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The world of pop music

For many people, pop music means the hit parade, the list of the most popular singles. A single is a record with only two songs, the one which most people want to listen to on the 'A' side, and another, less important song on the 'B' side. But another chart, the list of best-selling albums, often gives a different picture of what is happening in pop.

An album has important advantages for a serious musician. A single lasts three or four minutes, but an album lasts much longer. A musician has more time on an album to express his musical ideas. Also a single usually stays in the charts for about ten or twelve weeks, but an album lasts much longer. For example, we can still buy the first albums of Bob Dylan and the Beatles, more



than ten years after they were made.

A young person who is going to buy an album usually thinks very carefully about his choice. If he buys an album that he does not really like, then he has made quite an expensive mistake. And so, when he is buying an album, a young person will look for one that he can enjoy for a long time.

Many musicians have realised the advantages of making albums. Groups like Pink Floyd, Deep Purple and Emerson, Lake and Palmer release only albums, sometimes double or even triple albums. Other groups, for example Procol Harum or Rod Stewart and the Faces, prefer to make albums, but occasionally also release a good, popular single.

A group or singer usually needs about twelve songs for an album. They may write their own songs, or have the songs specially written for them; or they may choose older songs which they like. When a group have gathered enough songs for the album, they go into the recording studio.

A group sometimes has to work in the recording studio for many weeks to complete an album, although an album can sometimes be recorded 'live' at a concert. Perhaps the group also needs some extra musicians or 'session men' as they are called, to help in the recording.

Before a completed record can be offered for sale, a 'sleeve' has to be designed. The sleeve is the cover of the record. On it are the names of the songs and the musicians and perhaps other information about the record. Usually a commercial artist designs the sleeve, but occasionally a singer or member of the group likes to do it. Bob Dylan, for example, drew the picture on his album *Self Portrait*. The drawings on Ringo Starr's album *Ringo* are by Klaus Voormann, who played on the record itself.

Then the record is ready for the public. Copies are sent to disc-jockeys, who then play it on the radio and perhaps comment on it. Sometimes the record company puts advertisements in the papers. But the success of the record depends finally on the public who decide whether to buy it or not.9

From: The Story of Pop by John Byrne, Heinemann Guided Readers, 1975.

Now, can you match up these words and their definitions?

- 1 single
- 2 live recording
- 3 album
- 4 session men
- 5 sleeve
- 6 hit parade
- A record with about 12 songs
- **B** extra musicians for studio recording
- C list of best-selling records
- D record with 2 songs
- E cover of a record
- F recording made at a concert

Answers to test