

Exploring Contemporary Scottish Music

The Scottish English Podcast – Episode 18



LANGUAGE LEARNING

*Transcript & Upper-intermediate and Advanced
Vocabulary Guide*

Below is the transcript with all selected B2, C1, and above vocabulary and phrases **bolded and underlined**. After the transcript, you'll find a table with definitions, British English pronunciation, and useful collocations/idioms for each highlighted word or phrase.

Transcript (Key Words Highlighted)

When most people think of Scottish music, they imagine bagpipes **echoing** through the Glens, folk songs sung by candlelight, or the **unmistakable** sound of a fiddle.

And yes, those traditions are powerful, beautiful, and still alive.

But today's Scotland is also **buzzing with** new sounds.

From Indie Rock to rap, electronic to soul, Scotland's musicians are **pushing boundaries** and **making waves**, not just at home, but also internationally.

Today we are **turning up the volume** and **tuning into** contemporary Scottish music. The artists and bands who are **defining** the sound of modern Scotland.

Hello and welcome to the Scottish English Podcast, the show where you can learn all about Scotland's history, culture, and accents.

If you want to follow along with this episode a little bit more easily, check out the description where you will find a link to the transcript of the show.

And do subscribe so that you know when the next episode of the Scottish English Podcast comes out.

I'm Claire, and today we are exploring some of the most exciting names in the Scottish music scene. Their styles, their lyrics, and what makes them so uniquely Scottish.

The Scottish music scene today

Let's start with a quick overview.

Scotland may be small, but it's got a huge **musical output**.

Cities like Glasgow and Edinburgh are **cultural hubs** where music of all **genres thrives**.

Glasgow, in fact, was named a UNESCO City of Music in 2008.

And of course, Scotland has given the world big names such as Annie Lennox, Franz Ferdinand, and Calvin Harris.

But today we're focusing on **emerging** and current artists shaping the scene now.

Indie and Alternative

Scotland has long had a strong indie music scene. One of the most internationally recognized names of recent years is CHVRCHES, a **synth pop** trio from Glasgow.

With their **shimmering electronics** and their emotionally honest lyrics, they've played major festivals around the world.

Another **standout** is Lewis Capaldi. Born in West Lothian, his **raspy voice** and his **heartbreak ballads** have earned him global fame. You might know his hit song 'Someone You Loved'.

What's interesting is although Capaldi sings in fairly **neutral English**, he speaks in a strong Scottish accent, full of humour and **slang**. His interviews are a fantastic example of modern spoken Scottish English.

Also worth a listen are the Snuts, an indie rock band from Whitburn, who combine **energetic guitar** with **gritty vocals**.

Hip hop, rap, and **spoken word**

You might not associate Scotland with rap, but that's changing fast.

Bemz, a rapper originally from Nigeria but now based in Ayr, is gaining attention for his thoughtful lyrics and his **commitment to representation** in Scottish music.

Then there's Nova, a young black female rapper from Edinburgh, who won Scottish Album of the Year in 2020. Her music **blends** rap and afrobeats and explores themes like race, identity, and growing up in Scotland.

And don't forget Darren McGarvey, also known as Loki, the Scottish Rapper.

He combines hip hop and **spoken word**, often **tackling issues** like addiction, poverty, and politics. His use of the Glaswegian accent makes his work both challenging and **rewarding** for learners of English.

Folk Fusion and **Gaelic revival**

Scottish traditional music hasn't disappeared. It's evolved. Artists today are **blending old sounds** with new ideas.

Take Julie Fowlis, who sings almost entirely in Scottish Gaelic. Her voice is **ethereal** and she's been a big part of Gaelic music's **resurgence**, even featuring on Disney Pixar's Brave.

And Talisk, a trio mixing fiddle, concertina, and guitar with high energy and modern **flair**, have

taken traditional instruments to **global stages**.

These artists prove that Scottish culture is alive. It isn't just living in the past. It's evolving.

Artists singing in Scots and local accents

One thing that's really exciting is the increased **visibility** of Scottish accents in music. For a long time, many Scottish artists would sing in standard English or with Americanized accents to appeal to a wider audience.

But now more artists are **embracing** their own voices.

For example, Joesef, a **soulful singer** from Glasgow, blends jazz, indie, and R&B, and often uses his Glaswegian accent when singing.

Rachel Sermanni from Carrbridge in the Highlands sings **haunting folk songs** in a soft Highland **lilt**.

And The View, a rock band from Dundee, the town where I grew up, don't **hold back** with their accents.

For learners of English, this can be a great way to **train your ear** to different regional sounds and appreciate the **musicality** of Scottish English itself.

How to explore contemporary Scottish music

Here's a few tips to discover more.

BBC Introducing Scotland and BBC Alba often feature new artists, including those singing in Gaelic and in Scots.

On Spotify and on YouTube, you'll be able to find **curated lists** of Scottish music, and try to watch **live performances** or watch interviews so that you can see the artists speaking in their normal voices. It's a great way to practice your listening skills across accents.

Contemporary Scottish music is **diverse, bold**, and full of character.

Whether it's electronic beats from the Isle of Skye, Indie Rock from Glasgow, or Soul sung in Dundee, there's something truly special happening in Scotland right now. So why not update your playlist? You might just find your next favourite artist with a Scottish twist.

Thanks for tuning into the Scottish English Podcast today. If you enjoyed the show, please subscribe and share this episode with your friends who enjoy Scottish Music. And in the show notes, you'll find a list of all the artists that I have mentioned today.

So until next time, keep your ears open for the sound of Scotland.

Vocabulary List

Word/Phrase	Definition & Pronunciation (BrE)	Collocations & Idiomatic Usage
Echoing	Repeating a sound, reverberating /ˈekəʊɪŋ/	echoing through, echoing footsteps
Unmistakable	Impossible to confuse with anything else /ˌʌnmɪˈsteɪkəbl/	unmistakable sound, unmistakable style
Buzzing with	Full of activity or excitement /ˈbʌzɪŋ wɪð/	buzzing with energy, buzzing with excitement
Pushing boundaries	Going beyond accepted limits /ˈpʊʃɪŋ ˈbaʊndəriz/	push the boundaries, boundary-pushing artist
Making waves	Attracting attention, causing a stir /ˈmeɪkɪŋ weɪvz/	make waves internationally, make waves in (field)
Turning up the volume	Increasing intensity or sound /ˈtɜːnɪŋ ʌp ðə ˈvɒljʊːm/	turn up the volume, turn the volume up
Tuning into	Paying attention to, listening carefully /ˈtjuːnɪŋ ˈɪntuː/	tune into a show, tune into the conversation

Defining	Giving meaning to, shaping /dɪˈfaɪnɪŋ/	defining moment, defining characteristic
Musical output	The amount of music produced /ˈmjuzɪkəl ˈaʊtpʊt/	high output, creative output
Cultural hubs	Centres of activity and creativity /ˈkʌltʃərəl hʌbz/	creative hub, cultural hub
Genres	Categories of artistic composition /ˈʒɒnrəz/	musical genres, genre-bending
Thrive	Grow or develop vigorously /θraɪv/	thrive in, thriving scene

Emerging artists	New and rising talents /ɪˈmɜːdʒɪŋ ˈɑːtɪsts/	emerging talent, emerging trend
Synth pop	Pop music with synthesizers /sɪnθ pɒp/	synth pop band, synth pop sound
Shimmering electronics	Bright, sparkling electronic sounds /ˈʃɪmərɪŋ ɪˌlekˈtrɒnɪks/	shimmering lights, shimmering quality

Standout	Remarkable, easily noticeable /'stænd,aut/	standout performance, standout feature
Raspy voice	Rough, harsh-sounding voice /'rɑ:spi vɔɪs/	raspy tone, develop a raspy voice
Heartbreak ballads	Songs about lost love /'hɑ:tbreɪk 'bælədz/	sing heartbreak ballads, classic ballad
Neutral English	Standard, accent-free English /'nju:trəl 'ɪŋɡlɪʃ/	neutral accent, speak in neutral English
Slang	Informal language /slæŋ/	use slang, Scottish slang
Energetic guitar	Lively guitar playing /,ɛnə'dʒetɪk ɡɪ'tɑ:/	energetic performance, energetic rhythm
Gritty vocals	Raw, rough singing /'grɪti 'vəʊkəlz/	gritty sound, gritty realism
Commitment to	Dedication, strong focus on /kə'mɪtmənt tu:/	commitment to excellence, commitment to cause
Representation	The act of speaking or acting for others /,reprɪzen'teɪʃən/	representation in media, fair representation

Blends	Mixes, combines /blændz/	blend of styles, blend together
Tackling issues	Dealing with problems /'tæklɪŋ 'ɪʃuːz/	tackle a problem, tackle social issues
Rewarding	Satisfying, providing benefit /rɪ'wɔːdɪŋ/	rewarding experience, find rewarding
Blending old sounds	Mixing traditional with new /'blendɪŋ əʊld saʊndz/	blend old and new, blend traditions
Resurgence	Revival, renewed activity /rɪ'sɜːdʒəns/	resurgence of interest, cultural resurgence
Flair	Unique style or elegance /fleə/	artistic flair, show flair
Global stages	International venues /'gləʊbəl steɪdʒɪz/	perform on global stages, global audience
Visibility	Being easily seen or noticed /,vɪzɪ'bɪlɪti/	increase visibility, high visibility
Embracing	Accepting enthusiastically /ɪm'breɪsɪŋ/	embrace change, embrace diversity

Soulful singer	Emotionally expressive singer /'səʊlfʊl 'sɪŋə/	soulful performance, soulful voice
Haunting folk songs	Memorable, evocative folk music /'hɔːntɪŋ fəʊk sɒŋz/	haunting melody, haunting beauty
Lilt	A pleasant, rhythmic swing in speech or music /lɪlt/	Highland lilt, soft lilt
Hold back	Restrain, not show fully /həʊld bæk/	hold back emotions, don't hold back
Train your ear	Develop listening skills /treɪn jɔːr ɪə/	train your ear to, ear training
Musicality	Quality of being musical /,mjuːzɪ'kælɪti/	natural musicality, musicality of language
Curated lists	Carefully selected collections /kjʊ'reɪtɪd lɪsts/	curated playlist, curated content
Live performances	Music performed in real time /laɪv pə'fɔːmənsɪz/	attend live performances, live gig
Diverse	Showing variety /daɪ'vɜːs/	diverse background, diverse range

Bold	Confident, courageous /bəʊld/	bold move, bold decision
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