# 'I'm gay!’ LGBTQ Artists' Impact from the 1950s onwards



In 1972, David Bowie declared "I'm gay" during an interview with Melody Maker, a revelation that had a transformative impact on the pop music industry. This admission came five years after the death of Brian Epstein, the Beatles' manager, who had lived his life concealing his sexuality.

Bowie's coming out was part of a broader cultural shift that had roots as early as 1955 when Little Richard released "Tutti Frutti," a song with overt references to gay sex. The late 60s and early 70s saw increasing visibility and influence of LGBTQ performers in the music industry, from the disco scene to artists like Dusty Springfield and Tom Robinson.

Jon Savage's book, "The Secret Public: How LGBTQ Performers Shaped Popular Culture (1955-1979)," delves into this history, exploring the profound impact LGBTQ artists had on popular music. By the 1980s, figures like Frankie Goes to Hollywood's Holly Johnston and Dead or Alive's Pete Burns further exemplified the growing acceptance and influence of LGBTQ artists in pop music.

Despite advancements, challenges persisted, as seen with George Michael and his eventual public coming out in 1998, which reshaped perceptions of LGBTQ artists. Savage's book highlights the continuous struggle and contributions of LGBTQ artists, illustrating how their presence profoundly shaped the landscape of popular culture.