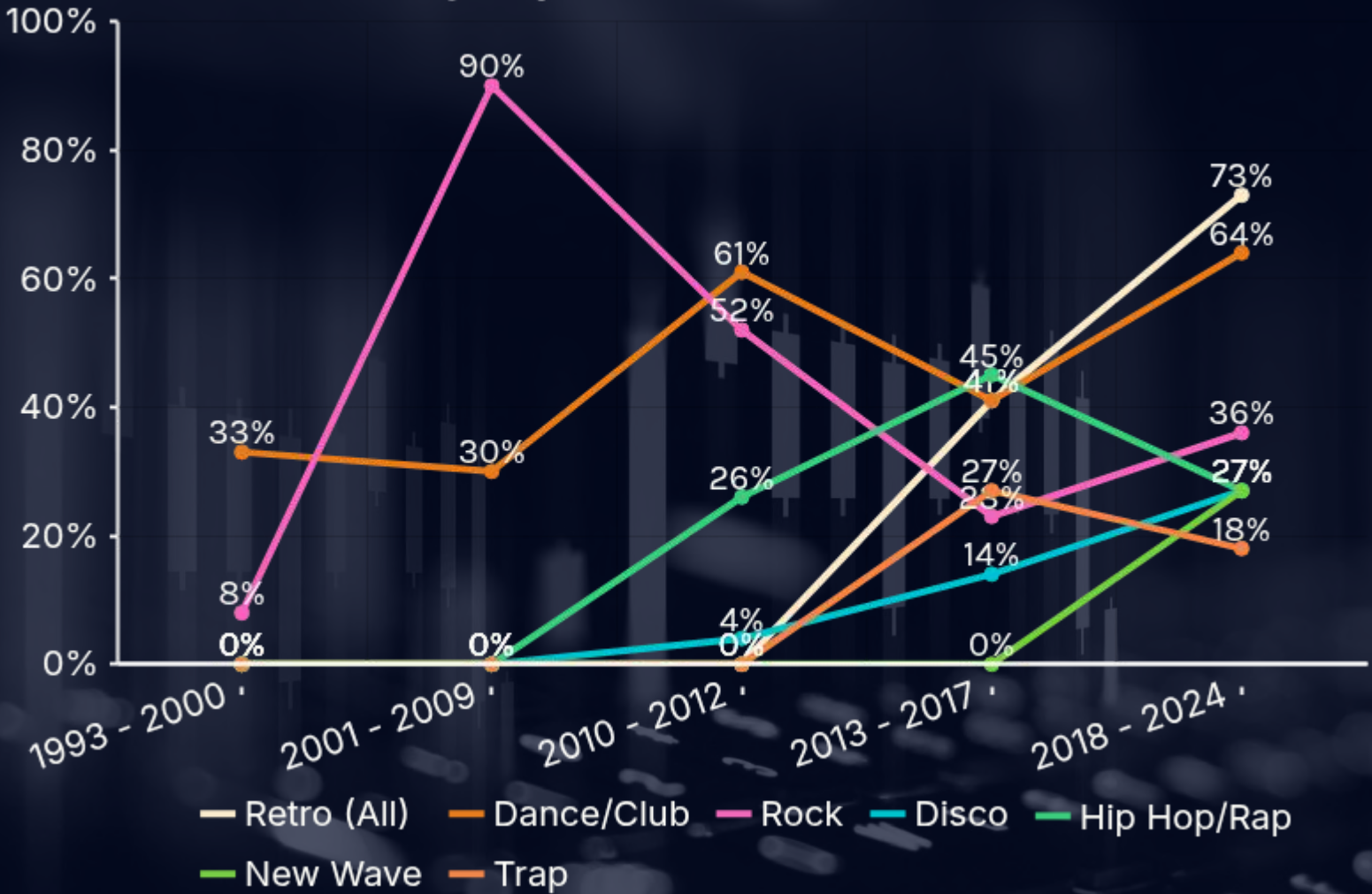
## Primary Genres



**Increased**

Pop (82% → 91%)

## Sub-Genres/Influences



### Increased

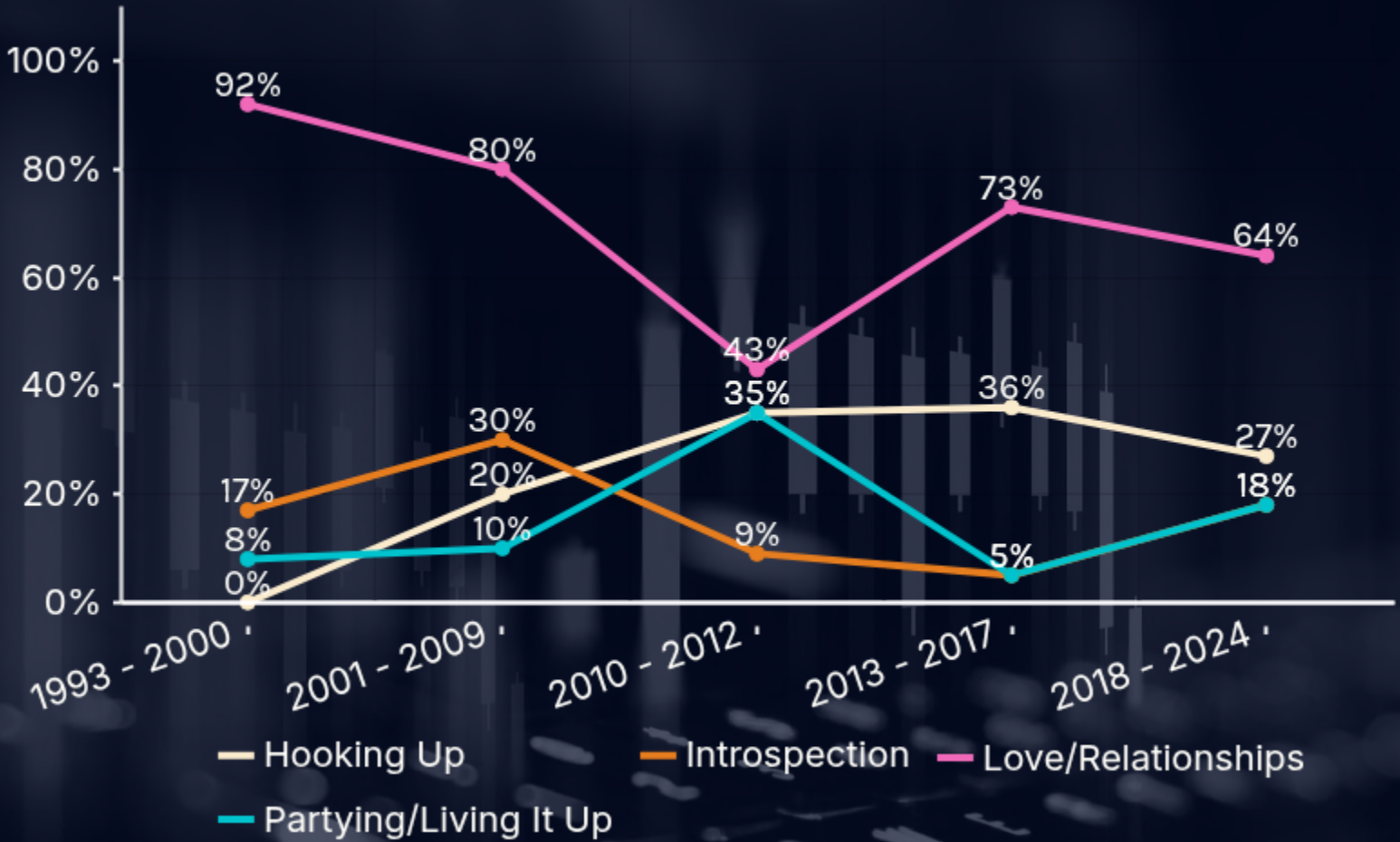
- Retro (41% → 73%)
- Dance/Club (41% → 64%)
- Rock (23% → 38%)
- Disco (14% → 27%)
- New Wave (0% → 27%)



### Decreased

- Hip Hop (45% → 27%)
- Trap (27% → 18%)

# Lyrical Themes



## Increased

Introspection  
(5% → 18%)

Partying/Living it Up (5% → 18%)



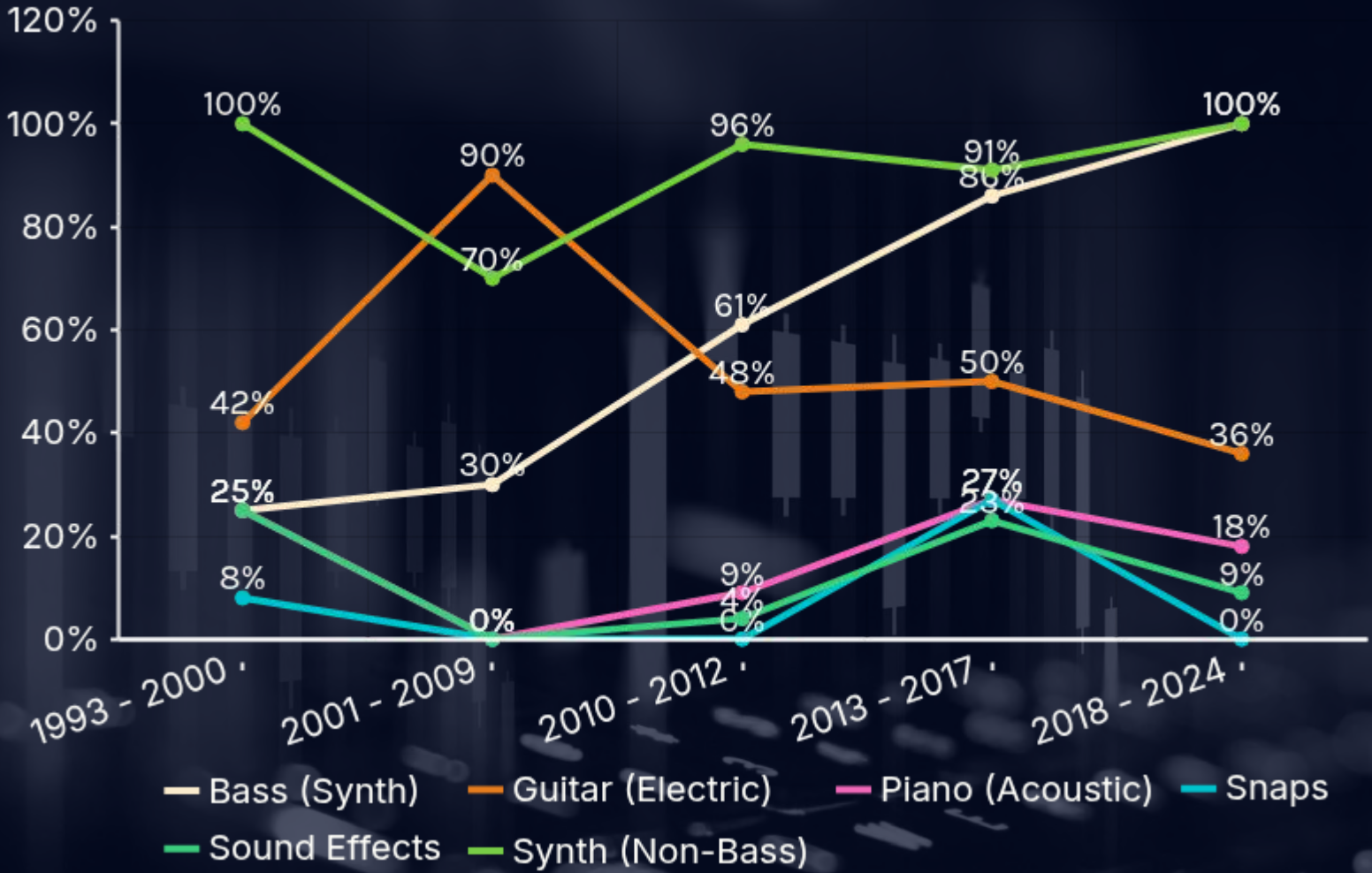
## Decreased

Hooking Up  
(36% → 27%)

Inspiration/Empowerment  
(41% → 36%)

Love/Relationships  
(73% → 64%)

## Prominent Instruments



### Increased

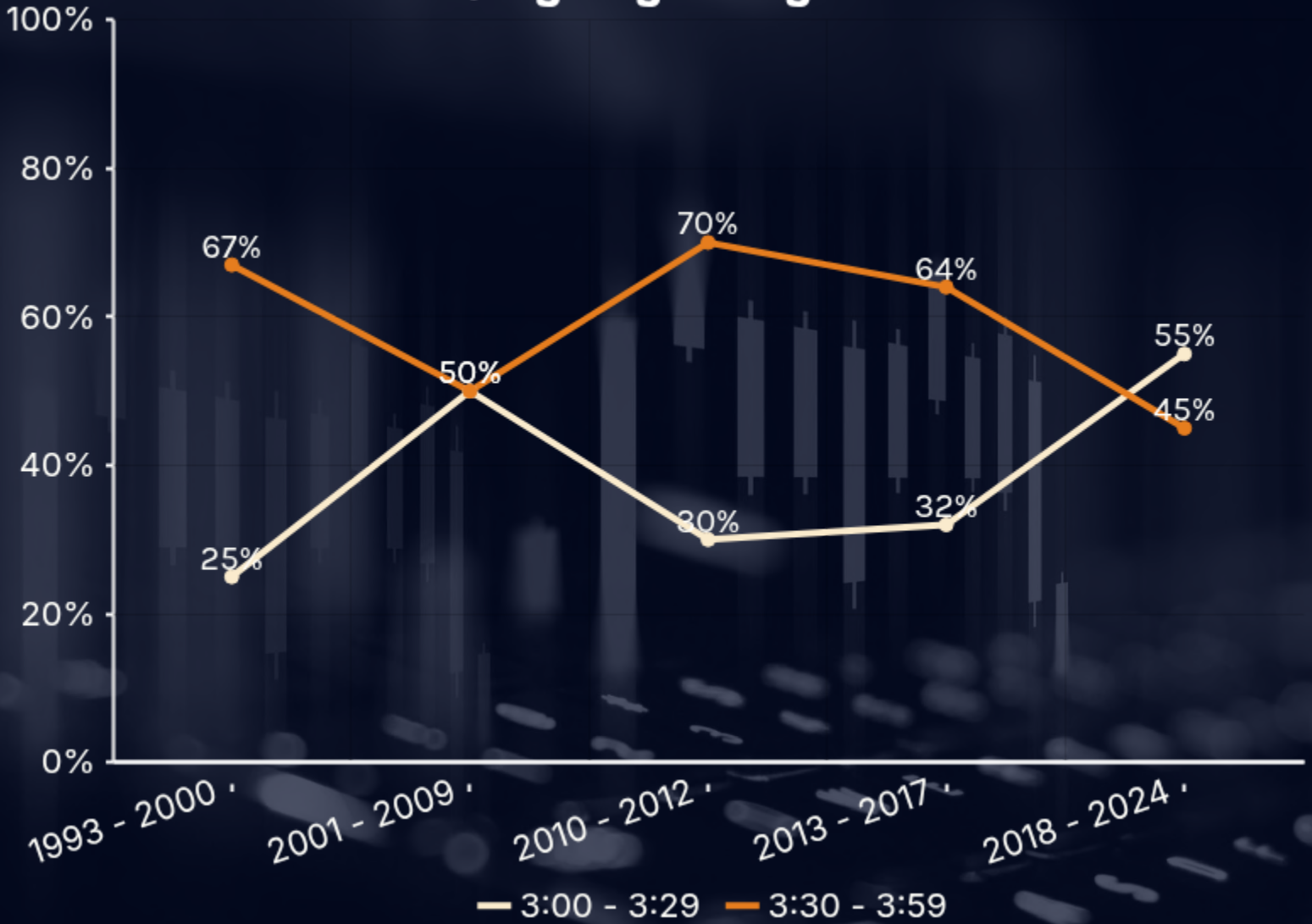
- Synth (Non-Bass) (91% → 100%)
- Synth (Bass) (86% → 100%)



### Decreased

- Guitar (Electric) (50% → 36%)
- Piano (Acoustic) (27% → 18%)
- Snaps (27% → 0%)
- Sound Effects (23% → 9%)

## Song Length Range



**Increased**

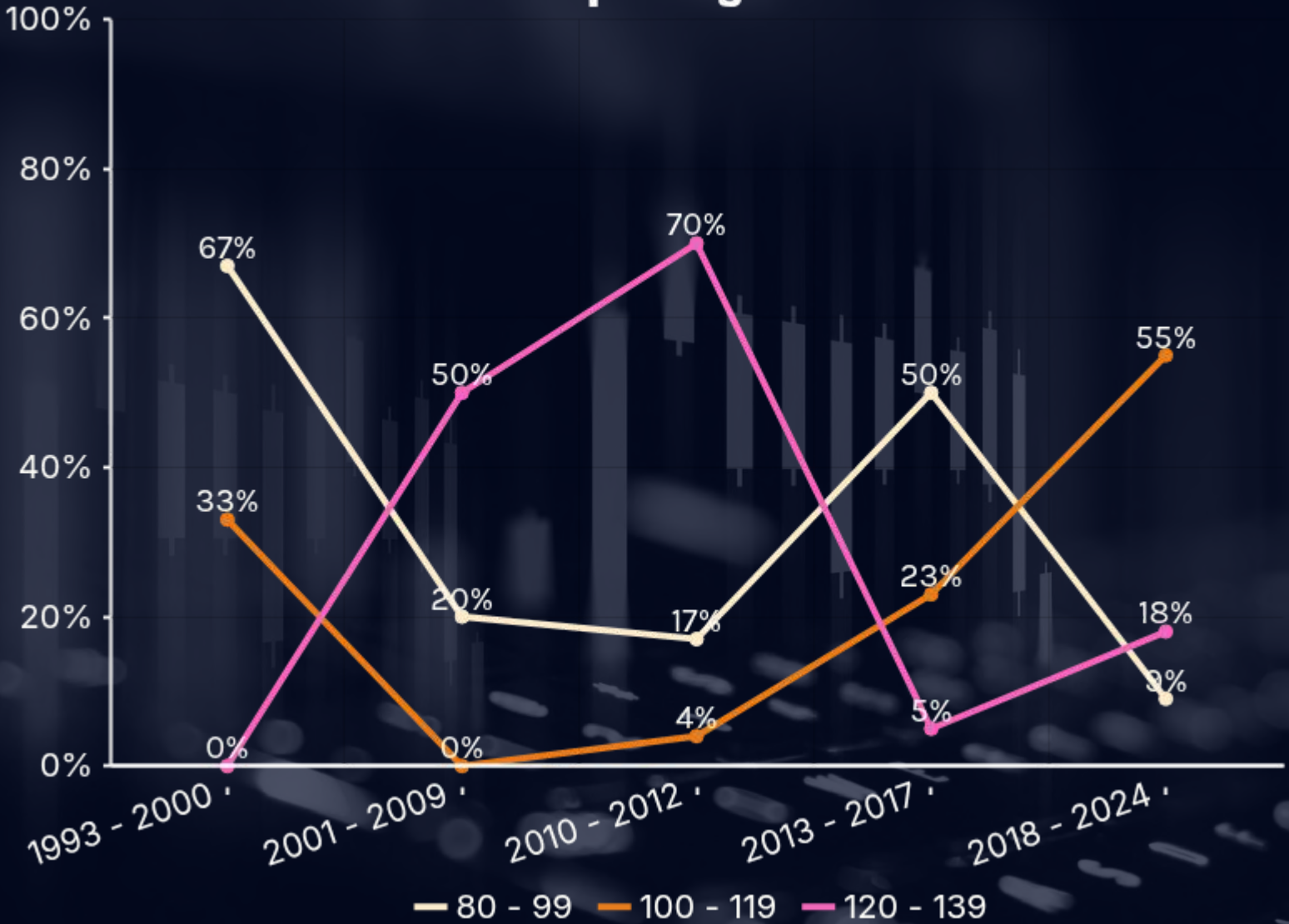
3:00 - 3:29 (32% → 55%)



**Decreased**

3:30 - 3:59 (64% → 45%)

## Tempo Range



### Increased

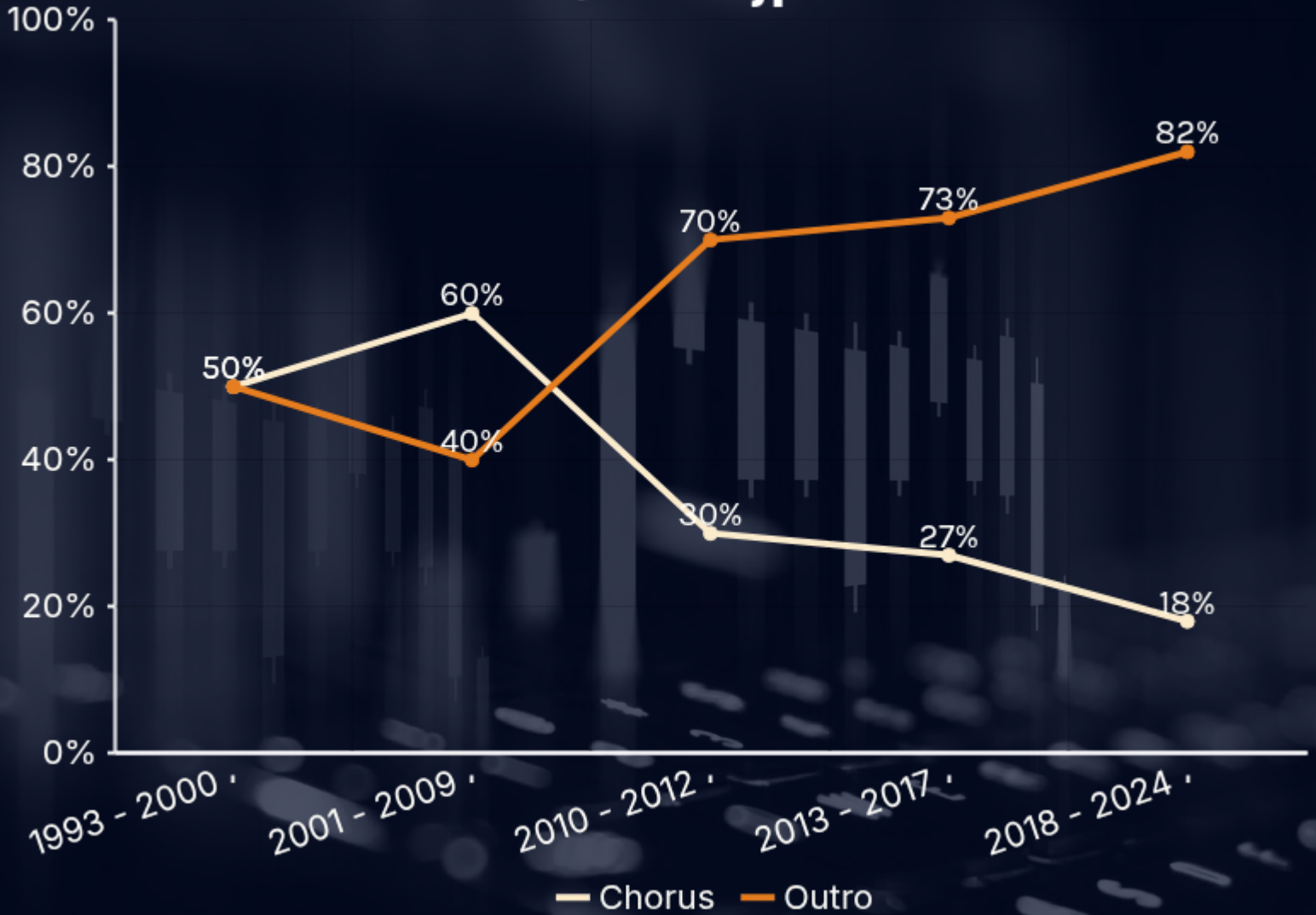
100 - 119 BPM (23% → 55%)  
120 - 139 BPM (5% → 18%)



### Decreased

80 - 99 BPM  
(50% → 9%)

## Last Section Type



### Increased

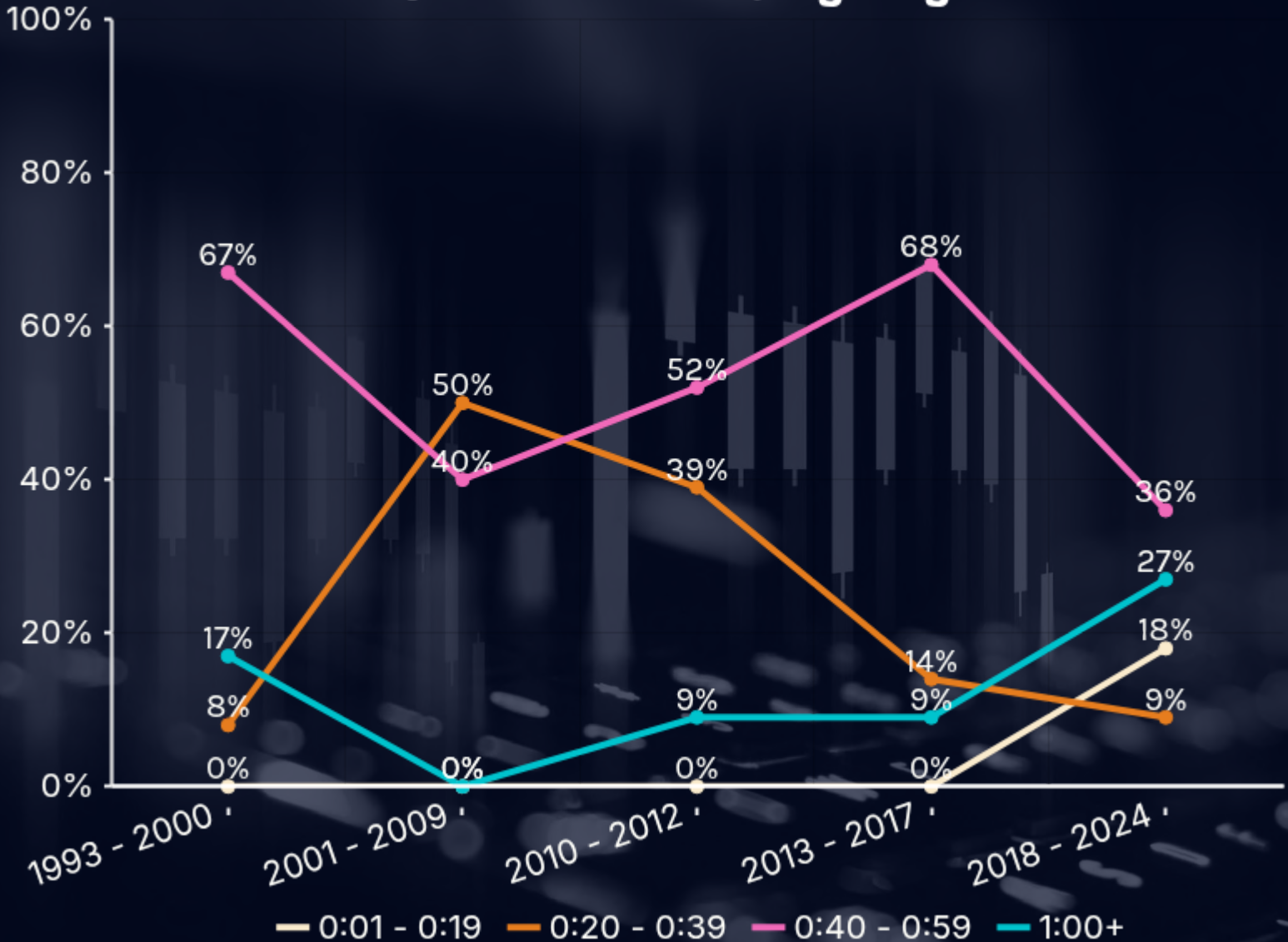
Last Section: Outro  
(73% → 82%)



### Decreased

Last Section: Chorus  
(27% → 18%)

## First Chorus: Time Into Song Range



### Increased

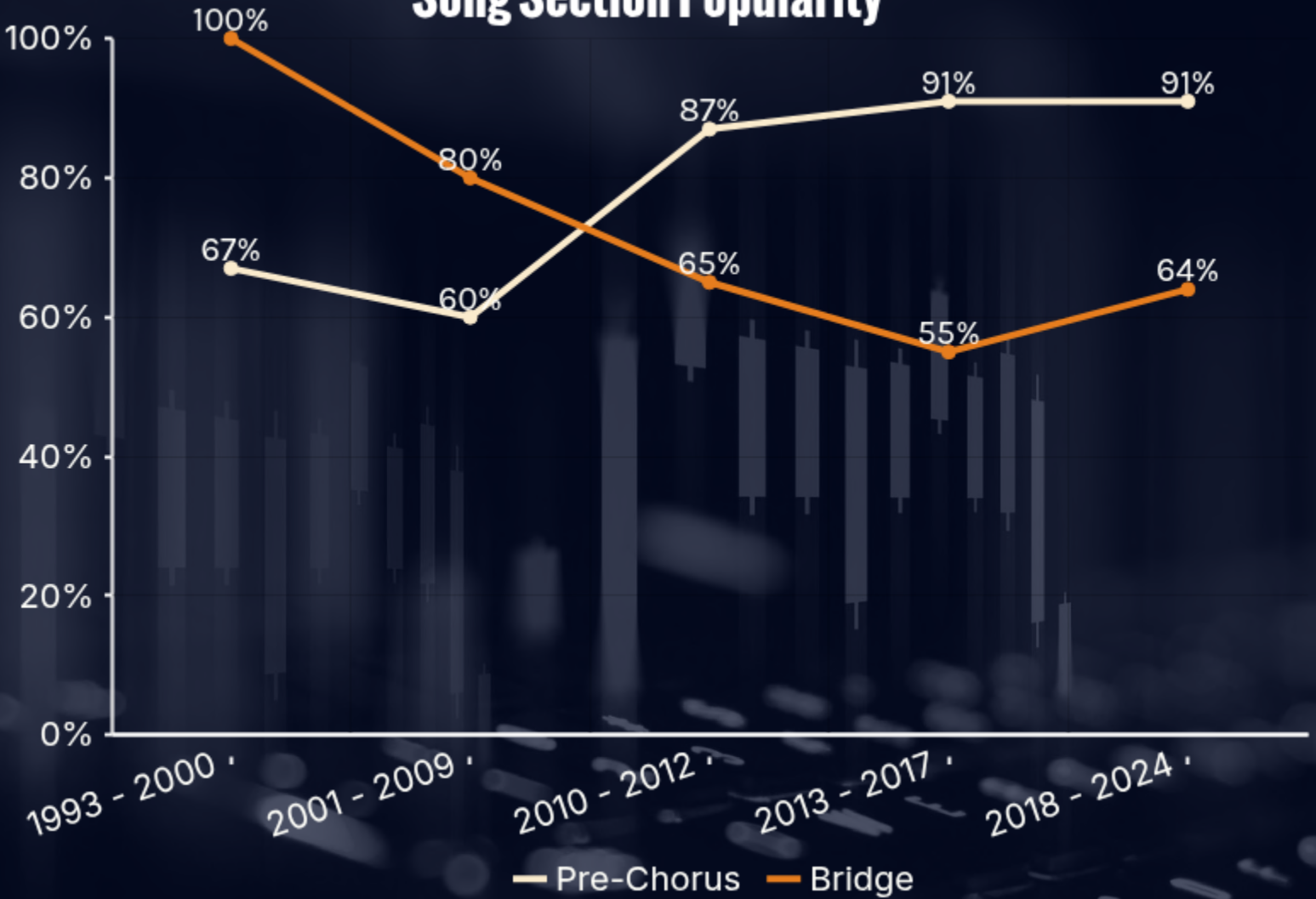
1:00+ (9% → 27%)  
0:01 - 0:19 (0% → 18%)



### Decreased

0:40 - 0:59 (68% → 36%)

## Song Section Popularity



**Increased**

Bridge (55% → 64%)



# The Life

of a Showgirl

(2025)

In 2024, Max Martin reunited with Taylor Swift for *The Life of a Showgirl*, released on October 3, 2025 through Republic.

Written and produced exclusively by Martin, Swift, and Shellback, the album marks her first full-length project created entirely with this trio at the helm. Recorded primarily in Sweden during the European leg of her 2024 Eras Tour, the album embraces a fusion of introspection and spectacle, pairing Martin's pop precision with theatrical storytelling and emotional depth.

Sonically, the production evolves toward a warmer, more organic sound, blending synth textures with electric guitar, bass, and dynamic, performance-driven arrangements.

"It felt like catching lightning in a bottle. These guys are just geniuses,"

- Taylor Swift, *New Heights* podcast, August 2025

# Breaking Records and Making History

On October 3, 2025, Taylor Swift's single "The Fate of Ophelia" became the most-streamed song in a single day on Spotify, with approximately 25.5 million streams in 24 hours.

Some additional records broken, as reported by *Billboard*, include:

- Largest Week for an Album by Equivalent Album Units Earned: Earned 4.002 million equivalent album units in the U.S, according to Luminate.
- Largest Sales Week for an Album in Modern Era: Sold 3,479,500 copies in pure album sales in its first week (purchases of digital downloads, CDs, vinyl LPs and cassette tapes).
- Biggest Sales Week for a Vinyl Album in Modern Era (since 1991): 1.334 million of the albums sold were on vinyl.
- Biggest Streaming Week for a Song in Post-UGC Era: "The Fate of Ophelia" earned 92.5 million official U.S. streams in its opening week
- First album with all songs to debut on the Hot 100 from No. 1 on down sequentially.

(2025)

# Key Collaborators



Taylor Swift



Shellback

## Top 10 Hits



(Number One Hit\*)

Actually Romantic

Cancelled!

Eldest Daughter

Elizabeth Taylor

Father Figure

Opalite

The Fate Of Ophelia \*

The Life Of A Showgirl

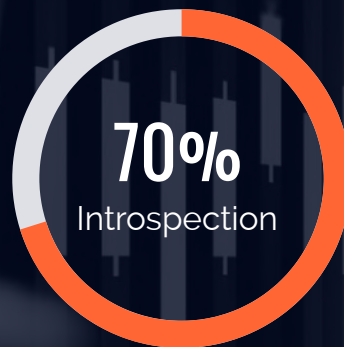
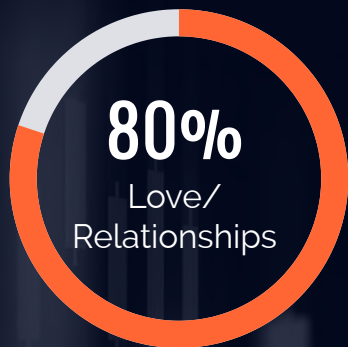
Wi\$h Li\$t

Wood

# The Life of a Showgirl

## Most Popular Characteristics

(2025)

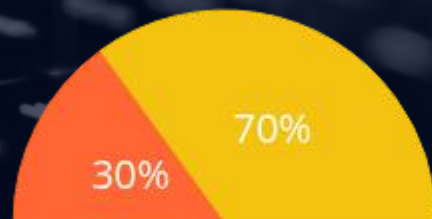


### First Section



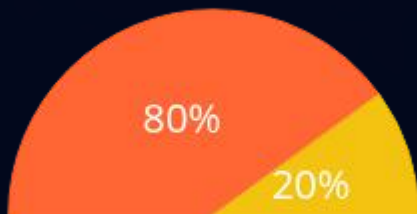
Intro

### Last Section



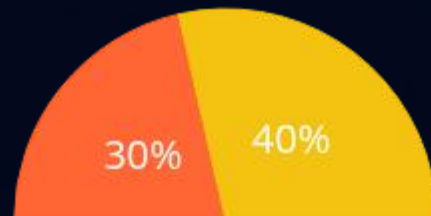
Chorus Outro

### Key (Major/Minor)



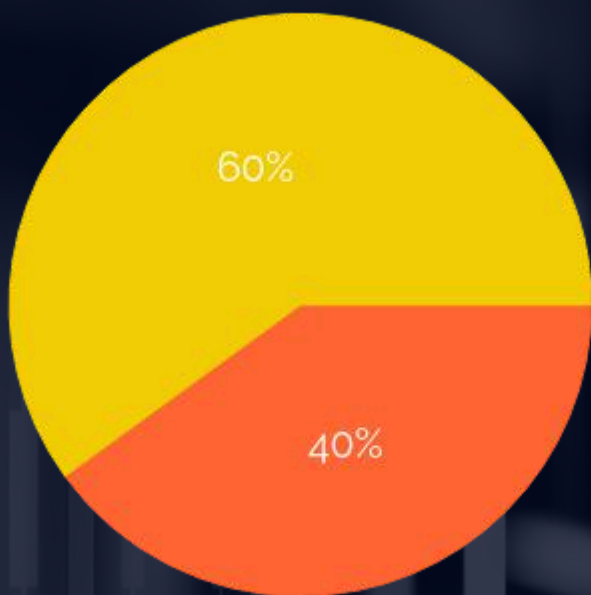
Major Minor

### Tempo Range



79 or less 80 - 99

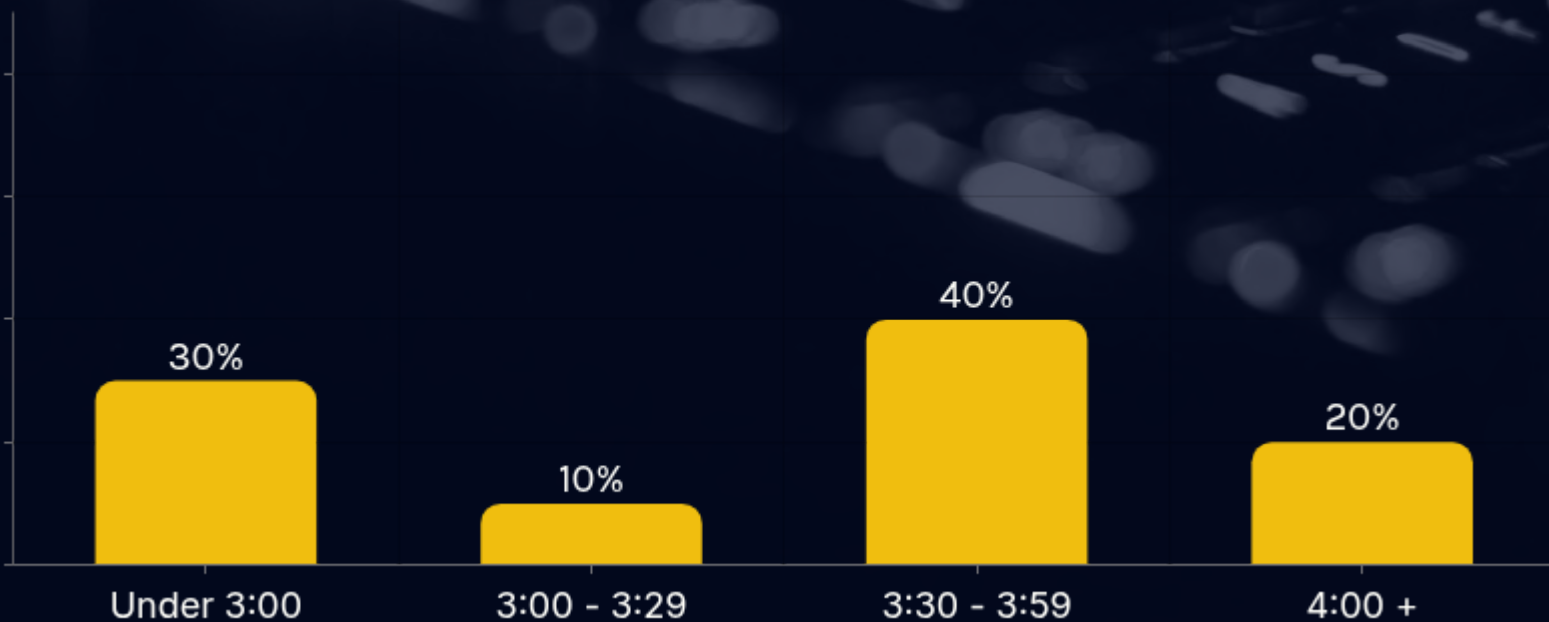
### First Chorus: Time Into Song Range



0:20 - 0:39    0:40 - 0:59

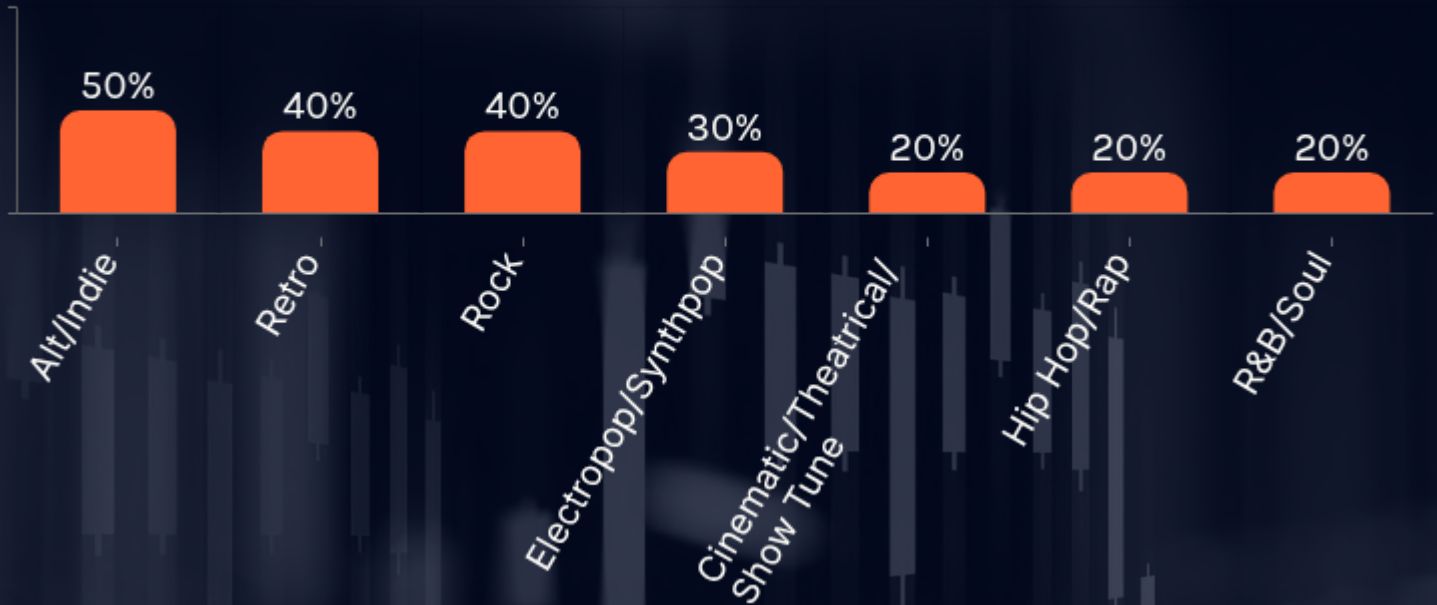


### Song Length Range



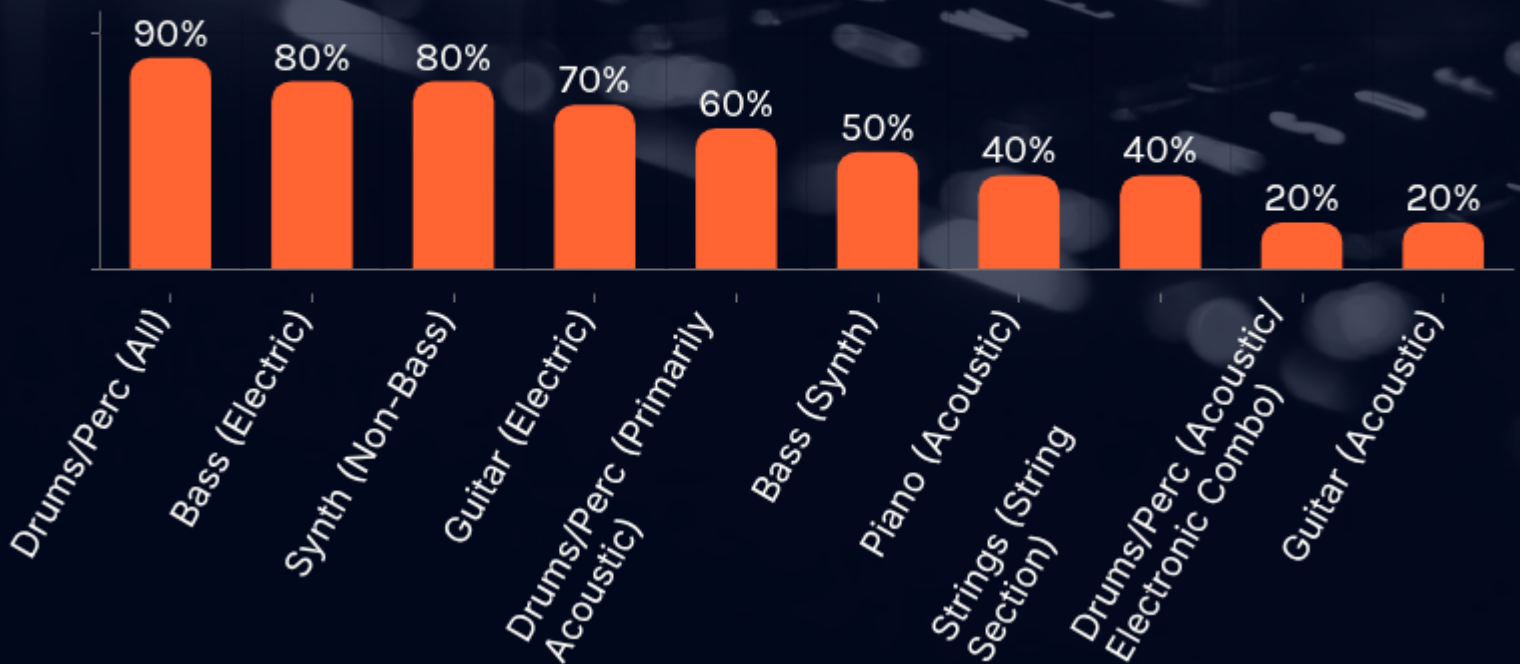
### Sub-Genres & Influences

(Present in 20% of songs or more.)



### Prominent Instruments

(Present in 20% of songs or more.)

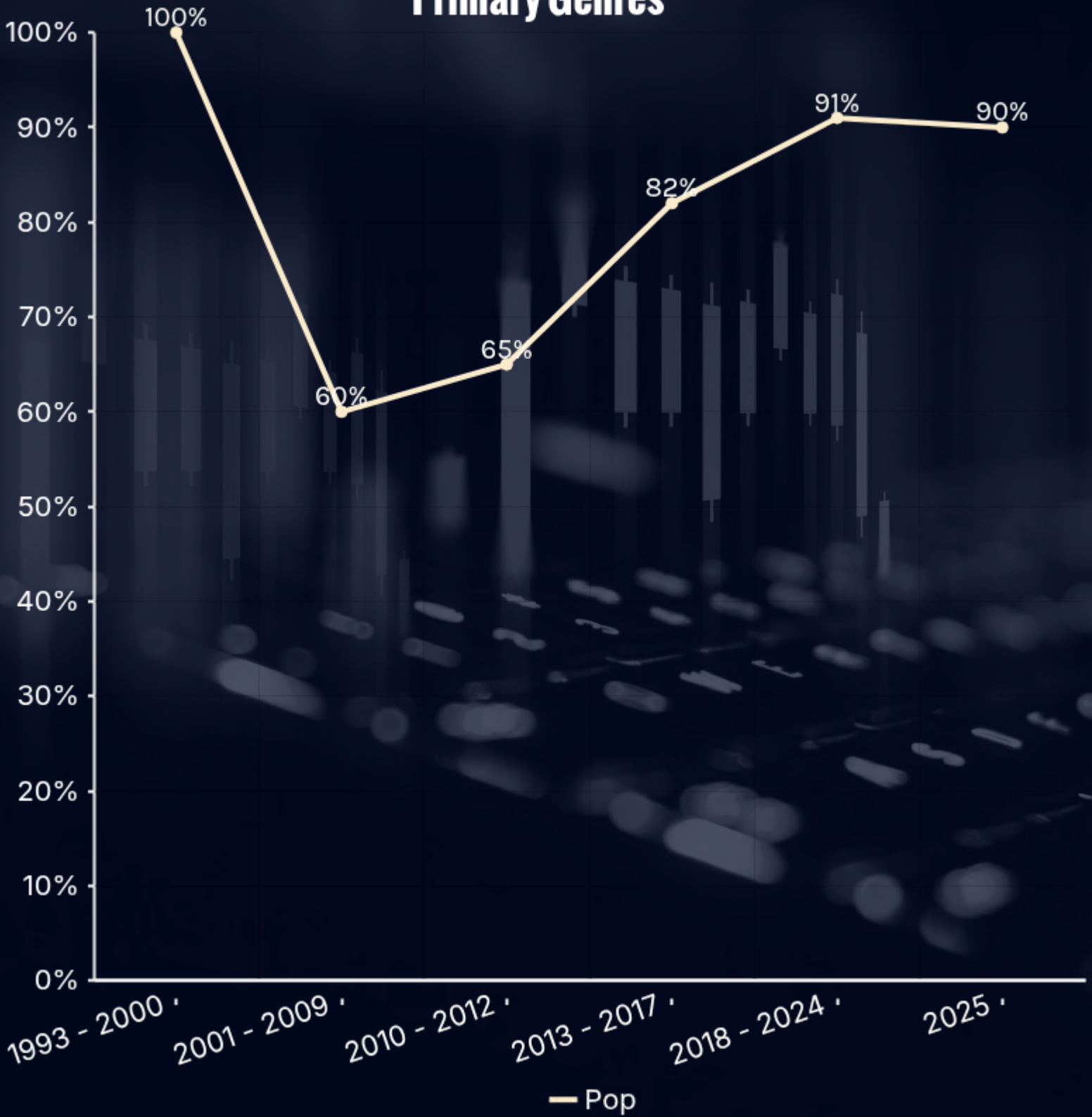


# The Life of a Showgirl

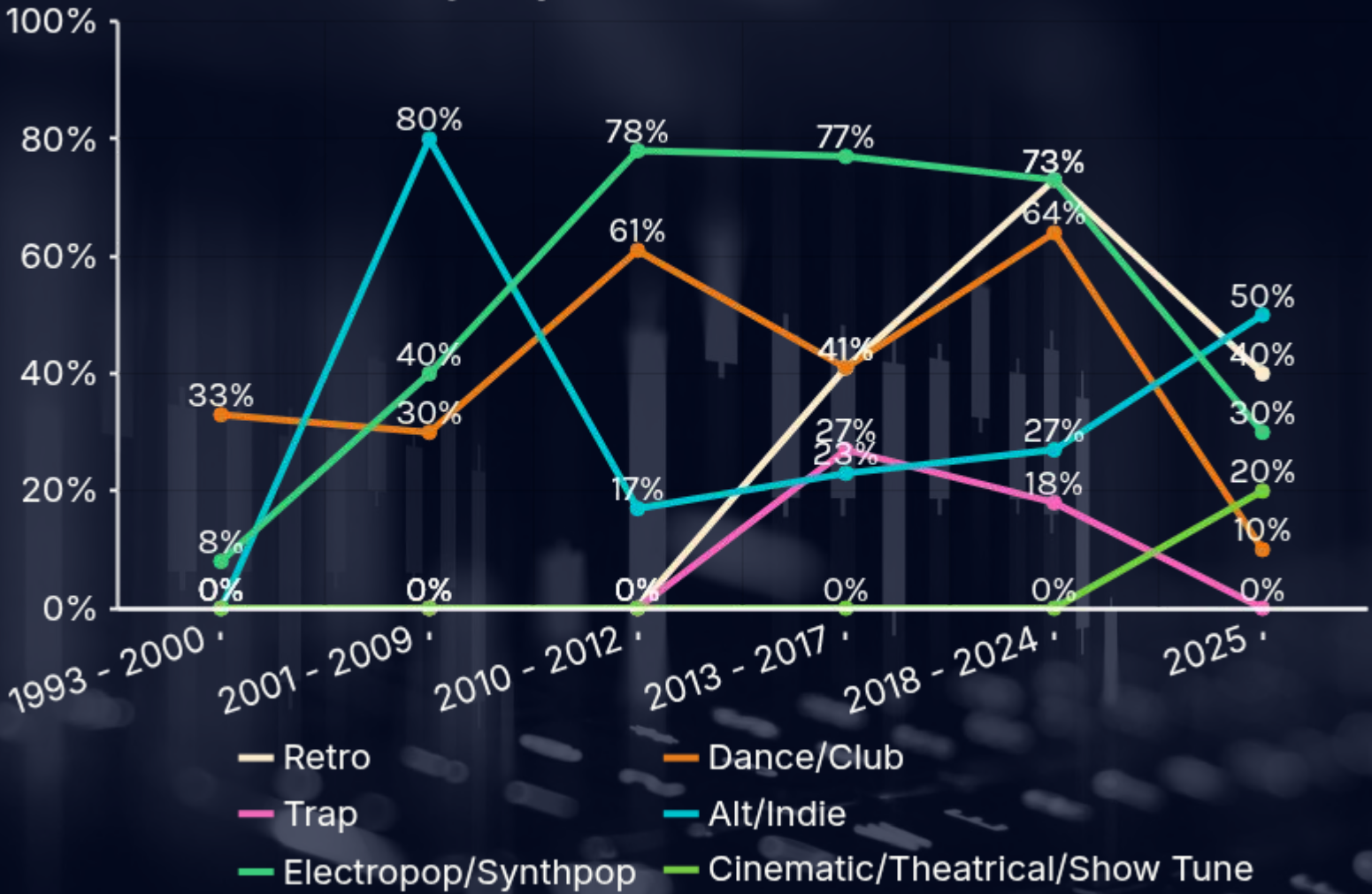
## Notable Shifts

(2025)

# Primary Genres



# Sub-Genres/Influences



## Increased

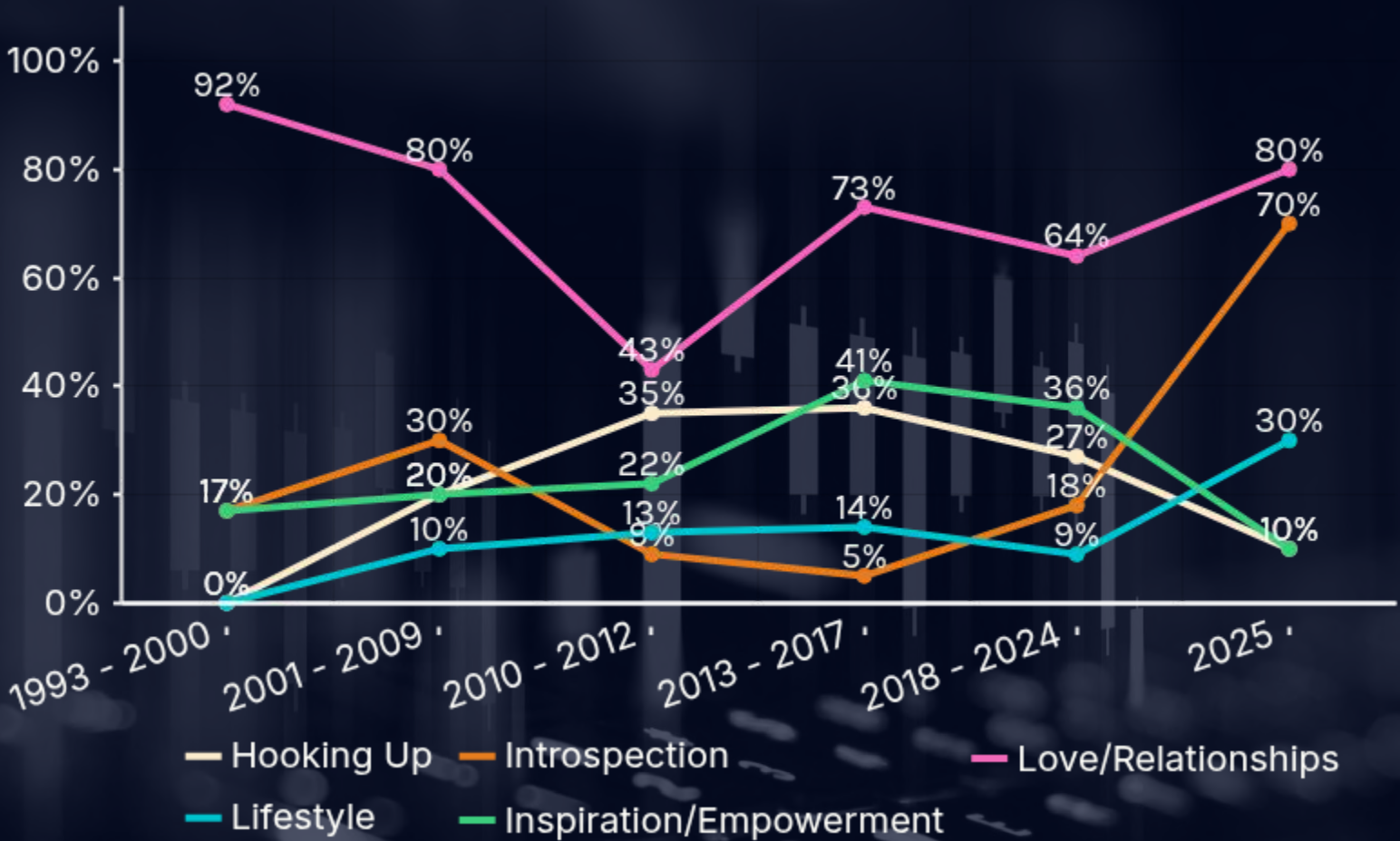
Alt/Indie (27% → 50%)  
Cinematic/Theatrical/Show  
Tune (0% → 20%)



## Decreased

Retro (73% → 40%)  
Dance/Club (64% → 10%)  
Trap (10% → 0%)  
Electropop/Synthpop  
(73% → 30%)

# Lyrical Themes



## Increased

- Introspection (18% → 70%)
- Love/Relationships (64% → 80%)
- Lifestyle (9% → 30%)

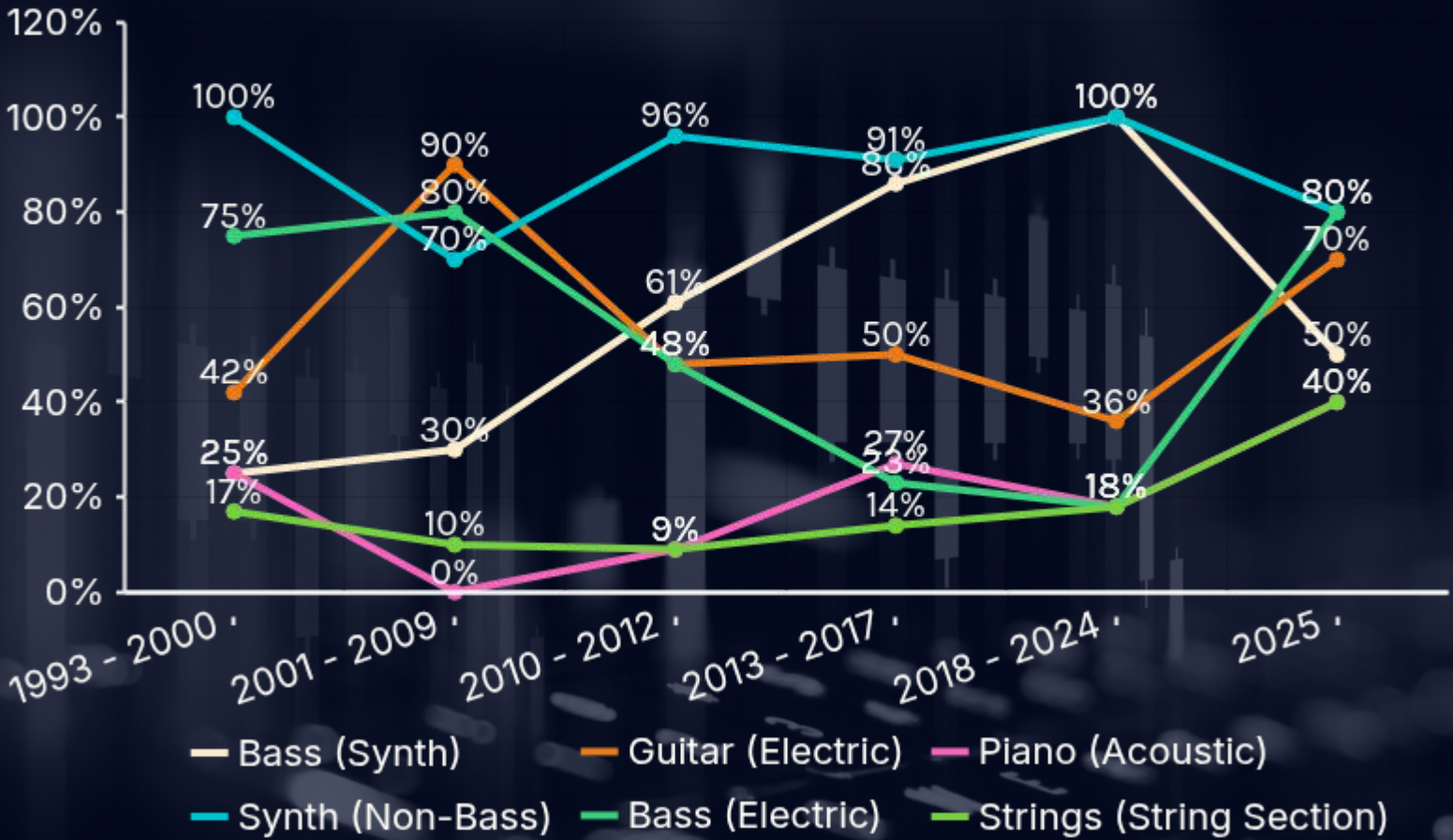


## Decreased

- Hooking Up (27% → 10%)
- Inspiration/Empowerment (36% → 10%)

# Prominent Instruments

(Excludes Drums/Perc)



## Increased

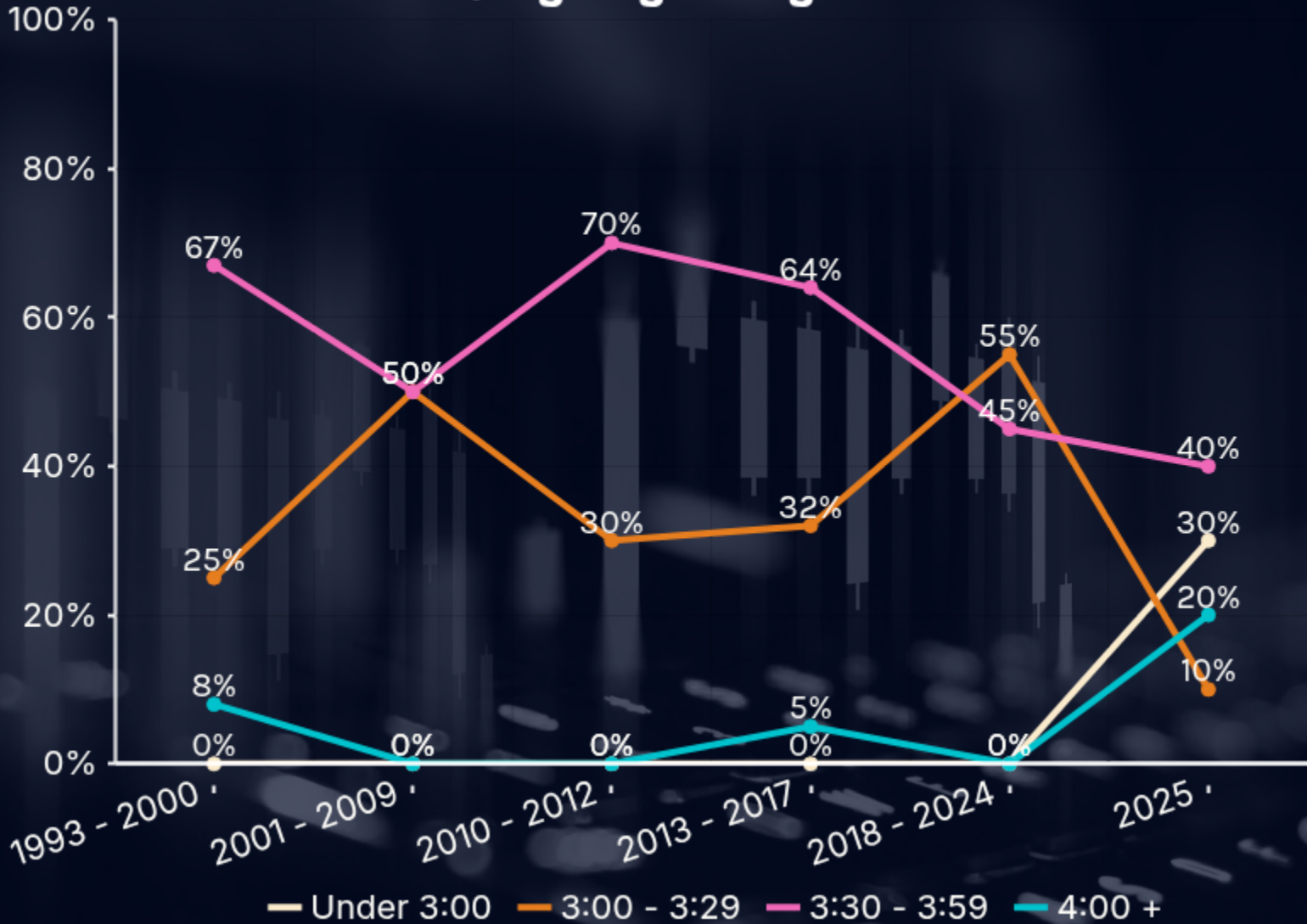
- Guitar (Electric) (36% → 70%)
- Bass (Electric) (18% → 80%)
- Piano (Acoustic) (18% → 40%)
- Strings (String Section) (18% → 40%)



## Decreased

- Bass (Synth) (100% → 50%)
- Synth (Non-Bass) (100% → 80%)

# Song Length Range



## Increased

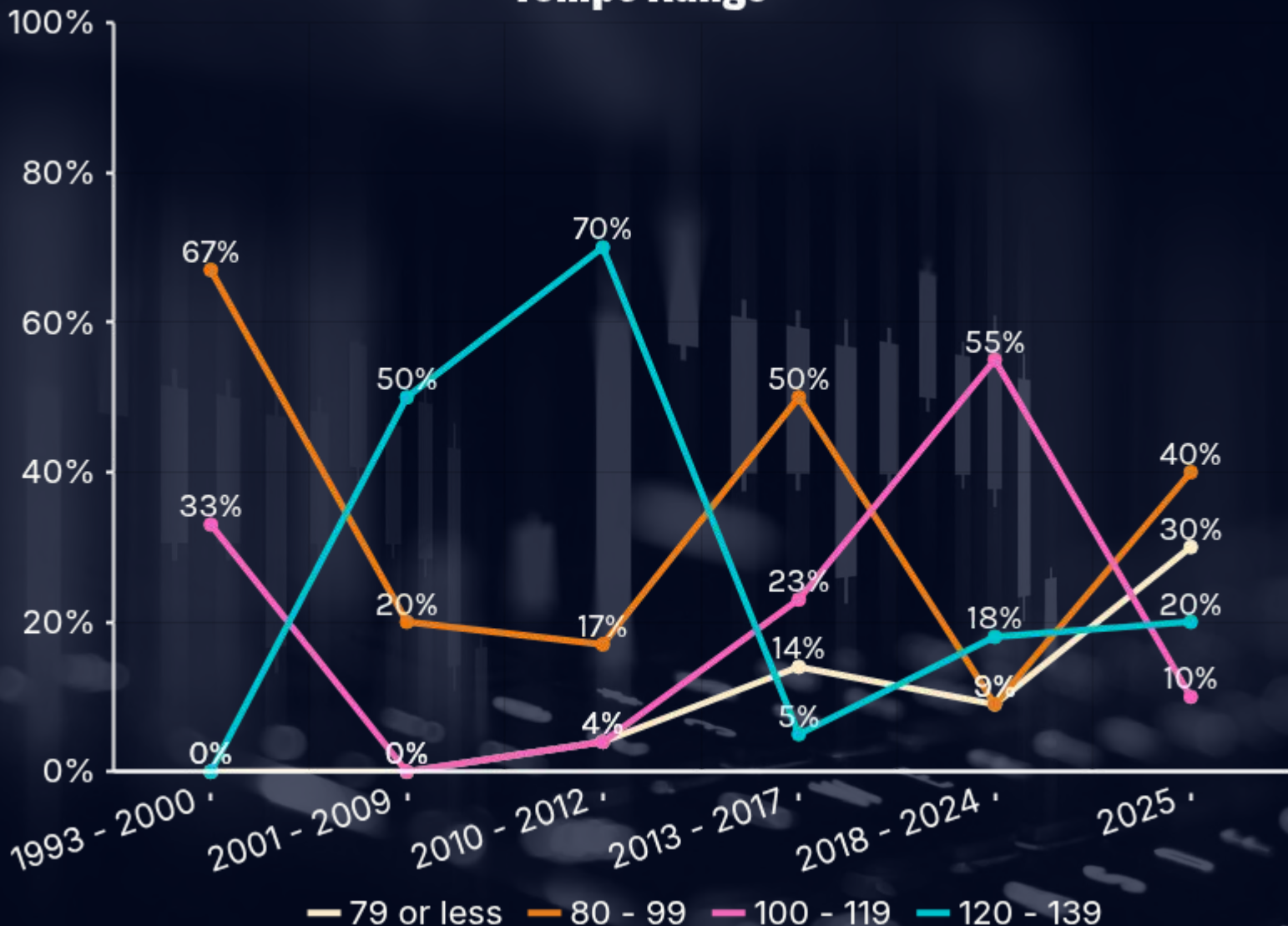
Under 3:00 (0% → 30%)  
4:00 + (0% → 20%)



## Decreased

3:00 - 3:29 (55% → 10%)

# Tempo Range



## Increased

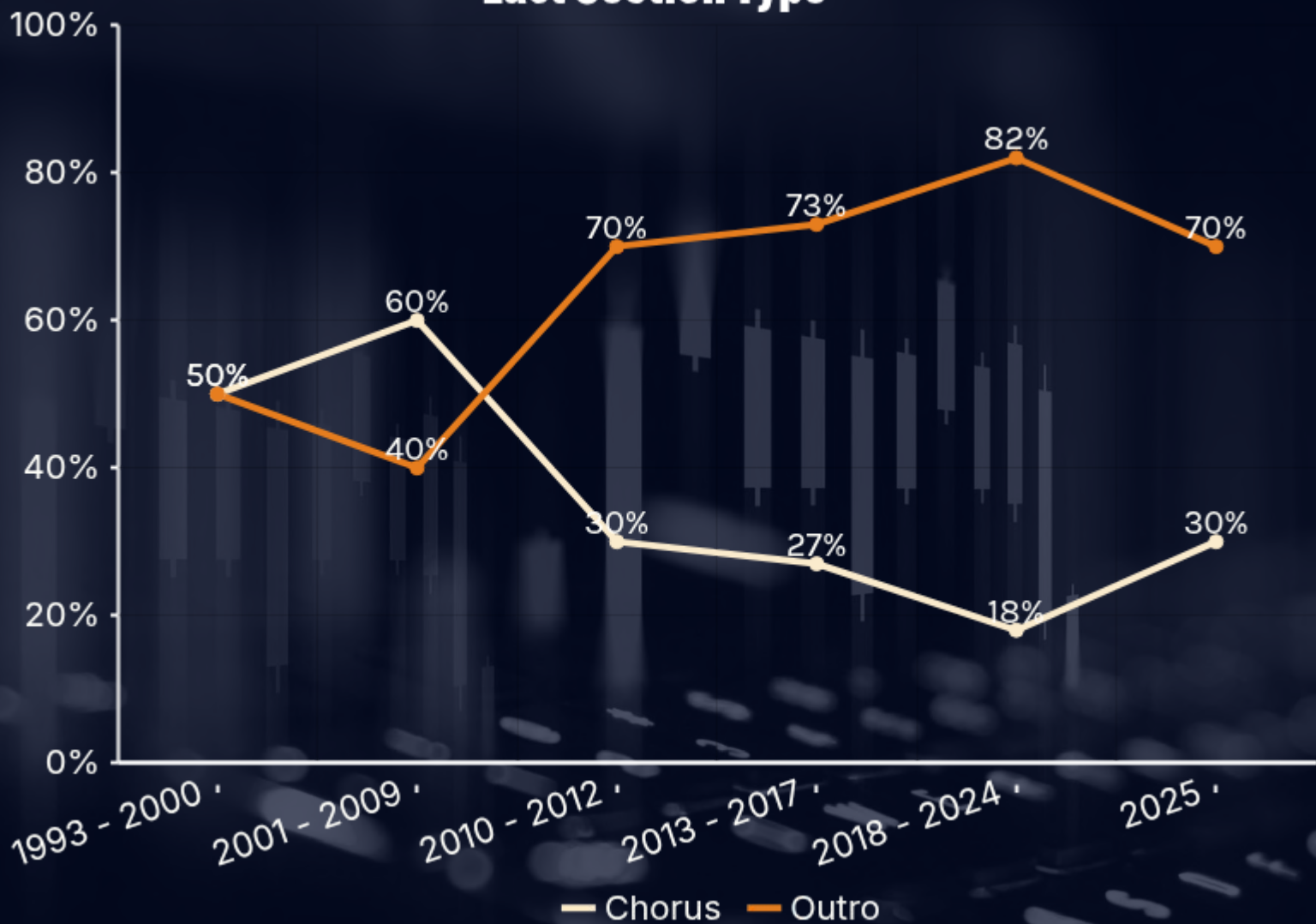
79 or less BPM (9% → 30%)  
80 - 99 BPM (9% → 40%)



## Decreased

100 - 119 BPM (55% → 10%)

## Last Section Type



### Increased

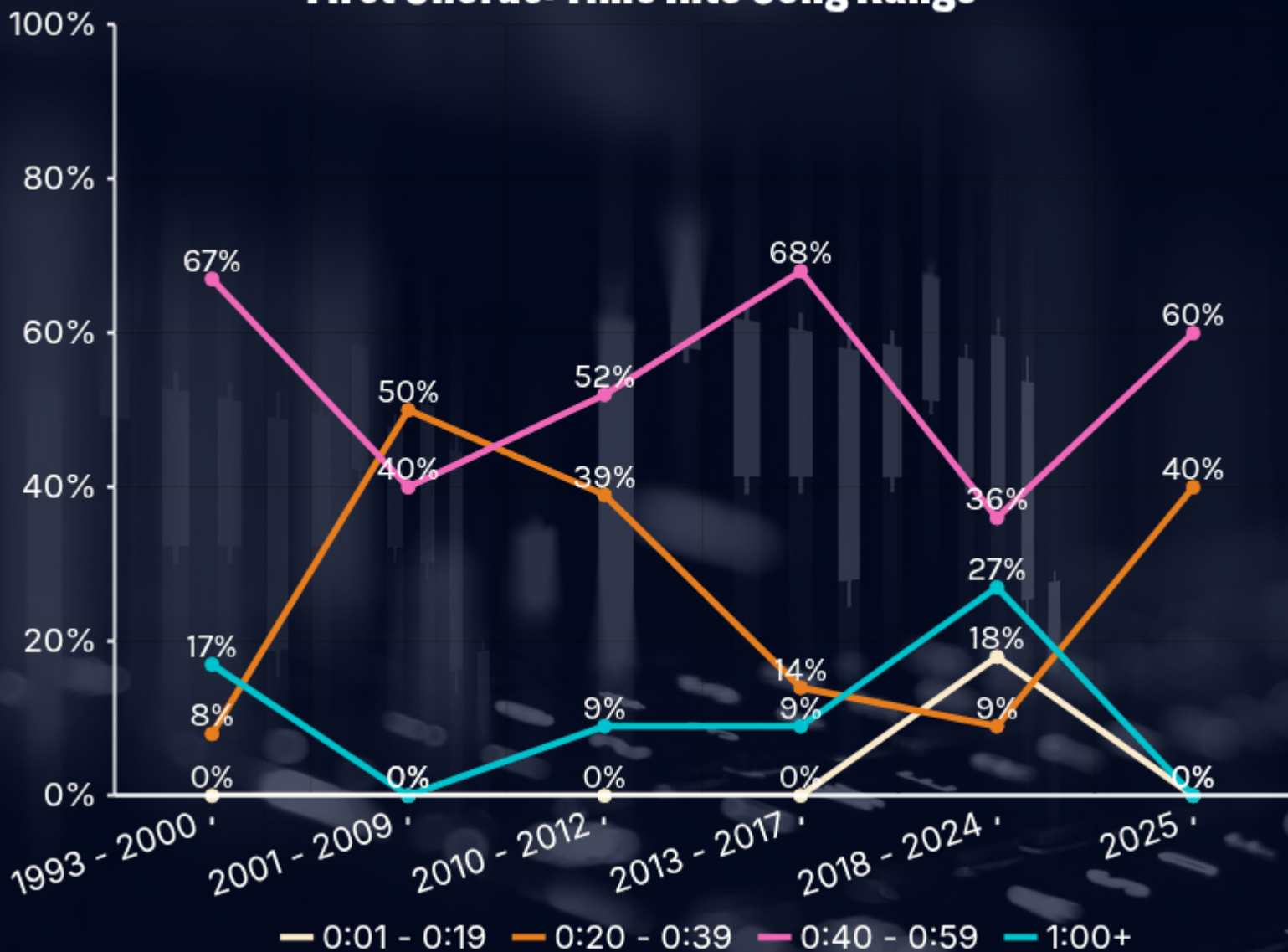
Last Section: Chorus  
(18% → 30%)



### Decreased

Last Section: Outro  
(82% → 70%)

## First Chorus: Time Into Song Range



### Increased

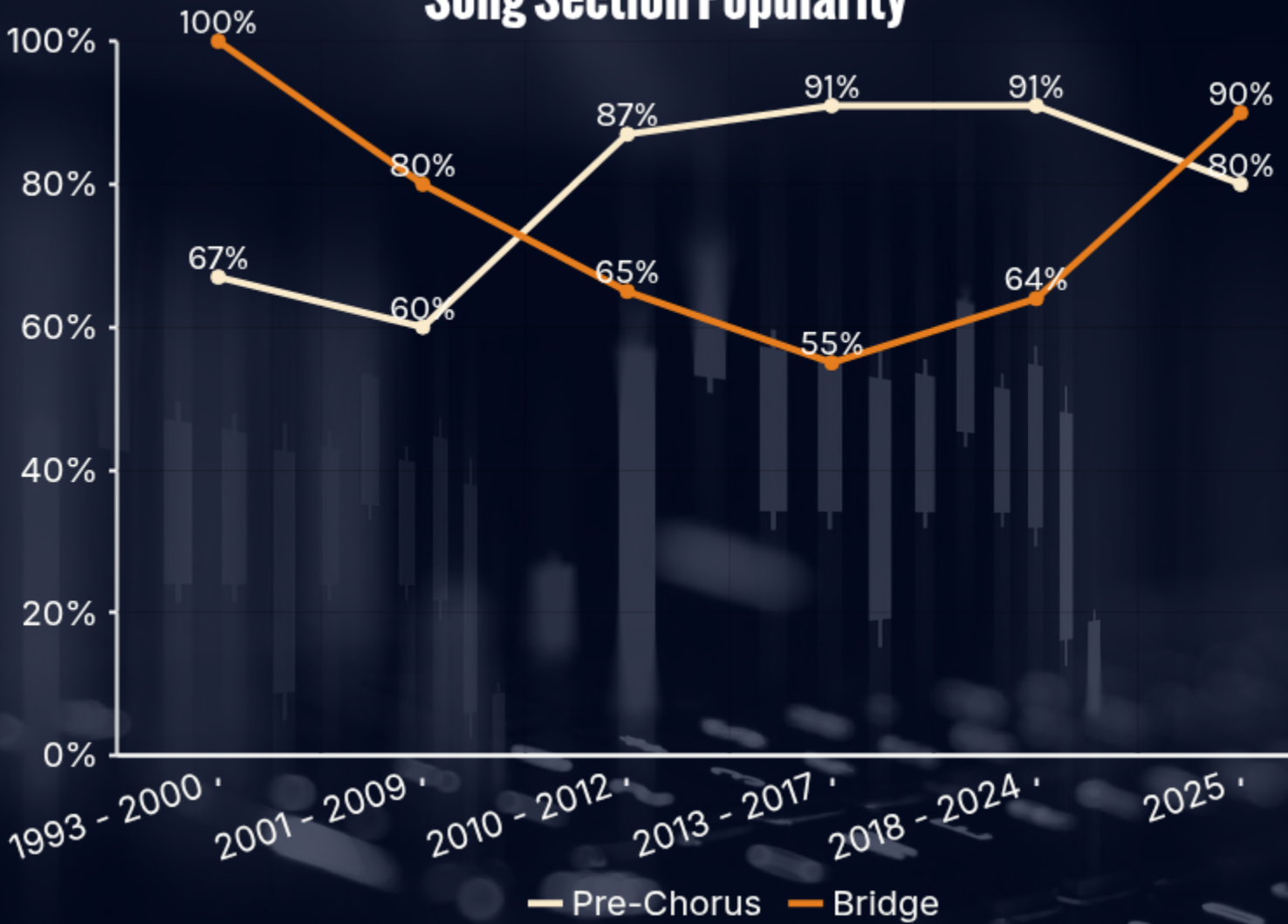
0:20 - 0:39 (9% → 40%)  
0:40 - 0:59 (36% → 60%)



### Decreased

0:01 - 0:19 (18% → 0%)  
1:00+ (27% → 0%)

## Song Section Popularity



**Increased**

Bridge (64% → 90%)



**Decreased**

Pre-Chorus (91% → 80%)

# LEARN THE CRAFT BEHIND MAX MARTIN'S HITS

Gain unparalleled insight into the signature techniques that Max Martin has used to shape the sound of pop music for three decades.

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- Structures melodies using the principles behind melodic math
- Crafts hooks and arranges them for maximum impact
- Aligns melody with lyrics to bring the storyline to life and deepen audience connection
- Foreshadows and reinforces hooks so the chorus feels familiar before it arrives
- Employs Nano Hooks to embellish and energize the arrangement
- And much more!

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- Strategically structures song sections to create a solid foundation for his songs
- Maximizes the impact of song sections ensuring each moment serves a purpose
- Designs dynamic energy flows that keeps the listeners engaged from start to finish
- Creates standout, attention-grabbing moments throughout the song
- Utilizes in-section, like-section, and cross-section arrangement strategies to maximize both memorability and interest
- And much more!



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# MAX MARTIN

## EVOLUTION

A deep dive into the trends behind Max Martin's Hot 100 top 10s.

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