
Doo Wop

The term “Doo Wop” refers to a type of vocal music that became popular in the 1950s. It was usually performed by a group of four or five singers. Some of these groups did not use any musical instruments in their performances, and others had only minimal accompaniment. Instead, they made a wide variety of sounds with their voices. Doo Wop gets its name from the nonsense syllables singers produced as they imitated musical instruments. In many Doo Wop groups, a lead vocalist with a high voice would sing the melody and lyrics of a pop song, while the other members sang nonsense syllables in the background.

Doo Wop originated primarily in African-American communities in big cities like New York and Philadelphia. Amateur and semi-professional groups would practice for fun in public places like street corners, schools, and churches. Many Doo Wop group members learned to sing in school or at church. Because only voices were needed to perform this style of music, it was an inexpensive form of entertainment.

In the 1950s, Rock and Roll disc jockeys began playing Doo Wop on the radio, and audiences liked it. Record companies recruited singing groups off of the streets. White vocal groups, who were more easily accepted by some white audiences, began imitating black Doo Wop singers. Vocal harmony—with a Doo Wop twist—became a common sound all across the country by the middle of the decade.



The Flamingos

In the video:

You will watch the Doo Wop group the Flamingos performing the song “Would I Be Crying?”