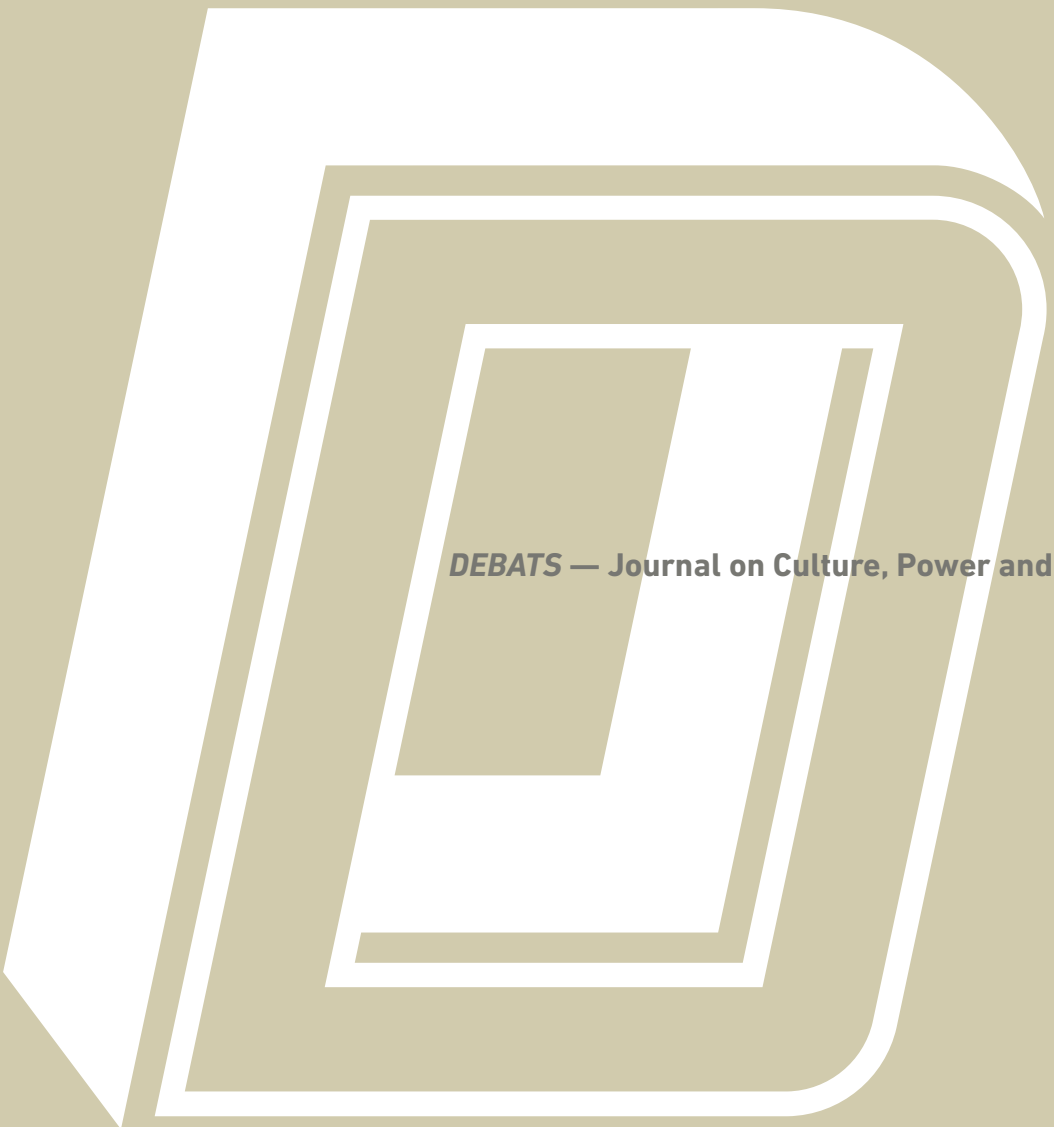
— Journal on Culture, Power and Society

Annual Review 9
2024

DEBATS

Special Issue
Rock is dead? Long live to sociology of rock!

Contributions Fernán del Val, Cristian Martín Pérez-Colman, Simon Frith, Motti Regev, Amparo Lasén, Candy Leonard, Manuela Belén Calvo



DEBATS — Journal on Culture, Power and Society

Annual Review 9

2024

DEBATS
— Journal on Culture, Power and Society

Annual Review, 9
2024

Send correspondence, subscription requests, and orders to
Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society
Institució Alfons el Magnànim – Centre Valencià d'Estudis i d'Investigació
Carrer Corona, 36 / 46003 València / Tel. +34 963 883 169 / Fax +34 963 883 170
secretaria.debats@dival.es / www.revistadebats.net / www.alfonselmagnanim.net

Annual subscription for the printed journal, issued twice a year, is available (two issues a year, price includes Spanish VAT and mailing costs). Payments should be made by bank transfer to the following payee: Debats. Revista de cultura, poder i societat / Institució Alfons el Magnànim. Diputació de València.

Annual subscription: €10
Single Issue: €6

Distribution
Sendra Marco, distribució d'edicions, SL
C/ Taronja, 16 / 46210 Picanya / Tel. +34 961 590 841
sendra@sendramarco.com

ISSN 2530-898X (print)
ISSN 2530-8262 (electronic)
Legal registration number: V-978-1982

arce ASOCIACIÓN DE REVISTAS CULTURALES DE ESPAÑA
This journal is a member of Arce

Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society

Debats was launched in 1982 as the journal of the Institution of Alfonso The Magnanimous (IAM) and shortly afterwards, of the Valencia Institute of Research and Investigation (IVEI). Its mission, then as now, is to foster and update the great debates on Social Sciences in the Valencian region, and to facilitate participation by leading experts in the field. The Debats journal is now a bi-annual publication. Its objective is to: (1) bring together current intellectual reflections on culture (both in its broadest sense of cultural practices and in the narrower sense of the Arts); (2) examine the links between culture and power, identity, geographies, and social change. The Journal covers matters that are relevant to Valencian society and its wider setting. That said, the aim is to make Debats a key scholarly publication in both Europe and further afield. Debats' starts from the perspective of the Social Sciences but it also aims to forge links with contemporary analysis and debates in the Humanities, Communication Studies, and Cultural Studies fields. It calls for methodological pluralism while fostering innovation through the adoption of new research techniques and ways of communicating scholarly findings to a broader public. In a nutshell, the Journal is an invaluable tool for analysing emerging problems in the cultural field and in contemporary society. In playing this role, it takes a broad, multi-disciplinary view and combines social impact with scientific rigour in scholarly publications and debates at the international level.

Databases and directories

— Compludoc
— Dialnet
— Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)
— Emerging Sources Citation Index
— ERIH PLUS
— ISOC – Revistas de CC. Sociales y Humanidades
— Red de Bibliotecas Universitarias (REBIUN)
— Red Iberoamericana de Innovación y Conocimiento Científico (REDIB)
— Periodical Index Online

Evaluation systems

— Scopus
— CARHUS+ 2014
— CIRC (Clasificación Integrada de Revistas)
— DICE. Difusión y Calidad Editorial de las Revistas de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales y Jurídicas
— IN~RECS (Índice de Impacto de Revistas Españolas de Ciencias Sociales)
— Latindex
— MIAR (Matriz de Información para el Análisis de Revistas)
— Revistas Españolas de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades (RESH)

Contents

Special Issue: Rock is Dead? Long Live to Sociology of Rock!

Guest Editor
Fernan del Val, Cristian Martín Pérez Colman

Special Issue

Rock is dead? Long live to sociology of rock!

Presentation of the monograph, 'Rock is dead? Long live to sociology of rock!'

Coordinated by

Fernán del Val

UNED

Cristian Martín Pérez Cólman

UNIVERSIDAD ALFONSO X EL SABIO

In their latest live album, *En el Fillmore* (2023), the rock group Los Deltonos, originally from Cantabria and with a long career in Spanish rock, full of ups and downs, conflicts with record companies, expulsion of members and some doses of rock authenticity, throw a question into the air to their followers: Has rock died? A sparse chorus of deep voices answers without much enthusiasm: No!

The topic of the death of rock, raised on numerous occasions throughout the 20th century, has become difficult to refute at this point in the 21st century: other musical genres, such as electronic music, reggaeton, trap or pop, that metagenre that assimilates any musical expression, are at the top of sales, listening, viewing charts, etc. It turns out that, as the sociologist Andy Bennet (2013) observed, Western societies are increasingly older, and musical tastes that originate in adolescence and youth are maintained throughout the life of many fans. Subcultural styles, participation in music scenes and attendance at concerts and festivals are still common practices for people over forty years of age. The most important popular music festivals are still headed by rock groups, and survivors of the 1960s are a sought-after item (Cruz, 2023), although the most current bands lack that prestige. Therefore, although rock is in the grave, it continues to provide huge economic benefits and continues to be part of the daily soundtrack of millions of people.

But as Simon Frith points out in the text he contributes to this dossier, popular music, throughout the 20th century, spoke about present and future, or at least imagined possible futures. However, as Simon Reynolds (2012) pointed out some time ago, rock has been immersed for thirty years in nostalgic and "retromaniac" loops, revivals and stylistic exercises, brilliantly executed by young and not so young people. Now this look towards the future would be intertwined with other genres such as drill or trap, embracing autotune and the creative freedom provided by the new technologies (Mackintosh, (2022)).

SOCIOLOGY AND ROCK (A MARRIAGE THAT HAS NOT LOST ALL ITS FIRE)

This monograph on sociology and rock aims to delve into an area of sociology that has barely had any impact in the Spanish academy. To this end, this dossier includes works by authors that we consider to be of great relevance within the sociological field of the study of rock, as well as new authors who are currently working, from the social sciences, on some of the different dimensions of this genre.

It seems strange that a branch of study, associated with one of the most important and outstanding sociological phenomena of the last century, has been left in a sort of oblivion and masking in the Spanish academy. Although perhaps we should start from a broader fact: the sociology of culture, which we could understand as the area in which the study of rock could have its welcome, is a minor branch within Spanish sociology, and although in recent years it has had a certain upturn, it has been far from the importance of other disciplines. Just as rock, as a cultural field, has had a complex establishment in Spanish culture, the sociology of rock has entered the Spanish academy late (from the turn of the century), when the effervescence of the phenomenon was far away.[1]

The sociology of rock was initially the logical development of the study of a multiple field that concerned musical production in the context of the recording industry of the second half of the 20th century, which linked post-war youth with a new social and cultural paradigm based on the rejection of the adult world and the experience of a hedonism founded on leisure, which was justified by an ideology of authenticity that recovered the romantic tradition of art, etc. At the end of the seventies and beginning of the eighties, Simon Frith justified the need for a sociological analysis of rock by postulating this musical field as a form of mass communication. The Frankfurt School, the emerging cultural studies, the sociology of education or the sociology of youth served as academic perspectives for this British sociologist.

1 With the right amount of egocentrism, the authors of the dossier consider that some of our works would represent that small share of attention paid to rock in Spanish sociology. See Pérez Colman & Val ((2009)), Val, Noya & Pérez Colman (2014), Val (2017) or Pérez Colman (2017). Of course, the study of rock and popular music in Spain is not limited to our works, since both musicology and communication are two fruitful areas (more so than sociology) in the study of these genres. An updated state of the art can be found in Piquer (2020).

It is evident, however, that rock has not been an exclusive object of study of sociology. If Frith's work laid the groundwork for its academic study, the appearance in the eighties of the *popular music studies*, linked to the IASPM (International Association for the Study of Popular Music), placed the study of rock under an amalgam of perspectives, in which musicology, communication, cultural studies and, to a lesser extent, sociology, discussed the validity of this genre and its consumption. The consolidation of *popular music studies* and cultural studies as academic degrees meant that sociology gradually gave way in its study.

How did this situation come about? It must be remembered that, originally, musicology was dedicated to the study and analysis in a general sense of Western music of cultured and artistic tradition, which we usually informally call *classical music*. The rest of musical manifestations remained outside the musicological academy. On the one hand, the various traditional and artistic kinds of music of the rest of the non-Western world were addressed by ethnomusicology, while folklore was concerned with rural music of the Western oral tradition. On the other hand, however, the emerging field of urban popular music in the first half of the 20th century, dismissed by musicology because it found little musical value in it with respect to the canonical tradition, and removed from folklore or the anthropology of music because it was understood as a manifestation of a music genre without connection with the peoples of the world, was left under the protection of sociological concern. It seemed that these new music genres only had value as a manifestation of the new mass society. Theodor Adorno was the most notable case, although not without controversy, of the sociological concern for the new recorded popular music genres. In him, we find a clear identification of the new music genres with the mass society and the capitalist exploitation of music. For Adorno, popular music is a manipulative creation whose purpose is to adapt the working masses to a conformist ideology lacking critical vision (or hearing) with regard to the system in which they find themselves.

When rock music emerged and had an incredible global impact, this division of the study and analysis of the worlds of music was still operating in the academy: musicology and canonical tradition, folklore and oral tradition, ethnomusicology and world music, sociology and urban popular music. The difference, however, this time, was that, instead of criticizing the manipulation of the masses, the analysis of the different sociological dimensions of rock suggested not a manipulation but a liberation of the masses, whose fundamental subject, moreover, was identified with the new post-war youth.

Rock music initially celebrated youth as a group in itself, as Deena Weinstein (1991) pointed out. Remember the image of American teenagers transformed into a consumer group. Then, in the sixties, rock began to celebrate youth not only as a group in itself, but as a group for itself. Consider the social and cultural changes experienced in that decade. From the late seventies onwards, rock began to celebrate a certain idea of youth, youth as a floating signifier, freed from any precise link to a particular age

group. According to Weinstein, in this context, the problem of the sociology of rock could have been the lack of theoretical cohesion.

Even so, contributions to the study of rock from sociological knowledge have been key to its development. The works of Richard A. Peterson on the origin of rock ((1990)) or on the cycles of the popular music industry (1975), in which he applied the sociology of organizations to the study of the central institutions of popular music (music industry, media, copyright societies) showed how the development of rock could be explained beyond creativity or the idea of artistic genius. Motti Regev, who also participates in the special issue, applied the advances of Bourdieu's sociology of culture to show how, based on the work of music criticism, rock has emerged as an artistic form (Regev, 1994). Regev's work, specifically in "Ethno-National Pop-Rock Music: Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism Made from Within" (2007) and "Pop-Rock Music as Expressive Isomorphism: Blurring the National, the Exotic, and the Cosmopolitanism in Popular Music" (2007), is especially relevant from the Spanish perspective, since his view of rock is constructed from Israel, not from the Anglophone world, with special attention to rock in Latin America and Spain. This has allowed him to introduce a nuance that the Anglophone academy had not analysed: how rock is globalized and adapted to each culture through the concept of aesthetic cosmopolitanism. Problematizing the ideas of rock as an example of imperialist globalization, Regev explains how this genre has been linked to its own cultural patterns, hybridizing with sounds, music, languages and native accents. The one-offs of sociology and rock have also been notable, and partly a constant, as was the case of H. Stitch Bennet and *On becoming a Rock Musician* (1980), a notable ethnographic work on the experience of being a rock musician, or Peter Wicke and his *Rock Music. Culture, Aesthetics and Sociology* ((1990)), one of the first attempts to summarize the study and analysis of rock.

Another important contribution to this line of studies, in a sociological, rock and, finally, Spanish-speaking key, are the works that have addressed the study of rock in Argentina. The peculiarities of the so-called *national rock*, especially from the eighties onwards, when the Falklands War led the military juntas to ban music in English on the radio, encouraged the production of their own music, while rock concerts became spaces of symbolic resistance to the dictatorship and the war. In the mid-eighties, Pablo Vila (1985) was already analysing this political dimension of national rock, some of whose ideas are also present in the works of Pablo Alabarces (1992), and thus began a line of work that is continuing today with researchers who are delving into rock music production since the seventies (Delgado, 2017; Sánchez Trolliet, (2022)). Scenes such as metal are also being analysed by researchers such as Manuela Belén Calvo (2021), with whom we feature in this dossier, and who also pays attention to gender and identity studies.

Despite these contributions, the limitations of the sociology of rock in its study are clear, and they are nonetheless the limitations that the sociology of music and the sociology of culture show, that is, those of a fertile field in adapting theoretical innovations that

arise in other fields of sociological knowledge, but with little theoretical contribution of its own to the study of its object. Simon Frith successfully applied the advances of the sociology of education and showed the importance of art schools in the configuration of a rock bohemianism in the United Kingdom in the sixties. He also collected the vigour of cultural studies (see, for example, Hall & Jefferson, 1976, or Hebdige, 2004) to explain the connections between youth, music and style in the identity constructions of youth. Peterson introduced organizational analysis to analyse the role of institutions in the development of musical genres. Regev turned to Bourdean knowledge, perhaps the most culturally linked of those discussed here, as well as to the theories of globalization and cosmopolitanism. But we do not find in these authors a conceptualization of their own, which in turn has inspired other sociological knowledge.

We can introduce two caveats here. One would be the concept of authenticity, which Frith develops, applied to rock, in his first works, and which has generated an extensive bibliography. Frith demonstrates with this concept that rock constructs a discourse that is still current on the role of culture as resistance to the commercial dynamics of capitalism. Rock would be an element of solidity in the face of the liquidity of postmodern society and against the cannibalism of the music industry. Debates about authenticity are classics in art, and their presence in popular cultures is notorious: football, politics, the media, are spaces in which the authentic (within its various meanings) is valued. On the other hand, Regev, in "The «Pop-Rockization» of Popular Music" (2002), raises another element of discussion: that of the pop-rockization effect of popular music. Regev suggests that the ways of composing, creating, disseminating and consuming music that developed from rock have spread to various musical genres. Thus, current genres that challenge the authenticity of rock (rap, trap) follow logics that began to develop in the 1950s in that genre.

CONTENTS OF THE MONOGRAPH

Finally, we will present the contents of the special issue, the authors who participate, some of the contributions in their texts and the interview with the musician and researcher Santiago Auserón.

We have already commented on the importance of Simon Frith in the development of the sociology of rock and of music in general. Therefore, it is an honour to have a text of his in this dossier. In his article "Performing Rites revisited", Frith presents a review of his seminal work *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (1996).2 The author's starting point is that, if aesthetic judgements are rooted in a social context, as he argued in this work, the technological, geographical, social and political changes that have affected popular music in the last twenty years must have had an impact

2 Perhaps indicative of the weight of rock sociology in each country, perhaps pure coincidence, this book by Frith was translated into Spanish and published in Argentina by Paidós in 2014 but has never been published in Spain.

on these judgements and on the way they are constructed. For example, the forms of consumption have become individualized. We no longer listen to music that we don't want to listen to, Frith tells us. In the era of *scarcity*, before digital developments, records were bought blindly, perhaps only guided by a single, and, to listen to that single, you had to listen to the radio, which played songs that you might not like, but which you ended up memorizing, waiting for your particular hit to play. Something similar happened with music video programmes. Streaming platforms, YouTube, MP3..., the logic of abundance, allow us to listen to what we want when we want, but tastes are built in a less collective way, sharing and knowing less about what others listen to in their own bubbles.

At the same time, the text also serves to point out some gaps in academic approaches to popular music. One of these gaps would be what Frith defines as the "inability" of academics to listen to music and pay attention to sounds. The approach to music is left in the background, while contexts and meanings are unravelled. What Frith proposes is to develop a musical sociology, rather than a sociology of music (Val, (2022)). This would imply that researchers begin to pay attention to listeners: pay attention to the ways of listening, to the uses of music, to their judgments and opinions, leaving aside the intentions (distinctions) that sociology usually circumscribes to the acts of listening. And if we begin to pay attention to listening, we should also pay attention, says Frith, to dancing. Dancing and listening to music are linked activities, although they are not analysed as such. As we will see later, Amparo Lasén's text, based precisely on some classic texts by Frith, rethinks these questions.

Finally, we would like to remember this phrase from the text: "If I had to rewrite *Performing Rites* now, I would be less interested in how musicians become stars than in how musicians give meaning to their lives when they do not become stars", that is, to build a less *rockist* sociology, less focused on musicians, sales and record companies, and more focused on music as a generator of meaning and social relations.

We also highlight the collaboration of the Israeli sociologist Motti Regev. Unlike Frith, who has been translated in some cases, there were no publications by Regev in Spanish until now. His work takes up sociological analysis and focuses on the analysis of the artistic dimensions and the impact that rock has had as a global language on the rest of the world's music scenes. He has written a number of articles and summarized much of his ideas in P*op-rock Music. Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism in Late Modernity* (2013).

In the article we share here, Regev reflects on how the experience of rock has helped to establish a form of globalized and shared bodily knowledge, a kind of cosmopolitan *habitus*. This embodied, bodily and sonorous knowledge is evidence not only of the aesthetic cosmopolitanism in which we sociologically inhabit, but of the *rockized* form in which various citizens of the world currently share an appreciative capital, a *habitus* equipped with the cultural knowledge that allows the immediate, spontaneous and intuitive deciphering of musical sounds typical of pop-rock, whether local, indigenous or Anglo-American.

In short, Regev, when referring ultimately to *pop-rockization*, goes beyond rock as a genre and speaks to us of pop-rock as a global situation of contemporary music that has been built on the foundations of North American urban popular music since the midtwentieth century. All subsequent developments, rock, hard rock, reggae, hip-hop, punk or disco, to mention a few, would emerge from the same matrix of international musical and cultural interaction; always under the waning Anglophone gaze, waning not as a definitive retreat, but as leaving space for new sounds and forms of body knowledge. Rock, in Regev's sociology then, would be the starting style or genre, the origin of a new popular music and the beginning of a path of unstoppable cosmopolitanization.

Manuela Calvo, an Argentine researcher focused on metal studies and doctor in communication, represents the academic cosmopolitanism that is in some way homologous, in the Bourdesian sense, to the aesthetic cosmopolitanism of pop-rock mentioned by Motti Regev. Coming from the margins of the musical and academic periphery, her work brings us closer to gender studies, with attention focused on the discursive formation of metal authenticity in the Argentine case.

In her article, entitled "Metal in Argentina: spatio-temporal disputes of a musical scene", Calvo reflects on the academic situation of the study of musical scenes in light of the results of her ethnographic work. The author focuses on how there are global patterns in the construction of musical scenes —in her case, metal— following the lead of Regev or Peterson, while the Argentine case presents certain characteristics of its own, due to its location in the global south and on the linguistic periphery, as well as the unequal situation found in the various local scenes. At the same time, she points out the elements that constitute the legitimizing discourses of *authentic* Argentine metal.

Through her ethnographic work, Calvo identifies the way in which the masculinization of metal has implied, in the discourses of authenticity, the denial or denigration of the feminine dimensions of rock, helping to replicate and maintain in the Argentine musical field the distinctions that Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie ((1990) in bibliography, original from 1978) identified early on in the Anglo-Saxon field.

Candy Leonard is an American sociologist who has researched and analysed the effect that the Beatles' music, listening to it, as well as their communal activity through fandom has had on the baby boomer generation. We can situate her work within the Beatles studies, another of the emerging branches and subdisciplines within the field of rock studies that has had a broad development in recent decades.

In the work presented here, Leonard, taking up her research *Beatleness: how the Beatles and their fans remade the world* (2014), shows us how the boomer experience of growing up with the Beatles is deeply embedded in their consciousness, both as a lifelong resource for resilience and for their well-being. As she points out, this generation's deep commitment to music and musical fandom are resources that can be harnessed not only by the fans themselves, but also by families or health professionals to extend

life expectancy, mitigate loneliness, maximize engagement and improve the quality of life of this first generation of *old fans*, and, given how generational barriers cross over, of the next generations as well.

The Beatles have always been first in their field, and, in this way, Leonard's work, in the logic of aesthetic cosmopolitanism, helps us to understand and foresee the possible paths that the fan experience, audience aging and even the future of the world's health systems, taking into account the cognitive deterioration that comes with old age, may take.

As we pointed out earlier, Amparo Lasén's text seems to dialogue, to a certain extent, with some of the criticisms that Frith develops around the sociologies of music. Lasén, a professor of sociology at the Complutense University of Madrid, has developed an extensive career as a professor and researcher in France, Spain and the United Kingdom, countries where she has analysed contemporary cultural and visual dynamics until becoming a pioneer in the study of techno in Spain (Lasén & Martínez de Albéniz, 2001).

In her article, the author tries to turn around some gender readings around rock as a sexist genre, and the concept of *cock rock*, precisely coined by Frith and McRobbie in the seventies to account for certain masculinities that are woven around rock. The idea of analysing rock from the point of view of fans brings sociology closer to audiences and leaves aside a certain fixation with musicians and journalists, understanding music as an element that allows for the construction of identities, not so much as a reflection of them.

And focusing on dance, on its disruptive potential, on the practices of the subjects, allows us to rethink some previous notions about rock and masculinity. Without denying the sexist component of this genre, some men can rethink gender mandates and construct different, strange, uncomfortable masculinities. In fact, the referents of Anglo-Saxon cock rock (Robert Plant, Mick Jagger) are not examples of a hegemonic masculinity. The rocker does not dance, or dances badly, something that is not hard to admit because, within masculinity, dancing badly is not something to be ashamed of. On the other hand, some types of dance, such as pogo, are accepted and shared as a manifestation of energy and the rock community.

This monograph closes with an interview with Santiago Auserón, also known as Juan Perro. Just for the role played as a founding member of Radio Futura, this Spanish musician would already be worth a prominent place in the history of popular urban music. However, Auserón has a history before and after Radio Futura, which makes him one of the most interesting central figures of Hispanic American sound culture. A philosopher by training, including a PhD at the Complutense University, Auserón put on the boots of Juan Perro, "a kind of bluesman sonero troubadour", and set off on a transatlantic adventure back and forth that has not yet ended.

In this interview, among other topics, Auserón reviews the emergence of rock, that "kind of collusion between poetic need and the ability to reach many people". He

points out the radical paradox of rock or *tension* —as he himself calls it— of being initially an experimental and at the same time multitudinous artistic form in which "artistic experimentation, which was previously only in the hands of the poetic or plastic avantgardes, suddenly comes to be in the hands of children of the working class". Auserón blows up some assumptions of canonical sociology of art (such as Bourdieusian): being artistic and popular go hand in hand, as does the industry when it pays attention to the creative whims of kids.

Another moment worth highlighting in the interview occurs when he talks about musical globalization and makes his position clear: "What we are proposing is to defend a criterion of foreignness internalized in the soul". In his own way, he agrees with the general postulates of aesthetic cosmopolitanism about which Motti Regev talks. In any case, and this is the important thing, it is about the native vision, the *emic* vision of rock and its syncretic and hybrid vocation, especially when it leaves the USA (although Auserón also points out that the USA music itself is just a hybridization that takes African elements but displaces them or takes them a step beyond their original form). Along these lines, he affirms that "we are involved in a millennial process of miscegenation whose trace can be described rhythmically, that is, in the ternary rhythms that Spain exports to the entire American continent, Central America and the Southern Cone, in which ternary rhythms predominate, the *little waltzes*, which were played in Spain from the Golden Age onwards".

Auserón is also going to talk about another of his compositional efforts: using Spanish and applying its metrics and accents to the rhyme of popular music. The counterpart to the native language is also not lost on comment: rock was born in a foreign language, and its original charm lies in its sonority. The "rhythmic, vibrant, contagious, electric, foreign sound allowed us to be infected by a music whose lyrics we did not understand, and we did not care". Auserón lays bare that often hidden pleasure of the weight of sound in the initial attraction of rock for non-English speakers —here Mafalda's joke plays in its splendour, that nobody knows what woof means, but half the world like dogs.

A last great moment that we are going to mention here from the interview occurs when Auserón, speaking about Radio Futura, alludes to one of the most important keys to its success: work. "Radio Futura's success consisted in going from ignorance of the musical profession to good professionalism on stage", he says, putting work above genius.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Alabarces, P. (1992). *Entre gatos y violadores. El rock nacional en la cultura argentina*. Buenos Aires: Colihue.

Bennett, A. (2013). *Music, style and aging. Growing old disgracefully?* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Bennet, H. S. (1980). *On becoming a rock musician*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts.

Calvo, M. B., Pascuchelli, M. & Vidal. P. (2021). Los estudios del metal en Argentina: un posible estado del arte. *El Oído Pensante* vol. 9, no 2: 252-278.

Cruz, N. (2023). *Macrofestivales. El agujero negro de la música*. Barcelona: Península Ediciones.

Delgado, J. (2017). *Tu tiempo es hoy: una historia de Almendra*. Azuqueca de Henares: Eterna Cadencia.

Frith, S. (1978). *The sociology of rock*. London: Constable.

Frith, S. (1980). *La sociología del rock*. Madrid: Júcar.

Frith, S. (1981). *Sound effects. Youth, leisure, and the politics of rock'n'roll*. New York: Pantheon.

Frith, S. (1996). *Performing rites. On the value of popular music*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Frith, S. (2007). T*aking popular music seriously. Selected essays*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Frith, S. & Goodwin, A. (eds.) (1990). *On record. Rock, pop, and the written word*. London: Routledge.

Frith, S & McRobbie, A. (1990). Rock and Sexuality. In S. Frith & A. Goodwin (eds.), *On record: rock, pop and the written word*: 371-89. London: Routledge.

Frith, S., Straw, W. & Street, J. (eds.) (2001). *The Cambridge companion to pop and rock*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hall, S. & Jefferson, T. (eds.) (1976). *Resistance through rituals. Youth subcultures in postwar Britain*. London: Hutchinson.

Hebdige, D. (2004). Subcultura. *El significado del estilo*. Barcelona: Paidós.

Lasén, A. & Martínez de Albéniz, I. (2001). El tecno: variaciones sobre la globalización. *Revista Política y Sociedad* no 36.

Leonard, C. (2014). *Beatleness: how the Beatles and their fans remade the world*. New York: Arcade.

Mackintosh, K. (2022). *Gritos de neón. Cómo el drill, el trap y el bashment hicieron que la música sea novedosa otra vez*. Buenos Aires: Caja Negra.

Pérez Colman, C. (2017). Rock y creatividad: los Beatles y la fórmula generadora del rock discográfico en los años sesenta. En Rodríguez Morató y Santana (eds.), *La nueva sociología de las artes*. Barcelona: Gedisa.

Pérez Colman, C. & del Val, F. (2009). El rock como campo de producción cultural autónomo: autenticidad y producción discográfica durante la constitución del rock. *Intersticios,* vol. 32: 181-192.

Peterson, R. A. (1990). Why 1955? Explaining the advent of rock music. *Popular Music*, vol. 9: 97-116.

Peterson, R. A. & Berger, D. (1975). Cycles in symbol production: The case of popular music. *American Sociological Review* vol. 40, no 2: 158-173.

Piquer, R. (2020). Popular music in Spain: current lines of research and future challenges. *IASPM Journal* 10(1): 59-69.

Regev, M. (1994). Producing artistic value: the case of rock music, *The Sociological Quarterly,* vol. 35: 85-102.

Regev, M. (2002). The "pop-rockization" of popular music. In Hesmondhalgh, D. & Negus, K. (eds.), *Studies in Popular Music*. London: Arnold.

Regev, M. (2007). Ethno-national pop-rock music: aesthetic cosmopolitanism made from within. *Cultural Sociology,* vol. 13: 317-341.

Regev, M. (2011). Pop-rock music as expressive isomorphism: blurring the national, the exotic, and the cosmopolitanism in popular music. *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 20(10): 1-16.

Regev, M. (2013). *Pop-rock music. Aesthetic cosmopolitanism in late modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Reynolds, S. (2012). *Retromanía: la adicción del pop a su propio pasado*. Buenos Aires: Caja Negra.

Sánchez Trolliet, A. (2022). *Te devora la ciudad. Itinerarios urbanos y figuraciones espaciales en el rock de Buenos Aires.* Buenos Aires: Universidad de Quilmes.

Val, F. (2017). *Rockeros insurgentes, modernos complacientes: un análisis sociológico del rock en España 1975-1985*. Madrid: Fundación SGAE.

Val, F. (2022). De la sociología de la música a la sociología musical. Nuevos paradigmas en los estudios sobre música y sociedad. *Revista Internacional de Sociología* 80(2).

Val, F., Noya, J., y Pérez Colman, C. (2014). ¿Autonomía, sumisión o hibridación sonora? La construcción del canon estético del pop-rock español. *Reis. Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas* 145: 147-178.

Vila, P. (1985). Rock nacional, crónicas de la resistencia juvenil. In Jelin, E. (ed.), *Los nuevos movimientos sociales. Mujeres, rock nacional*. Buenos Aires: CEAL.

Weinstein, D. (1991). The sociology of rock: An undisciplined discipline. *Theory, Culture & Society,* vol. 8: 97-109.

Wicke, P. (1990) *Rock music. Culture, aesthetics and sociology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DOI: doi.org/10.28939/iam.debats-138-1.1
ISSN 2530-898X (print)
ISSN 2530-8262 (digital)

Performing Rites revisited

Simon Frith
UNIVERSITY OF EDIMBURGH
Simon.Frith@ed.ac.uk
ORCID: 0000-0002-9774-8722

Received: 18/10/2021
Accepted: 18/10/2021

ABSTRACT

Performing Rites. On the Value of Popular Music was published 25 years ago. The aim of the book was to address issues of musical value and to show that arguments about music as good or bad were as vital for popular music culture as for high art. In this paper I consider the changes in popular music practices and studies in the last quarter of a century and reflect on the effects of these changes on value discourse. The changes that interest me are the digital transformation of musical communication, leading to new ways of making, listening to and sharing music; the demographic forces that have reshaped both the geography and the ecology of the music market; and the emergence of electronic dance music in a new economy of 'live' music. What does it mean for a sociological approach to aesthetics that people no longer have to listen to music they don't like? That a once taken-for-granted apparatus of music authority (music radio and the music press) has been undermined by algorithms? That dancing is such important a way of listening? What is a 'musician' in the digital age? In addressing these questions, I acknowledge too that just as popular music makers and listeners are constructed as such by historical and discursive possibilities, so are popular music scholars. We are free to study what and how we like but only in the circumstances in which we find ourselves. How have these circumstances changed since 1996?.

Keywords: value, popular music, listening, dancing, streaming, choice.

SUMMARY

Corresponding author: Simon Frith. The University of Edimburgh, Edimburgh College of Art, 74 Lauriston Place Edimburgh, EH3 9DF.
Suggested citation: Simon, F. (2024) Noves consideracions sobre *Performing Rites. Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society*, 138, 11-29. DOI: http://doi.org/10.28939/iam.debats-138-1.1

INTRODUCTION

This paper was originally written as the introductory keynote for the 17th IASPM Conference, which was held in Gijón June 2013. I was pleased to be asked to give this lecture because I owed my career to IASPM, a wonderfully supportive and challenging organisation for those of us who were originally interested in establishing popular music as an academic field of study, and I was particularly grateful for the invite because I was by then coming to the end of my career: I retired from fulltime teaching that August and this was my last IASPM event. But I was also surprised. I rarely go to see old bands play their old hits and I don't think the future of popular music studies will be found in celebrations of what we once thought it might be. The value of popular music lies in the way it reflects on the present and suggests a future not in its ability to make us feel good about the past. And what goes for old rockers rehearsing old songs goes for old academics rehearsing old arguments. I found it particularly surprising that I, a founder member of IASPM, should be asked to introduce a conference organised around the theme of "challenging orthodoxies".

After some thought I decided that the best way I could approach my task was via my 1996 book Performing Rites. The aims of Performing Rites were to show, first, that a sociologist could address issues of musical value thought to be the preserve of philosophers and concerning primarily classical music and, second, that such issues were essential to the ways in which popular music worked. My starting point was that arguments about music as good or bad, right or wrong,

constantly engage popular musicians and listeners; they are central to all cultural life and not just for the high art world bourgeoisie. I also wanted to challenge a then dominant strand of cultural studies that saw no place for value judgements in the classroom.

My approach was rooted in Marxist sociology. Put simply, I believed that people—musicians, fans—were free to make their own musical judgements and choices for their own individual reasons, but that such judgements and choices were always made in historical circumstances not of their own choosing: material circumstances (the effects of technology, commerce, education, and institutional power of various sorts) and discursive circumstances (how musical choices and values are expressed and understood). I argued that aesthetic judgements are, necessarily, social constructs. They are determined even in the most individual circumstances by what is possible, what is imaginable and what is explicable.

The first point to make in this essay, then, is that material and discursive circumstances have changed since 1996 and the social construction of value judgements in popular music must therefore be re-examined. The drivers of cultural change remain technology, demography and ideology and the last twenty-five years of popular music history have been shaped by the rise to dominance of digital means of making, storing and listening to music, by the continuing effects of ageing and generational change, and by the latest manifestations of globalisation, the movement of people, goods and ideas across cultural and geographical borders. Such historical forces have driven--but also been themselves driven by—the emergence of new social and political mores.

The effects of these developments have, of course, been addressed by popular music scholars and it is not my concern here to summarise or critique their work. My interest is narrower: what are implications of recent popular music history for my arguments about value and discourse in Performing Rites? And an added complication here is that it is not only popular music culture that has changed since 1996; so has the academy. If music makers and listeners are constructed as such by historical circumstance and discursive possibilities, so are music scholars. We may be free to study what and how we like but only in the circumstances in which we find ourselves, material and institutional, intellectual and conceptual. Popular Music Studies, that is to say, is a socially constructed academic enterprise, in terms of both what is studied and how research questions are conceived. If popular music can be defined, loosely, as the music people like, the question is which people? And there can be no doubt that in the academic development of popular music studies some people have been regarded as more significant than others (punks, for example, more significant than people who make or enjoy musicals) or that our sense of which people matter has changed over time, in response to the political challenges of feminist sociology and black cultural studies, for example.

Some of the constraints on our work as popular music scholars have always been acknowledged: academic conditions of employment and teaching, the effects of disciplinary territorialism and status hierarchies, the politics of research funding. IASPM was founded in response to such institutional indifference or hostility. But academic interests are also shaped by scholars' experiences outside the academy, by family life, by ageing and increased economic security. Time passing has its own effects on the accumulation of knowledge; digital technology has changed how music is studied as much as it has changed how music is made. One problem today, for example, is knowledge overload. When I was writing Performing Rites I was reasonably confident that I had read all the relevant academic writing on popular music in English and knew about the most significant work in other languages. By the time the book came out I had to accept that I could now hope to read only a small selection of the available scholarly work. Popular Music Studies was being developed by ever more scholars in ever more countries in ever more disciplines. Add to this the dialectic of academic generations, each new group of scholars arguing against their elders, and the effects of academic fashion.

Over the years key names (Adorno, Attali, Becker, Bourdieu ...) have recurred in and then vanished from IASPM conference debates, while once dominant concepts ('subcultures', say) have been replaced by new intellectual concerns ('identity', for example).

I can illustrate the interplay of changes in personal and professional circumstances with my own experience. When I wrote Performing Rites (which was based on a seminar programme for postgraduates), I taught in a media studies centre, I was a working rock critic, formed by UK/US discourse, and I was an active member of the European IASPM discussion network. Ten years later I was teaching in a traditional music department and had music colleagues and students, which meant engaging not just with musicology but also with the psychology and physiology of music, topics oddly absent from popular music studies. I had to all intents and purposes stopped being a rock critic (though I still chaired the judges of the Mercury Music Prize) and my research now focused on live rather than recorded music. For family reasons I'd mostly stopped travelling internationally; I spent much more time with musicians than journalists, and my postgraduate students had very different concerns than the students I'd taught in the first decades of my career.

If the questions that interest me now are not the same as they were when I wrote Performing Rites this is an effect of how I've changed as well as how popular music culture has developed. From my current perspective, it seems clear that popular music scholarship (and IASPM in particular) was initially a response to the emergence of a particular form of music-making, rock, which was defined by three sociological factors: the dominance of the music business by record publishing companies, the dominance of music making and listening by young people and the dominance of critical discourse by romantic ideas about authenticity. My first academic book, The Sociology of Rock, published in 1978, was certainly shaped by these factors and, in particular, by a need to theorise rock's sociological differences from low/pop music, on the one hand, and high/classical music on the other. These concerns informed Performing Rites too.

Which is one reason why the book now seems dated. Rock is still a significant form of popular music but it is no longer the fulcrum of either a commercial or a cultural ecology. Musical access, for example, is now monopolised by streaming companies such as Spotify, Apple Music and YouTube rather than by record shops or broadcast music radio. By the beginning of the 2020s the corporate music industry might have recovered from the turn-of-the-century decline in record sales—it was certainly more profitable than ever--but this was because it had successfully adapted to the new commerce of digital streaming. Record companies have also had to adapt to the rise of global live music corporations such as Live Nation and to the remarkable growth of the festival economy. What was once young people's music is now played by heritage acts and tribute bands while the most popular live music of the new millennium, electronic dance music, has a very different aesthetic than either the indie club or the stadium rock concert.[1]

How have such changes affected value discourses in popular music? In the rest of this essay I will address this question under three headings: musical choices, ways of listening and musicianship.

MUSICAL CHOICES

The English poet Lavinia Greenlaw remembers teenage life in 1970s Essex in these words:

> Waiting to her a song was like waiting for a bus to arrive in that village. I would stand on the side of the road an hour after the bus was due, unable to accept that it wasn't about to turn up, sure that as soon as I got home and closed the door it would. While waiting to hear what I liked on the radio, I had to listen to hours of other

1 For an overview of the changes in the political economy of music in the UK between 1950 and 2015 see Frith et al 2013, 2019 and 2021.

> music, but then something else might catch my attention. I'd be excited by one song only to be distracted by another. Songs found me and made sure I kept coming across them until one day they were in my head and I wanted to hear them. I missed something I had not possessed. What more delicate form of seduction could there be (Greenlaw 2021: 57)?

One of the most significant effects of the digital revolution is that teenagers no longer have to listen to music they don't like. Until 2016 I did. Every year, as chair of the judges of the Mercury Music Prize, I got sent around 250 CDs that I had to listen to over about six weeks. But this was an increasingly uncommon experience and one of the marked changes in how the Mercury Prize works in marketing terms is that whereas in 1993 people would take a chance on a shortlisted album and its sales would rise significantly, now people sample a track or two on Spotify and the effect on sales is much smaller. This is worth noting because historically, as Lavinia Greenlaw remembers, an important part of popular music culture was listening to things we didn't like, given the organisation of radio and TV programming, the limited number of domestic music outlets and the conservatism of school music lessons. The gamble of buying an album (once they ceased to be hit compilations) was that one spent one's money without having heard most of it. The major effect of digital technology on music consumption, in short, has been to change the nature of consumer choice.

When I was growing up the problem was not just choosing music one liked from what was there but also trying to find out what was not there. Hunting for records and collecting dance floor rarities were a necessary for popular music fandom, as was expressing a view on what was there, like it or not. Now, by contrast, I don't have to have a view of, say, Ed Sheeran or even Beyoncé because I don't have to listen to them. If we once heard music we liked in an unfriendly context (light entertainment programmes on the radio, for example), now the music we like is the context for everything else we hear. This is one reason, I think, that many people over the age of 40 think that music is less important to young people these days, though the point here is, rather, that it is important in a different way. Introducing his campaign to ensure that everyone involved in making a record is properly rewarded in the digital music economy, Abba's Björn Ulvaeus explained to the BBC's Mark Savage that (September 22, 2021) that

> We want to get back to that experience we had when we opened a double-sleeved LP and listened to the songs while reading the liner notes, I think that's a very valuable experience that young listeners today are missing.[2]

He doesn't explain, however, why this is such a valuable experience.

It could certainly be said that if people no longer need to justify their listening choices (because they no longer need to argue about them) then there is no pressing reason to be an 'informed' listener. Hence the declining demand for critics, for a critical authority, as indicated by the attrition of the music press. The question is now is not how do people talk about music but whether they talk about it at all. Historically the listener was hailed publicly, as it were, by journalists, broadcasters and the noise of record sales departments; this was how music marketing worked. Can such auddience building work be done by algorithms? How are taste publics now constructed?

On the same day that the BBC was reporting Björn Ulvaeus's nostalgia for sleeve notes, the Guardian drew attention to a research paper published in Proceedings of the Royal Society which suggested that a mathematical model describing the spread of a disease through the population performed just as well when describing song download trends.

Dora Rosati, lead author of the study and former graduate in maths and statistics at McMaster Uni-

2 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-58643787

versity in Ontario, Canada along with colleagues, wondered whether they could learn anything about how songs become popular using mathematical tools that are more usually applied to study the spread of infectious diseases.

The team turned to a database of almost 1.4bn individual song downloads from the now-discontinued music streaming service MixRadio. Focusing on the top 1,000 songs downloaded in the UK between 2007 and 2014, they measured how well a standard model of epidemic disease, called the SIR model, fitted trends in song downloads over time.

Rosati said: «It implies that a lot of the social processes that drive the spread of disease, or analogues of those processes, might also be driving the spread of songs.» More specifically, it supports the idea that both music and infectious diseases depend on social connections to spread through populations.

«With a disease, if you come into contact with someone who is ill, then you have a certain chance of catching that disease. With songs, it looks very similar. The big difference is that for songs, it doesn't necessarily have to be physical contact – it could be that my friend used this cool new song in their Instagram story, so now I'm going to go and find it.»[3]

Popular music scholars have traditionally seen themselves as fans, as collectors, accumulating the listening knowledge that gives them the authority to act as implicit promoters or curators. Is this claim still feasible in the digital listening world? Maybe our role now is to be unlike everyday listeners, whether as historians, archivists and custodians of a past in which no-one else has much interest or through our obligation to unpopular music, to music that no-one listens to. The first task means becoming expert in musical memory, making critical studies of the heritage and nostalgia industries, and concerning ourselves with the preservation and archiving of popular music's material objects and their traces. The second task is to make the unheard heard at a time when people can choose to listen to whatsoever they like.

A question remains, though: what kind of authority can popular music academics claim in the digital age? Why should anyone out there take any interest at all in what we say? Early rock academics like me tended to think of themselves as critics, although, on the whole, scholars don't make particularly good critics. They are rarely concerned about what listeners actually hear.

Many years ago I went to a meeting of the then IASPM executive in Philip Tagg's flat in Gothenburg, The meeting coincided with the Eurovision Song Contest, which was being held that year in Sweden. A bright spark from Swedish radio thought it would be good if we—as IASPM—gave our expert view of who should win after all the performances. When the first act appeared on Philip's TV, one executive member, not from Europe, was so appalled that a debate began about popular music, commercial exploitation, the corruption of audiences, etc, a discussion so heated that when the call came in from Swedish radio we were unable to make any comment at all because we hadn't actually watched any of the acts.

This is an example of popular music academics-as-critics being less concerned with what is there—the sounds—than with what isn't—their meanings. Music either stands for something else, represents something, or needs interpreting, means something which lies behind or beneath or deep within the actual sounds that meet our ears. The consequence of this is a kind of research negligence. We still lack informed understandings of what a listener does and what listening is. There are useful accounts of the ideology of listening—the construction of the silent, attentive, autonomous listener in the nineteenth century concert hall, for example, but there's little evidence that people—even in concert halls—do listen like this (even if they know how to behave as if they were). And it's even more doubtful that this

3 https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/sep/22/mathematicians-discover-music-really-can-be-infectious-like-a-virus

public mode of listening is how classical music is listened to in the home.

The most suggestive account of listening to popular music I know was written by Franco Fabri, describing in a published conversation his experience of listening to an album by the British group, the Shadows. He describes a state of mind that lies somewhere between being awake and asleep, a sort of conscious suspension of controlled thought so that the flow of the music determines the flow of scraps of imagery, emotion, memory, feeling.[4]

Sociologists, by contrast, whether Bourdieu writing about classical audiences in the 1950s or more recent scholars writing about music festivals in the 2010s, tend to treat music listening as an occasion for something else: a display of 'distinction' or the expression of 'identity'. But this is not to answer the question that interests me: what are listeners are actually doing as listeners?

WAYS OF LISTENING

In the autumn of 2021 The Guardian ran an interview with Sir Lucien Grainge, British-born head of the New York-based global corporation Universal Music. Grainge explained to the paper why the company's owners, the French conglomerate Vivendi, had decided to float Universal as independently stock market listed. Universal's performance was booming thanks to the surge in digital listening. Ten years previously, when record sales had plunged but streaming was yet to produce significant income, Universal had made €4.2bn in revenues and turned a profit of €507m. The company was now on track to make almost €8bn in annual revenue and annual profits of potentially €1.5bn. And, Grainge suggested,

There's so much more to come, so many opportunities. The penetration rates of digital services in some of the largest countries haven't yet reached those of more mature markets, so there's plenty of headroom in those key markets. And then when you add fans' growing listening through voice-controlled speakers, connected cars, social media, gaming, fitness and so on, you realise why we believe we're just at the beginning of a new wave of music consumption. This wave is taking place on a variety of platforms – some of which were not even on the radar just a few years ago.

Mark Mulligan, an analyst at Midia Research, confirmed that about 10% of the almost $22bn in global streaming revenues in 2020 came via licensing revenues from listening on platforms such as Facebook, through smart speakers such as Amazon's Alexa, in games such as Fortnite and from the home cycling business. In his words,

> Music is going everywhere. Besides TV shows, games, advertising, TikTok, Peloton, there's lots of growth on Instagram. Streaming was like the jump-start in the heart of the industry. It got it going and is keeping the lights on. But it's not all of the story anymore. Investors are buying music catalogues, emerging markets are showing strong growth. It's all making the music industry look interesting for investors. The industry looks like it is in peak growth.[5]

It also doesn't look much like it did in the rock era and is organised around quite different ways of listening. This is also apparent in another effect of digital music making, the commercial success of electronic dance music. Dancing has, in fact, always been one of the most important ways of listening to popular music but has not much interested rock-inflected researchers. Anthropologists may have long argued that music and dance cannot be treated as separate activities but popular music scholars have largely either ignored dance altogether or associated it with less significant pop music genres. In practice, however, the history of popular music can't be disentangled from the

4 See Fabbri and Quiñones 2014.

5 https://www.theguardian.com/music/2021/sep/21/universal-chief-growth-digital-listening-boom-record-music-flotation-lucian-grainge

history of dance, of who dances with whom, where, when and how.

The post-war evolution of popular music in Britain, for example, was driven by the needs of dancers: dancing to jazz in clubs laid the foundations for what became rock & roll and r'n'b clubs, blues clubs, discos, and dance clubs. What was new in the 1950s was not that young people spent lots of time dancing (they did that in the 1930s and 1940s, too) but that they now spent increasing time dancing in venues to which only young people went. The significance of dance for youth can clearly be related to courtship and sexuality but dance was also a setting in which listening happened, in which the meaning/value of music was related to physical responses and articulations. In the period 1950-1967 two kinds of ideological struggle over listening took place in the UK: listening silently vs listening noisily (an ongoing issue) and listening as spectacle (watching the band) vs listening as engagement (dancing). Promoters had problems when one group of people wanted to watch the performers and another wanted to dance to them. It was difficult to organise the space so both groups could be satisfied.

Since I wrote Performing Rites the cultural importance of the dance floor has become more obvious but we still lack sociological studies of dancing as listening.[6] How do dancers understand the relative pleasures of narrative drive and repetition or the way their attention switches between layers of sound? How does the ability to hear different sonic patterns relate to the experience of moving to them? Lavinia Greenlaw suggests that

> Perhaps dancing is the ultimate form of amplification. You listen to a song and your body makes it louder. You become louder too, both more yourself and freed. I've always found dancing hard to resist and am ashamed of how much I want to do it. Sometimes I dance because I am feeling too shy to make conversation. Or I become overexcited—feeling!—and instantly try to contain this, Is a good song all it takes for me to abandon my measured self? Who is this alarming creature who feels compelled to throw herself around? I hold her back and try to dance as casually as those who are jigging on the spot as they chat (Greenlaw 2021: 58-9).

One of the new terms in the Oxford English Dictionary's 2013 appendix was «dad dancing», which it defined as «the kind of dancing done by fathers at weddings that embarrasses their children» and the revised 2014 Chambers Dictionary defined as «dancing with an embarrassing disregard of rhythm and fashion, considered characteristic of middle-aged men». Such definitions, like Greenlaw's self-reflection, open up all sorts of questions about the work of dance in the social relations that construct musical listening. From a rock perspective, an oddity of dancing is that it is not focused on stardom: on the dance floor music is experienced through the bodies of the dancers not the performers while the work of the DJ challenges the supposed distinction between creativity in the studio and creativity on the stage. The commercial response to the confusions here was to market 'super DJs', embodying a new kind of star performer, but this only raised further questions: are dancers listening (or listeners dancing) to the super DJ, to the music he or she is playing, or to both at once? Who is the music maker here?

MUSICIANSHIP

In September 2021 the UK's Intellectual Property Office published a comprehensive review of "music creators' earnings in the digital era". One of its more robust findings was that "there is no evidence that there was ever a time when recorded music was the basis of substantial income for large numbers of musicians, even when total revenues were higher ..." (Hesmondhalgh et al 2021: 18). Most musicians make a living not from royalties, record sales or license fees but from selling their services. For them music

6 *The pioneering journal, Dancecult*, addresses such issues, and encourages ethnographic study, but its articles often seem to suggest that what's at stake are meanings rather than practices. It's as if philosophers are more drawn to the dance floor than sociologists.

is a craft not a commodity. This was true when the record publishing industry dominated the music business in the 1950s-1990s and it is true now, when it doesn't. What are the implications?

First, this is to challenge to the dominant academic treatment of musicians in terms of their creative self-expression (the romantic notion that underpinned rock discourse) and to suggest that we should understand musicians as workers not artists, as people who make music not for themselves but for other people, for social occasions, needs and purposes. The issue here is not art vs commerce but what counts as excellence in craft skills and techniques and who is best judge of this.

Second, music making is a collective process. 'Creativity' involves collaborative hierarchies among a variety of musical workers: not just the performers, instrumentalists and singers but also the people who make the performance possible. And such hierarchies change according to circumstance. The sociology of music can, in this respect, be related to the sociology of science. Think, for example, of the effects on music making of changes in the technological conditions of musical production. The history of popular musicians is necessarily also the history of musical instruments, of recording studios and on-stage amplification.

Third, to think of music as craft not commodity is to challenge accepted academic definitions of 'popular music'. It could certainly be argued, for example, that jazz has been rather more significant for the story of popular music than rock, though one wouldn't know this from IASPM events, and while we've tended (because of the origins of IASPM) to define popular music against high music, from a craft perspective the terms of this contrast don't really work. Classical musicians are craftspeople too; they also provide musical services. Classical concerts, like rock concerts, are social events serving social purposes. Indeed, many working musicians deploy their technical skills in a great variety of music settings and certainly across the high/low divide.

Rereading *Performing Rites* I realise that many of the issues with which I was concerned had more to do with star making than music making and it is notable that some of the more imaginative work in popular music research developed under the labels of 'celebrity studies', on the one hand, and 'fan studies', on the other. Is there a similarly vibrant subfield of research into what one might call the everyday life of musicians or into the social and technical relations upon which musicians' lives depend? If I were to rewrite Performing Rites now I'd be less interested in how musicians become stars than in how musicians make sense of their lives when they don't become stars. I'd be less interested in why people idolise performers than in how they regard performances which are mundane. Stardom and fandom are familiar effects of music commerce and although the terms of that commerce may have been changed by new technology, the logic of marketing remains the same. What it doesn't account for is the value of music as an ordinary part of ordinary lives.

CONCLUSION

When I studied research methods as part of my formal training in sociology in the late 1960s, my teacher, Shirley A. Starr, remarked that many people regarded sociologists as cold fish who took the oddities and accidents of people's individual quirks and choices and explained them away as social facts, fitting them into patterns determined by institutional factors, by social norms, functions, roles, and so on. (Durkheim's Suicide was the key text here.) She suggested that we could also think about our task the other way round. We could show that the things that people did without thinking, 'naturally' as it were, may have been social facts but were also, from an academic perspective, quite strange. (Erving Goffman's writings were the text here.)

This suggestion has stayed with me, so I want to end this paper by suggesting that as sociologists we should begin from the premise that music is a strange thing for humans to do. This is one reason why evolutio-

nary biologists, psychoanalytic theorists and, indeed, Marxists have had difficulties with it. Why, for example, in 1950s Britain, did vast numbers of young (or youngish) people, mostly boys but girls too, suddenly decide that with no evident musical skill or training at all, they could pick up or fashion instruments, go on stage and play skiffle? Or why, in the decades since, all over Britain, have vast numbers of people, mostly (but not only) oldish people, often but not always professionals, been willing to spend a couple of hours a week (paying for the privilege) to sing in a choir, practising intensely, putting themselves under the authority of a choir 'master', working eventually with professional musicians, to perform one or two concerts a year? And what could be stranger than these two recent accounts of fan behaviour. The first is by Vice journalist Hannah Ewens; the second is by Cardiff media academic Lucy Bennett.

> Through winter 2016 and early spring 2017 I've been waking up at 2 or 3am and taking the nightbus across London from my Peckham flat to a music venue. I don't know who I'm going to find but since there's a pop or rock gig on the following night, the fans will be there, wanting to be the first in. It doesn't feel particularly exclusive to any type of music, as long as the fan base includes a lot of them. When I say "them" I mean almost exclusively teen girls, since that is who I find every time (Ewens 2019: 31).

> Even though they are not physically present and are in different time zones, [U2] fans are gathering to share their opinions and knowledge and the excitement surrounding this specific event [a U2 stadium concert in South Africa] in such a way that they not only feel part of the "live" music experience, but also create their own. Some construct and post possible set-lists, sharing their own predictions, while others play the songs being performed as the songs are texted in. After the concert, the interest continues, with fans posting footage and songs from the show on YouTube and sharing their photos ... While some fans use social media to send bulletins to other fans throughout the concert, others take the connection further by using a facility called 1000Mikes—self-described as Radio 2.0—to broadcast the entire show to them as it happens. The volunteer show attenders use their mobile phone to connect to the platform, which then generates a personal live broadcast channel, which other fans can access and listen in to through the website (Bennett 2012: 548).

These audience activities, like the performance activities of skiffle groups and choirs, are undoubtedly odd things to do and their value for their participants are not easily explicable in terms of the commerce, art and folk discourses I analysed in Performing Rites. It is particularly important for sociologists to document and celebrate the singular behaviour the love of music can inspire in everyday life presently, when music is ever more relentlessly mediated, explained and labelled. In the commercial logic of digital media, everything has to be categorised, everything must fit.

When I presented the original version of this paper in Gijón I ended by paying tribute to Jan Fairley, a IASPM colleague and Edinburgh friend who had been IASPM chair at the time of the previous conference (in South Africa in 2011) and died in 2012. Jan was someone who didn't fit neatly into any scholarly slot. She was a freelance teacher and academic and a freelance broadcaster and journalist; her doctorate was in ethno-musicology but she felt at home in IASPM. At popular music conferences her mission was to ensure that arguments were not confined to Anglo-American popular music. As an ethnomusicologist she argued that concepts like authenticity or tradition had to pay heed to musicians' practical decisions. Music making is a craft in all societies and in her many magazine interviews with world music stars Jan was always more interested in what they did than in who they were. She sought both to de-exoticise strange music and celebrate its strangeness as mundane.[7]

In Edinburgh Jan Fairley sang in two groups, a church choir and a female barbershop chorus, and she was

7 For a sample of Jan's work see Fairley 2014.

always intrigued by the byways of musical sociability. She knew that music was the quintessential human activity, that making music is what makes us human. In evolutionary terms music is the basis of sociability, culture, the ability to do things together for pleasure, and it is therefore necessarily political, an important way of understanding what is meant by a good life.

The good life was not an issue I addressed directly in Performing Rites but it has been constantly on my mind during the disorienting Covid-19 experience of life without live music, and the questions I am now asking are these: How is music-making entwined with daily life? How does music shape sociability? And my starting point is now that popular music is a process not a thing.8 Its value lies not in its congealed commodity form but as a social activity. Music is not something people have, it is something people do, as music-makers, as music listeners, as music lovers, on special occasions and as a matter of routine. Popular music, music, that is to say, rooted in social situations, is necessarily both taken-for-granted and wonderfully odd.

8 For an extended version of this argument see Frith 2018.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Bennett, L. (2012) Patterns of listening through social media: online fan engagement with the live music experience, *Social Semiotics* 22(5) 545-57.

Ewens, H. (2019) F*angirls: Scenes from Modern Music Culture*, London. Quadrille.

Fabbri. F. and Quiñones, M. G. (2014) Listening to the Shadows, forty-eight years later, and for the first time *Volume! 11*(1) 208-223.

Fairley, J. (2014) *Living Politics, Making Music*, Farnham: Ashgate.

Frith, S. (2018) Why there is not such a thing as popular music, E. Encabo ed. *Sound in Motion*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars 1-13.

Frith, S., Brennan, M., Cloonan, M., and Webster, E. (2013) *The History of Live Music in Britain since 1950. Volume 1: From Dance Hall to the 100 Club*. 1950-1967, Farnham: Ashgate.

Frith, S., Brennan, M., Cloonan, M. and Webster, E. (2019) *The History of Live Music in Britain since 1950. Volume 2: From Hyde Park to the Haçienda*. 1968-1984, Abingdon: Ashgate/Routledge.

Frith, S., Brennan, M., Cloonan, M. and Webster, E. (2021) *The History of Live Music in Britain since 1950. Volume 3: From Live Aid to Live Nation*. 1985-2015, Abingdon: Ashgate/Routledge.

Greenlaw, L. (2021) *Some Answers Without Questions*, London: Faber & Faber.

Hesmondhalgh, D., Osborne, R., Sun, H. and Barr, K. (2021) *Music Creators' Earnings in the Digital Era*, London: Intellectual Property Office.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Simon Frith

Simon Frith is an Emeritus Professor at the University of Edinburgh. His first book, The Sociology of Rock, was published in 1978 and translated into Spanish in 1980. He has published extensively in the field of music sociology as both an academic and a journalist. His most recent book is the third and final volume of The History of Live Music in Britain. 1950-2015, published by Routledge in 2021.

DOI: doi.org/10.28939/iam.debats-138-1.2
ISSN 2530-898X (print)
ISSN 2530-8262 (digital)

Pop-rock, Musical Cosmopolitanism and Embodied Musical Knowledge

Motti Regev
THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF ISRAEL
mottire@openu.ac.it
ORCID: 0000-0002-3829-6869

Received: 13/09/2022
Accepted: 21/06/2023

ABSTRACT

This article suggests that, after over half a century during which successive generations of fans in countries around the world have embraced multiple local and global genres and styles of pop-rock music, individuals in many countries have became equipped with sonic-musical knowledge that enables them to immediately, spontaneously and intuitively decipher amplified, electric, electronic and manipulated musical soundscapes. Possession of this type of corporeal knowledge, and its routine embodiment by individuals across many different parts of the world amounts to a mundane manifestation of current culture, or rather a commonplace musical cosmopolitanism. As it unfolds, this article discusses the notion of musical cosmopolitanism and the meaning of pop-rock as an aesthetic culture. It also develops a classification of music-related knowledge into three major categories – discursive, musical and sonic knowledge – before focusing on the third type.

Keywords: pop-rock, cosmopolitanism, culture, globalization, embodied knowledge

SUMMARY

Corresponding author: Motti Regev. The Open University. The Dorothy De Rothschild Campus. One University Road P.O.B. 808 Ra'anana 4353701 Israel
Suggested citation: Regev, M. (2024) Pop-Rock, Musical Cosmopolitanism and Embodied Musical Knowledge, *Debats. Journal on culture, power and society*, 138(1), pp. 33–46. DOI: www.doi: 10.28939/iam.debats-138-1.2.

INTRODUCTION

Listening, almost anywhere in the world, to signature tunes of television news-shows, to non-diegetic music in films, to music in commercials for consumer goods, to background music in shopping malls or waiting rooms, and in general to functional music of all types, one realizes that their sonic vocabulary largely consists by now, two decades into the 21st century, of a massive proportion of electric, electronic and digitally manipulated sonorities. Fuzzed-up and distorted electric guitars for conveying drama, jangling or chiming electric guitars for cheerfulness, soaring synthesizers for depicting futurism, electronic beats for transmitting energetic motion, are just a handful and most obvious uses of such sounds. In addition, the musical environment of most countries is saturated with sounds of local, indigenous or Anglo-American pop-rock, overwhelmingly based on this type of sonorities. This ubiquitous presence of amplified, electric, electronic and manipulated musical sonorities testifies that individuals around the world are equipped with the cultural knowledge that enables immediate, spontaneous and intuitive deciphering of such sonorities. Individuals are familiar with them and with their conventional affective meanings. Possession of this type of corporal knowledge, and its routine enactment by individuals in many different parts of the world amounts to a mundane manifestation of current cultural, or in this particular regard, musical cosmopolitanism in everyday life.

In this article I suggest that such knowledge, such fa-miliarity, is the outcome of the long process in which pop-rock music was localized and indigenized to be-come a legitimate and self-evident routine presence in musical cultures of countries all over

the world. Put differently, the article proposes that beyond any history of genres, styles, musical works, scenes and subcultures, a major historical impact of pop-rock on musical culture around the world, and on contemporary global culture in general, consists of the global difusion of familiarity with, and knowledge of a musical vocabulary, an idiom, consisting of amplified, electric, electronic and manipulated sonoroties. The article points to pop-rock as a cultural realm, an aesthetic culture, that weaves into one complex whole the macro topic of cosmopolitanism, the physical "thingness" of music, and the micro level of bodily knowledge. It points to a possible sociological perspective on cultural globalization, centered around the sociology of the senses. The article draws on and combines elements from previous work (Regev 2013, 2019, 2020).

I begin with some words on the concept of *cultural and musical cosmopolitanism*. I then proceed to discuss the notion of pop-rock music and its global diffusion, before delving into the topics of embodied musical knowledge and pop-rock.

MUSICAL COSMOPOLITANISM

The term musical *cosmopolitanism* relates to the reconfiguration, or permutation of diversity in world popular music, resulting from intensified cultural globalization and expressive isomorphism since mid 20th century. I should stress that my understanding of *cultural cosmopolitanism* is essentially sociological. That is, it refers to, and aims to depict the empirical cultural reality of our times. It does not follow the line of thought where the idea of cosmopolitanism is focused on political and moral issues and is understood primarily, if not exclusively, in idealistic terms (see Inglis, 2014, on these two meanings of cosmopolitanism). In this regard, the term musical cosmopolitanism depicts a musical world order characterized by increased similarities between musical cultures the world around, while at the same time preserving variance, diversity, and a strong sense of uniqueness and singularity among national, ethnic and other forms of musical cultures. We may talk in this regard about increased musical overlap, or significant surge in the proportions of common musical ground shared by nations, ethnic groups or any other forms of collective identity – as well as individuals. This overlap, or common cultural ground, stems from countless amounts of creative techniques, expressive means, stylistic elements, affective meanings and evaluative criteria that circulate worldwide through cultural industries and "old" or "new" media of all types. It becomes a musical-cultural reality when all of these are shaped at both the global and local levels into musical works, genres, styles and trends. Put differently, and as already pointed out by Turino (2000) and Stokes (2004), musical cosmopolitanism refers to a situation in which national, ethnic and local musical cultures, while retaining features of native and indigenous traditions and a sense of singularity, are fully entangled in one world musical culture. It results from the volitional or enforced openness of musicians and fans to globally circulating musical materials alien to their own native traditions, and the assimilation of such materials into local, national and ethnic musical cultures.

The notion of alien musical elements deserves some elaboration. Cultural cosmopolitanism is often identified with openness to unfamiliar materials originating in remote countries, nations and ethnicities. Indeed, alien musical elements could be those identified as originating in specific ethnic or national entities other than one's own, signifying "otherness" (Tagg 2012). Openness to, and domestication of such materials is certainly one major component of musical cosmopolitanism. But alien cultural materials can also be those perceived as part of a universal modernity, detached from any particular ethnicity or culture, yet "foreign" to most traditional cultures on earth. Such cultural materials circulate worldwide and are localized and indigenized into cultures to which they arrive from the "outside." The role of cultural materials perceived as constituents of universal modernity is crucial in the formation of current cultural cosmopolitanism. In the case of popular music, the sonic vocabularies, as well as actual genres, styles and

works of pop-rock are perceived by fans and musicians all over the world, since mid 20th century, as the musical expression of a universal modernity. Their assimilation into local, national and ethnic musical cultures is a key element in contemporary musical cosmopolitanism. Before turning to a discussion of pop-rock, however, some words about the sociological logic of cultural cosmopolitanism, in which music plays a significant role.

One way to think about cultural globalization as a constant process leading up to, and resulting in cultural cosmopolitanism, is to portray it as a global socio-cultural market of life-style identities, taking lead from Bourdieu's notions of distinction, fields and the homology between these two (Bourdieu 1984, 1993). On the demand side of this market, variables like demography, class inequality, diversification of education and professions, identity politics in the realms of gender and ethnicity, as well as additional social variables join to structurally and recurrently split national societies into multiple groupings, all seeking to express and practice their contemporary socio-cultural sense of local or translocal singularity and distinction. On the supply side of this market stand the products of global fields of cultural production (including thereby the cultural industries), all organized around impulses for constant aesthetic innovation. Driven either by variants of the ideology of "pure creativity" or by "commercial" interests (or any combinations of both), global fields of cultural production constantly produce fashions, trends and fads of life-style and consumption practices, presented as exciting new forefronts of modernity. In the case of music, musicians and other music professionals (including critics and journalists) develop an ex-plorative interest in new and contemporary stylistic trends and musical idioms as a way to participate in the innovative expressive frontiers of their field. This interest propels them to engage in production of local variants of such trends, sometimes hybridizing them with indigenous genres, so that national fields of popular music are rendered sub-fields of global ones.

These two aspects of the market reinforce and feed on each other to create, in accelerated speed, recurrent life-style groupings and multiple life-style fractions within and across national settings, differentiated from each other by boundaries materialized through taste preferences and cultural practices, and ranging from clearly demarcated ones to nuanced differences. These are groupings that cultivate tastes for "the new and innovative." They also nurture interests in having "their own" national, local or ethnic variants of stylistic trends that signify contemporariness and modernity. In the case of music, the work of musicians and music professional, in which indigenous musical elements interweave with pop-rock to modernize local musical cultures, caters to the status and distinction interests of pop-rock fans. Jointly, these types of producers and consumers become the agents who generate, innovate, create and recreate an endless series of styles, genres (including sub-styles and sub genres), scenes and fan subcultures, thus maintaining musical cosmopolitanism in national societies across the globe.

POP-ROCK

This is the point where I should say a few words about what do I mean by "pop-rock music." Pop-rock is not a musical genre, nor a musical style. It designates a global aesthetic framework, a musical culture that includes a wide range of styles, genres and related phenomena across nations, ethnic groups and countries. The elements that interconnect all styles and genres of pop-rock music are primarily their creative technologies – electric and electronic instruments, sound manipulation equipment of all types (in recording studios or as accessories to instruments) and amplification Also typical is the use of certain techniques of supposedly untrained vocal delivery, mostly those signifying immediacy of expression and spontaneity (one should note, in this regard, that the perceived pristine sounds of most acoustic or so-called "unplugged" variants of pop-rock are also products of studio treatments). For pop-rock musicians, the technologies of sonic

expression are creative tools for generating sonic textures that cannot be produced otherwise (Wicke 1990; Gracyk 1996; Zak 2001; Zagorski Thomas 2014).

In pop-rock, the technologically saturated creativity is targeted towards the sonic materiality of a recorded product as the musical artwork, a product to be lis-tened to via loudspeakers or earphones. From the angle of meaning and aesthetic value, pop-rock is organized around a genealogical narrative, a lineage of inter-connected styles and genres whose discourse points to a mythical beginning in the mid 1950s and an initial formative period in the 1960s and 1970s. Pop-rock is most frequently referred to as either rock or pop music, where the first refers to the more "rougher" and the latter to the more "lighter" forms of this musical culture. However, there is an abundance of musical works and musicians that can be easily classified under both labels, leading to much vagueness about the difference and overlap between them. The hyphened form pop-rock therefore stands as an umbrella term that resolves the widespread ambiguity regarding the difference and the overlap between pop and rock.

Paraphrasing Knorr Cetina's notion of epistemic culture (2007), we may think of pop-rock as an aesthetic culture. The aesthetic culture of pop-rock may be envisaged as a cluster of practices, arrangements, and mechanisms bound together by affinity and historical coincidence which, in the area of artistic and professional expertise of late modern popular music, make up how we experience, evaluate, and sense the world of objects that conventionally belong to the form of musical art known as pop and rock music, and what we know about it. The aesthetic culture of pop-rock is a culture of creating and warranting criteria of evaluation, modes of worshipping, cognitive and emotional dispositions pertaining to a certain world of musical objects.

The aesthetic musical culture of pop-rock emerged in the United States in the mid 1950s and expanded during the next half century to become the major global popular music culture. The history of pop-rock tends to be narrated as an unfolding lineage of styles and genres, organized around a symbolic divide between earlier periods and the "rock era" (Cateforis 2006). All styles and genres of pop-rock are characterized in such narrations as developments, mutations, and expansions derived from the original style of rock'n'roll and then from the successive styles that developed from it. The period of approximately twenty-five years, from the mid 1950s to around 1980, is in this regard the formative era of pop-rock, during which its major idioms and genres have been explored and defined, including thereby the formation of its essential, overwhelmingly Anglo-American "classic" canon of musical works (mostly albums) and musicians (either as individual artists or as bands). By early twenty-first century, the stylistic genealogy of pop-rock includes – or has included – genres, styles, forms, periods, fashions, trends, and fads of music known by names such as hard rock, alternative rock, punk, progressive rock, power pop, soul, funk, disco, dance, house, techno, hip-hop, heavy metal, extreme metal, reggae, country rock, folk rock, psychedelic rock, singer-songwriters, and notably, pop – as well as many more (some of these genres, most notably hip-hop and metal, have evolved into cultural entities sub-divided into multiple styles. Still, for all their autonomy, such genres retain the basic elements that make them part of the pop-rock framework).

Since the 1970s (and earlier in some countries), however, the musical culture of pop-rock has been increasingly adopted and indigenized in countries all over the world, to the point of becoming in many of them the major popular music culture. In line with the logic of the socio-cultural market of life-style identities outlined above, pop-rock styles and genres have functioned over the years as suppliers of aesthetic languages and packages of meaning around which consecutive generations of teenagers and young adults all over the world have defined their late modern sense of particularity, of distinction.

A major aspect of the aesthetic culture of pop-rock music is that due to its reliance on technology, and its appeal to youth cultures through an ideology

that combines rebellion, hedonism and artistic exploration, it has been globally institutionalized as a signifier of universal modernity in the field of popular music, facilitating its embrace by musicians and fans alike. Consecutive generations of musicians and fans in many parts of the world have insisted since the 1960s on indigenizing it as a project of modernizing and updating local musical traditions, as a cultural strategy for joining and participating in what such musicians and fans believed, and still believe, are the constantly evolving creative frontiers of innovation in popular music. By the end of the 20th century, pop-rock music became an integral element of local, national and ethnic musical cultures in many, if not most countries in the world (Regev 2013). Either in their Anglo-American dominant version, or as local variants, much of the pop-rock phenomena thrive in countries around the world, where they are augmented by various labels that refer to indigenous and national variants. A partial list includes *Anadolu rock* (Turkey), *yéyé* (1960s France), *(electric-)soukous* (Congo), *desert blues* (Mali and Niger), Algerian *pop-rai*, *Afro-pop*, *Afro-beat*, *J-pop* (for Japan), *K-pop* (for South Korea), *Cantopop*, and many other uses of nation names as adjectives, i.e *Ruski rock*, *hip-hop Italiano*, *rock indo* (Indonesia) as well as numerous others. Pop-rock in Latin America and Spanish speaking countries is a particularly salient example in this regard. Tags such as *rock nacional* (in Argentina and Brazil) and *rock en español* (Latin America and Spain) cover a highly diversified universe of pop-rock genres and styles, that "pasó de ser considerado una expresión cultural ajena a convertirse en el eje de promoción regional de unificación al romper las barreras nacionales erigidas durante el siglo XX" (Valdéz and Urióstegui 2015, p. 191. See also García Peinazo 2019; Viñuela Suárez 2019).

It is also important to note that although pop-rock is very broad in terms of stylistic range, when considered globally, as a cosmopolitan musical culture, it cannot be understood as synonym for popular music (as is often the case especially in the English speaking world). In countries where indigenous traditions of modern popular music preceded pop-rock music (for example, in Latin America), and have persisted along with it, the whole range of pop-rock styles and genres is typically regarded as an art world and aesthetic culture distinct from other forms and aesthetic idioms of popular music. On the other hand, musicians working within various such genres of indigenous popular music have adopted and implemented over the years in increasing measure creative elements, techniques and sonorities associated primarily with pop-rock. These include electric guitars and synthesizers, electronic beats, constructed studio sounds of overdubs and other sonic textures, insertions of sampled sounds, electronic or amplified manipulation of vocal delivery, as well the overall sound of typical pop-rock ensembles. While some of these sonorities have been experimented and explored in various cultural contexts, they were given global, widespread stylistic and generic shape mostly within the aesthetic culture of pop-rock. We may talk in this regard about the pop-rockization of popular music as a global process, in which the aesthetic logic of pop-rock has permeated by various forms of popular music throughout the world and adopted by their practitioners.

There are by now numerous studies that point to the global proliferation of styles and genres associated with pop-rock, and how they affected cultural life in national societies in countries in various parts of the world. Some recent studies include work on pop-rock in countries and regions such as China (de Kloet 2010), Spain (Val Ripoles 2017; Val Ripolles, Noya, and Pérez-Colman 2014; Martínez and Fouce 2014, Mora and Viñuela 2013), Italy (Fabbri and Plastino 2014; Varriale 2015, 2016), France (Looseley 2003), Turkey (Karahasanolu and Skoog 2009), Brazil, Argentina and Latin America in general (Magaldi 1999; Pacini Hernandez, L'Hoeste and Zolov 2004; Ulhôa, Azevedo and Trotta 2015) Mali (Skinner 2015), Japan (Minamida 2014), Soviet Russia (Yurchak 2003), and Portugal (Guerra 2016).

Additional work has been done on specific styles and genres such as hip-hop in Indonesia (Bodden 2005) or Japan (Condry 2006); electronic dance music in

Hong-Kong (Chew 2010), France (Birgby 2003) or India (Saldanha 2002); punk in Bali (Baulch 2007), in China (Xiao 2018), in Spain and Mexico (O'Connor 2004) or in multiple countries (Dunn2016); chart pop in Japan (Mōri 2009) and South Korea (Shin 2009); and metal all over the planet (Wallach, Berger and Greene 2011). The above are all but a sample of work on pop-rock phenomena covered by sociological and cultural research that hardly leaves a doubt about the global presence and impact of pop-rock aesthetic culture. The overwhelming majority, if not all of these studies, focus on topics such as the historical emergence of styles by tracing careers of musicians and bands, on generational cohorts and their musical tastes, on phenomena such as scenes and subcultures relating to specific genres, on various aspects of the music industry, and on struggles by the cultural mediators of pop-rock to gain artistic respectability and national legitimacy. Pointing to isomorphic processes in the worldwide proliferation of pop-rock genres and related phenomena, these studies, as a whole, provide firm evidence about the cosmopolitan nature of pop-rock. However, beyond the diffusion and proliferation of pop-rock genres and styles, and pop-rock related phenomena such as youth and fan cultures, a major impact of pop-rock on music culture of the world revolves around musical knowledge, and particularly the transformation of embodied musical knowledge.

MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE

Musical knowledge, in the sense of cultural information stored and inscribed in the bodies (including thereby the minds) of individual human beings, and enacted through bodily motion, sensory and affective experience, or simply through talk about music, consists of three basic layers. I refer to them as discursive knowledge, musical familiarity and sonic knowledge.

The first two layers are in the sphere of declarative culture, consisting of "knowledge-that." That is, knowledge that allows a person to identify something and relate to it verbally by name or proper term. The third layer is in the sphere of non-declarative culture, consisting of "knowledge-how." This is mostly a form of hard to verbalize tacit knowledge, existing as a disposition in body and mind, affording intuitive action and comprehension in everyday life (Lizardo 2017, 2012)

Discursive knowledge

This layer of knowledge is informative in essence. Or rather, it is a "database" type of knowledge about songs, genres, genealogies of styles and periods, and some additional details or items. It most often consists also of acquaintance with the institutionalized evaluative hierarchies of pop-rock in general, or of a specific genre. That is, knowledge about which bands and musicians are the sanctified master artists, and which musical works are the masterpieces of pop-rock and of its specific styles. This layer of knowledge is discursive and cognitive by nature. One can obtain it by reading texts, listening to lectures or talks, or through conversation.

In the case of this type of pop-rock knowledge, we may point to the global acquaintance of individuals around the world with names such as Elvis Presley, The Beatles, Michael Jackson, Madonna, or Bob Marley, to name the most obvious. Individuals may also be acquainted with titles of songs and albums by these and many other musicians who enjoyed global success. Familiarity with names of pop and rock musicians and their songs has become an element of trivia, of "general knowledge" that modern individuals have about the contemporary world (just like knowing the names of prominent political leaders or movie stars). It is also probable to assume that phrases like "heavy metal," "disco" or "reggae" are well known to people around the world as tags for pop-rock genres. Individuals might also be familiar with the appraisal of Bob Dylan as one of the most important figures of pop-rock, or with bands such as Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple being major purveyors of heavy metal. At a slightly narrower level of expertise or connoisseurship, we may point also to some widespread knowledge about pop-rock musicians from specific

genres, or from countries other than the US and UK. One recent notable example is acquaintance with the notion of *K-pop* and with its leading bands or successful songs. Other specialized fans may be familiar with the phenomenon of "desert blues", played by Tuareg bands and musicians from Sahara countries (Mali, Niger) such as Tinariwen and Bombino.

Musical Familiarity

Another layer of knowledge consists of acquaintance with musical works, with their actual sounds. This type of knowledge is affective and experiential, and is closely connected to auditory memory. The only way to obtain it is by listening to musical works, usually more than once, until acquiring a sort of cognitive and affective ownership of it, gaining thereby familiarity that allows one to say that he or she knows, enjoys and likes (or dislikes) a musical piece. Once such knowledge is acquired, an individual is able to identify a specific musical work, and anticipate its continuity when it starts playing. Such knowledge also affords humming a work. I should stress that in the case of pop-rock, being "the art of recording," such knowledge pertains not only to melody lines or rhythmic progression, but to actual sonorities as performed on the specific canonized recording of a given work. For example, knowledge of the song "While my Guitar Gently Weeps" by the Beatles incorporates a detailed acquaintance with the exact sound and melodic progression of the guitar solo in the recording of the song that appeared on the *White Album*, release by the band in 1968. In a similar vein, individuals in different parts of the world most probably store in their auditory memory the lines and sounds of Michael Jackson's "Beat it,", Madonna's "Like a Prayer," "Hotel California" by the Eagles, "Could you be Loved" by Bob Marley and many other songs. Knowledge of canonical works of national pop-rock can be added here in the context of given national or regional settings. For example, since the early 2000s, songs by the likes of Alejandro Sanz or Andrés Calamaro are known to individuals across the Spanish speaking world, while songs by the likes of Cui Jian or Faye Wong are known to millions in China and East Asia.

In other words, worldwide circulation of pop-rock music for more than half a century has rendered these two layers of pop-rock related musical knowledge global in scope. Countless individuals in the world, across countries and regions, share them. They are familiar with a large repertoire of musical works, and they typically know their names, as well as those of the musicians that perform them. It is however a third layer of musical knowledge that I want to focus on as the major manifestation of musical cosmopolitanism.

Sonic Knowledge

This third layer of musical knowledge is also experiential and affective, but consists of a rather basic form of acquaintance and familiarity with forms of musical sound, with sonorities – not necessarily with specific musical works. At its most essential form, we might say that this type of knowledge allows making the distinction between musical sounds and noise, or between musical and non musical sounds.

More typically, it is a form of internalized knowledge, enacted almost unwillingly upon hearing musical sounds, prompting the decoding of sound as musical idiom. While not necessarily entailing recognition of specific musical works, enactments of this layer of musical knowledge are nothing but routine, intuitive deciphering of affective meanings as these are evoked by familiar musical sonorities. This is indeed the type of musical knowledge targeted by all kinds of functional pieces of music such as signature tunes of television programs, non-diegetic music in film, advertisements and certain forms of background music. In other words, this layer consists of internalized acquaintance with familiar musical idioms, accepted as elements of the routine and mundane cultural environment, where a person feels culturally at home. On the other hand, it is also a form of musical knowledge that allows a person to identify certain sonorities as musical idioms alien to her or his own sense of cultural home.

When encountering new sonorities, this form of musical knowledge “can cause listeners to experi-

ence their bodies in new ways" (McClary 1991: 25), because it has the potential to "structure things as styles of consciousness, ideas, or mode of embodiment" (DeNora 2003: 47). At the individual level, this potential is sometimes fulfilled simply by listening for the first time to certain musical works. But when new, alien musical textures are encountered and domesticated into the sonic environment of a given social entity, where such textures were previously unknown; when substantial amount of members of this social entity absorb such new musical idioms and sonorities into their taste and auditory memory, this type of musical knowledge has the potential of heralding cultural change. Once encountered and absorbed into a music culture and personal taste of large sectors in a given community, such knowledge has the potential to usher in new modes of individual and collective experiences, alter the physical reality of public spaces, and in general affect cultural performance at the individual and collective levels.

And this is indeed one of the major cultural consequences of the global diffusion of pop-rock genres and of pop-rockization in general. Pop-rock genres and styles – by introducing new sonorities, sound patterns, and textures generated through electric and electronic instruments, sound manipulation technologies and amplification, and due to their enormous range of dissemination – acted as agents of cultural change at the material, physical levels of human bodies and urban spaces.

POP-ROCK AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE

For all the genres and styles related to the notion of pop-rock, it seems then, in retrospect, that one major cultural thrust brought about by this musical realm consists of its palette of typical sonorities, its vocabulary of typical tones and timbres. Regardless of specific youth subcultures, scenes or other forms of fan culture, the accumulated effect of pop-rock music in the successive presence of its styles, genres, albums and songs in their Anglo-American form, but especially in their localized and indigenized forms, has been to naturalize into the cultural environment of countries all over the world the electric, electronic, manipulated and amplified sonorities associated with it. Put differently, and in a rather grandiose statement perhaps, I would say that following more than half a century during which pop-rock music became a prominent musical culture of late modernity, and in terms of socio-cultural history of music, we live in what might be called the age of electro-electronic-manipulated-amplified musical sonorities. Being the major cultural realm, or aesthetic culture, in which these sonorities have been explored, formulated, defined, given stylistic and generic shape, as well as globally disseminated, indigenized and legitimized for the purpose of expressing various forms and types of generational, life-style, ethnic, national and other forms of collective identity in many parts of the world, pop-rock music has acted in this regard as a major agent of cultural change in a deep meaning of altering styles of consciousness and modes of embodiment.

Either as active fans or as passive listeners exposed to music in media channels and all over the cultural public sphere, individuals in most parts of the world have been engaged with pop-rock sonorities, with the physical "thing-ness" of pop-rock music, for over fifty years now. Absorbing these sounds and their connoted meanings into their auditory memory, the bodies of successive generations of individuals across the world came to be equipped with musical knowledge pertaining to the sonorities of pop-rock. Individuals in all parts of the world became capable of deciphering, routinely and intuitively, conventional meanings connoted by musical phrases, or museme stacks and strings, to use Tagg's vocabulary (2012), of electric guitars and synthesizers, electronic beats, constructed studio sounds of overdubs and other sonic textures, insertions of sampled sounds, electronic or amplified manipulation of vocal delivery, and the overall sound of pop-rock ensembles.

The cultural transformation encapsulated in the sonic vocabulary of pop-rock therefore means, at the individual level, an alteration of the corpore-

ality through which memberships in nations or ethnicities are performed in everyday life. With the growth of sectors within national societies who adopted national pop-rock styles as the music that expresses and symbolizes their sense of local, domestic, national identity; and with the sonorities of pop-rock becoming evermore ubiquitous and omnipresent all over the public cultural sphere, the bodily experience and routine cultural performance of national identity as a mundane sense of simply being culturally at home in a given territory has been transformed. It became a performance based on enactments of bodily dispositions that afford experiences of cultural domesticity through sonic vocabularies that are at one and the same time native and imported, indigenous and alien, local but also shared by numerous other cultural settings across the world. Put differently, once bodies of individuals across the world came to identify and experience their sense of cultural home, as this is mediated through musical sound, with the sonic vocabularies of pop-rock, they became aesthetic cosmopolitans.

Consider these following four types of sonic expression, all emitted by electric guitars: Short or extended solos, especially as explored and formulated in the context of the form known as "rock ballad," as expressions of emotional elevation and transcendence; Syncopated riffs, that is, short chords separated by a second or less of silence, most prominently associated with the genres of soul, funk and disco, that came to signify a sense of rhythmic energy, or "groove"; A slightly distorted but mostly pleasant-sounding chord progression often referred to as "chiming" or "jangling" electric guitar that conveys a feeling of joy or energetic warmth; and finally, the fuzz and distortion effects, most often used to deliver a sense of drama or to signify rage. One may add here typical phrases of distorted electric organs, "otherworldly" synthesizer sounds and many more. Each of these forms has gained widespread global cultural currency for transmitting their connoted meanings. They can be found in abundance in many pop-rock songs in all languages and cultures, as well as in film scores or filmed advertisements. Their prevalence in and across national and ethnic settings testifies to the widespread presence of capabilities for deciphering them in bodies of individuals in such cultural locations.

These phrases are but a tiny sample of the rich and diverse repertoire of musical phrases that originated in the aesthetic culture of pop-rock and gained worldwide currency for signifying a whole range of moods and emotions. The global ubiquitous presence of these phrases testifies that pop-rock musical knowledge is stored in cultural bodies across the world, shared by individuals in numerous national and ethnic settings, enacted routinely for performing mundane, everyday experiences of being culturally at home.

In other words, with the auditory perceptual schemes of individuals all over the world becoming accustomed to the distorted sounds of electric guitars and to the indefinable timbres of electronic music; with the tones and timbres of pop-rock being absorbed into the canonical auditory knowledge of listeners across the world; with the sonic phrases of pop-rock becoming familiar and recognizable as musical elements by listeners in most local cultures, ethnic group, and nations; when all the above became elements in the cultural performance of contemporary musical localism of nations, we may assert that the embodied sonic knowledge of pop-rock music inscribed in listeners around the world affords them a sense of being local and translocal at one and the same time, rendering them musical cosmopolitans.

As Frith asserts, music "gives us a way of being in the world, a way of making sense of it" (1996: 272). Indeed, membership in a given national or ethnic formation is one way of being in the world often articulated and made sense of through music. Furthermore, the articulation of ethnicity and nationality through music greatly nurtures the mutual sense of otherness between such formations. Thus, incorporations of elements from musics of the non-Western world (see Manuel 1988 for this term), conceived as the "other" of Western music, have been typi-

cally discussed along notions of power relations and dominance (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000). But this sharp sense of mutual otherness has been eroded with the global diffusion of pop-rock knowledge. It has been reduced and shrunk, as the proportion of shared musico-aesthetic perceptions has grown and expanded. And this is the core of musical-aesthetic cosmopolitanism – the shriveling and withering of cultural otherness expressed in music. Not its disappearance, but its mutation into something always familiar, never fully alien or strange. Listening to girl groups from South Korea, to hip-hop from Indonesia, to flamenco-tinged rock from Spain, and to a female or male rock auteur from any country, pop-rock fans anywhere in the world will always encounter in each of the above some electric and electronic sounds, vocal techniques, and musical phrases familiar from their very own national music.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Baulch, E. (2007) Making Scenes: *Reggae, Punk and Death Metal in 1990s Bal*i. Duke University Press, Durham, NC.

Birgy, P. (2003) French Electronic Music: The Invention of a Tradition. In: Dauncey, H. and Cannon, S. (eds.) *Popular Music in France from Chanson to Techno*. Ashgate, Aldershot, pp. 225–42.

Bodden, M. (2005) Rap in Indonesian Youth Music in the 1990s. *Asian Music* 36: 1–27. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4098514

Born G. and Hesmondhalgh, D. (eds.) (2000) *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge

Bourdieu, P. (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production*. Cambridge: Polity.

Cateforis, T. (ed.) (2006) *The Rock History Reader*. Routledge, London.

Chew, M. (2010) Hybridity, Empowerment and Subversiveness in Cantopop Electronic Dance Music. *Visual Anthropology* 24: 139-151. https://doi.org/10.1080/08949468.2011.527805

Condry, I. (2006) *Hip Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization*. Duke University Press, Dur-ham, NC.

DeNora, T. (2003) *After Adorno*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Dunn, K. (2016). *Global Punk: Resistance and Rebellion in Everyday Life*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Fabbri, F. and Plastino, G. (eds) (2014) *Made in Italy: Studies in Popular Music*. London: Routledge.

Frith, S. (1996) *Performing Rites*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

García Peinazo, D. (2019). ¿ Es nuestra música?: Rock con raíces e identidades nacionales España. *Anduli: Revista Andaluza de Ciencias Sociales* 18: 73-92.

Gracyk, T. (1996) *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetic of Rock*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Guerra, P. (2016) Keep it Rocking: The Social Space of Portuguese Alternative Rock (1980– 2010). *Journal of Sociology* 52: 615–630. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783315569557

Inglis, D. (2014). Cosmopolitans and Cosmopolitanism: Between and Beyond Sociology and Political Philosophy. *Journal of Sociology* 50: 99-114. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783312438788

Karahasanolu, S. and Skoog, G. (2009) Synthesizing Identity: Gestures of Filiation and Affiliation in Turkish Popular Music. *Asian Music* 40, 52–71. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25652426

Kloet, J. de (2010) *Red Sonic Trajectories: Popular Music and Youth in Urban China*. Amsterdam: School for Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam.

Knorr Cetina, K. (2007) Culture in Global Knowledge Societies: Knowledge Cultures and Epistemic Cultures. *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 32: 361–75. https://doi.org/10.1179/030801807X163571

Lizardo, O. (2017) Improving Cultural Analysis: Considering Personal Culture in its Declarative and Nondeclarative Modes. *American Sociological Review* 82: 88–115. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122416675175

Lizardo, O. (2021) Culture, Cognition, and Internalization. *Sociological Forum* 36. https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12771

Looseley, D. (2003) *Popular Music in Contemporary France: Authenticity, Politics*, Debate. Oxford: Berg.

Magaldi, C. (1999) Adopting Imports: New Images and Alliances in Brazilian Popular Music of the 1990s. *Popular Music* 18, 309–29. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143000008898

Manuel, P. (1988). *Popular Musics of the non-Western World: An Introductory Survey*. Oxford: Oxford Uni-versity Press.

Martínez, S. and Fouce, H. (eds) *Made in Spain: Studies in Popular Music*. London: Routledge.

McClary, S. (1991) *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*. University of Minnesota Press, Min-neapolis, MN.

Minamida, K. (2014) The Development of Japanese Rock: A Bourdieusian Analysis. In: Mitsui, T. (ed.) *Made in Japan: Studies in Popular Music*. London: Routledge. Pp. 120-138

Mora, K., & Viñuela, E. (Eds.). (2013). *Rock around Spain: Historia, industria, escenas y medios de comunicación*. Lleida: Universitat de Lleida.

Mōri, Y. (2009) J-Pop: From the Ideology of Creativity to DiY Music Culture. *Inter Asia Cultural Studies* 10: 474–88. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649370903166093

O'Connor, A. (2004) Punk and Globalization: Spain and Mexico. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 7: 175–95. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877904044252

Pacini Hernandez, D., L'Hoeste, H.F. and Zolov, E. (eds.) *Rockin' Las Américas: The Global Politics of Rock in Latin/o America*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Regev, M. (2013) *Pop-Rock Music: Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism in Late Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity

Regev, M. (2019) Musical Cosmopolitanism, Bodies and Aesthetic Cultures. In: Smudits, A. (ed.) *Roads to Music Sociology*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, pp. 79-94

Regev, M. (2020) The Condition of Cultural Cosmopolitanism. In Cicchelli, V., Octobre, S. and Riegel, V. (eds), *Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism in a Global World*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 27-45

Saldanha, A. (2002) Music, Space, Identity: Geographies of Youth Culture in Bangalore. *Cultural Studies* 16: 337–50. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380210128289

Shin, H. (2009) Have you ever seen the Rain? And who'll stop the Rain?: The Globalizing Project of Korean Pop (K-Pop). *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 10: 507–523. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649370903166150

Skinner, R. T. (2015) *Bamako Sounds: The Afropolitan Ethics of Malian Music*. Minneapoils: University of Min-nesota Press

Stokes, M. (2004) Music and the Global Order. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33: 47–72. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.33.070203.143916

Tagg, P. (2012) Music's Meaning: *A Modern Musicology for Non-Musos*. The Mass Media Music Scholars' Press (MMMSP), Larchmont, NY.

Turino, T. (2000) Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

Ulhôa, M.T., de, Azevedo C. and Trotta, F. (eds) (2015) *Made in Brazil: Studies in Popular Music*. London: Routledge.

Val Ripollés F.D., Noya, J., & Pérez-Colman, C. M. (2014). ¿ Autonomía, sumisión o hibridación sonora? La construcción del canon estético del pop-rock español. *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas (REIS)*, 145: 147-180. https://doi.org/10.5477/cis/reis.145.147

Val Ripollés, F. D. (2017). *Rockeros insurgentes, modernos complacientes: juventud, rock y política en España (1975-1985)*. Sociedad General de Autores y Editores

Valdéz, G.R. and Urióstegui, B.M. (2015). El ruido y la nación: cómo el rock iberoamericano redefinió el sentido de comunidad en Latino América. *Diálogos Revista Electrónica de Historia*, 16: 191-214. http://www.scielo.sa.cr/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1409-469X2015000100006&lng=en&nrm=iso

Varriale, S. (2015) Cultural Production and the Morality of Markets: Popular Music Critics and the Conversion of Economic Power into Symbolic Capital. *Poetics* 51: 1-15 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2015.03.002

Varriale, S., (2016). *Globalization, Music and Cultures of Distinction*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Viñuela Suárez, E. (2019). Rock en español: un terreno de disputa y convergencia entre España y Latinoamérica. Resonancias 23 (45): 197-214

Wallach, J., Berger, H.M. and Greene, P.D. (eds.) (2011) *Metal Rules the Globe: Heavy Metal Music around the World*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Wicke, P. (1990) *Rock Music: Culture, Aesthetics and Sociology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Xiao, J. (2018). *Punk Culture in Contemporary China*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.

Yurchak, A. (2003) Soviet Hegemony of Form: Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. Comparative *Studies in Society and History* 45: 480–510. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417503000239

Zagorski-Thomas, S. (2014) *The Musicology of Record Production*. Cambridge University Press.

Zak III, A.J. (2001) *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Motti Regev

Motti Regev is an Emeritus Professor of Sociology at The Open University of Israel. A cultural sociologist, specializing in popular music studies and cultural globalization. Has published on these subjects in *The Sociological Quarterly, Poetics, Theory, Culture and Society, Popular Music, Cultural Sociology, European Journal of Social Theory* and other journals. His books include *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel* (with Edwin Seroussi) and *Pop-Rock Music: Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism in Late Modernity.*

DOI: doi.org/10.28939/iam.debats-138-1.3
ISSN 2530-898X (print)
ISSN 2530-8262 (digital)

Not just cock rock: Body and affective male experiences in dancing rock

Amparo Lasén
UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID
alasen@ucm.es
ORCID: 0000-0003-4906-7890

Received: 20/04/2022
Accepted: 21/06/2023

ABSTRACT

This article proposes a sociological approach to rock music, taking into account affects, body and gender choreographies (Foster, 1998). Taking as the object of study the fact of listening and the particular form of embodied listening that is dance, I return to the approach and sensitivity of Richard Dyer's (1979-2021) precursor analysis of the sexual, material and affective politics of rock and disco exploring some aspects of rock eroticism. Based on an analysis of in-depth interviews with adult men about their dance experiences, it is shown how rock music enables other erotic and political possibilities in addition to the display of phallocentrism and hegemonic masculinity, pointed out by Dyer.

Keywords: rock; dance; masculinity; gender choreographies; embodiment

SUMMARY

Corresponding author: Amparo Lasén. Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Department of Sociologia Aplicada de la Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociología. Campus de Somosaguas. 28223 - Pozuelo de Alarcón (Madrid).
Suggested citation: Lasén, A. (2024) Not just cock rock: Body and affective male experiences in dancing rock, *Debats. Journal on culture, power and society*, 138(1), pp. 47–62. DOI: www.doi: 10.28939/iam.debats-138-1.3.

THE WAY OF RICHARD DYER

This article deals with the bodily and affective experiences of men who dance rock in that particular listening that dancing is. I return to Richard Dyer's (1979-2021) proposal of considering musical genres as "sensibilities": a combination of sound, behavioural, stylistic, bodily and value elements: a form of knowledge made into an embodiment that facilitates shared sensorial and affective orientations, which allows us to ask about the dispositions that are mobilized, the material, corporeal, intellectual and affective experiences that are generated in the reception, and the resulting tensions. This research on men who dance rock deals with how the forms of reception affect and are affected in the field of feelings that encompass sensations, feelings, senses and orientations that emerge and are configured in particular musical experiences. I follow Dyer in paying attention to the forms of eroticism facilitated by musical genres, as well as to the transformative political potential of musical practices in relation to gender embodiments and bodily experiences, in this case regarding the male experiences of rock dancing and their relationship to the expectations and mandates of normative masculinity. This consideration allows us to take into account different sound experiences without having to understand them according to a logic of signification such as that of language, but rather as generators of affects (Gilbert, 2006: 113). Music does not represent or encode an experience of the body, but is configured and transmitted by this experience, and can only do so by interacting with bodies. The corporeal experience of listening and of the particular listening of dance results from the interaction between sounds and the bodies of the participants, human and non-human (objects, substances, technologies), and this contributes to the production of that experience and

of the sound space that emerges on the dance floor or in the concert venue.

Dyer contrasts the full-body eroticism of the album with the masculinist and phallocentric eroticism of rock. Rock would be a technology of patriarchal culture, "a mixture of clumsiness and drive" that grabs you and does not let you go. Her analysis resonates with the pioneering text by Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie (1978) about popular music as an expression and regulation of sexuality, according to gender norms and expectations within normative heterosexuality. This text, influenced by the feminist criticism of the seventies, contrasts rock with pop for teenagers. In rock, a version of male sexuality would be displayed through a sexual iconography that uses guitars and microphones as phallic symbols, where loud volume and rhythmic insistence configure techniques of excitation and climax. The contrasting characterization of both kinds of music contributes to creating gender and reinforcing binarism (Peraino, 2005). If the rhythm and percussion of rock and its electric guitars are representative of masculinity, then pop's lesser rhythmic emphasis and its use of acoustic guitars would be indicative of female sexuality. In reproducing gender binarism, these critical analyses fail to take into account the complexity of rock and its reception in terms of gender and body experience, nor do they address how rock's eroticism operates in the reception and musical production of women and non-heterosexuals, who are also rock artists and fans (Fast, 1999), nor do they account for the ambivalence and tensions in the performativity of masculinity of the rock stars they cite. The repeated references to musicians such as Robert Plant, Jimmy Page or Mick Jagger as examples of *cock rock* forget that their performances, dancing and appearance did not match the normative masculinity of their time and led them to be judged as androgynous and effeminate. As it had happened decades earlier with Elvis Presley and his hip movements, the object of television censorship, they were considered feminine and ambiguous, as well as hypersexualized and unbecoming of white men (Leibetseder, 2021).

I follow Dyer's example, who, unlike Frith and McRobbie, does not identify musical genres with genders or forms of sexuality, but shows how bodies can be experienced in radically different ways depending on the affective processes in which they participate. This exploratory research asks whether the danceable sound spaces of rock and its eroticism are only and always cock rock and whether the reception and listening of rock by fans is limited to reproducing the masculine sensitivity of the musical, literary, performative, media, etc. contents of the so-called *cock rock*; and whether the body performance and dance listening, where the "volatility" of our bodies and their intrinsic resistance to "disciplining" (Grosz, 1994) unfolds, can destabilize rock's link with masculinity and phallocentrism.

Following the investigative sensibility that Dyer deploys to answer these questions is a bit like using Dyer against Dyer. It also requires developing methodologies of listening, observation and analysis that do not focus only on the semiotic and discursive, on the analysis of lyrics, visual representations and iconographies, clothing and fashions, but on the affective and non-verbal elements that emerge in the physical and body experiences of listening and, in this case, dancing. Unlike a large part of the studies on the sociology of rock, it is a matter of not focusing only, or primarily, on the musicians, the press, the industry and music criticism, on musical production, in the narrow sense, but opening the focus to the interaction with reception, public, fans, understood as a part of musical production as well, and not only contributing to the production of interpretations and meanings, but also to that of music and the sound spaces that emerge from musical experiences.

Gender choreographies

Dance situations are examples of gender choreographies (Foster, 1998). This notion underlines the performative and relational nature of gender, as well as the reference to a script or set of rules and instructions about the reciprocal and embodied construction of femininity and masculinity, of what is considered appropriate or inappropriate for men and women.

Erving Goffman (1987) is one of the first authors to point out the performative and choreographic nature of gender as a social organizational device articulated with other hierarchies and dichotomous devices, such as the public/private division, in his analyses of the dramaturgy of everyday interaction rituals, as well as the hyper-stylization of these gender conventions in advertising representations.

The notion of choreography underlines the relational, performative and scripted nature of gender, mea-ings, mandates and expectations. It maintains the consideration of gender as repeated forms of performance that update norms, embodied by people in their relationships and interactions (Butler, 1990), also underlining the importance of the script, the set of instructions and order that is updated, repeated, "danced." The choreographic metaphor allows us to understand gender performances and relations as translations and interpretations of norms and meanings, not only discursive but also corporeal, in the double aspect of interpretation: as a particular performance and as an imputation of historically and culturally conditioned meanings. The notion of choreography, like that of *performance*, includes the question of the sedimentation of these networks of meanings, as meanings, sensations, feelings and orientations, related to femininity and masculinity, susceptible to change over time, where the necessary repetition supposes an opportunity for change, intentional or not. In gender choreographies, bodies are active and reactive, generative and receptive, inscribing and inscribed. In its focus on movement and the theoretical and critical potential of body actions, choreography challenges the dichotomy between verbal and non-verbal cultural practices, pointing out how expectations and conventions regarding bodies and gestures are connected to political and social power structures. The relational aspect of gender choreographies concerns the people and groups involved, but also other participants: objects, technologies, materialities, and also sounds and music, which also condition our gestures and movements, facilitating certain steps and hindering others. The notion of gender choreography also allows us to take into account the reciprocal configuration of positions, movements and gestures, how the positions of some determine or limit the movements of others and how stepping outside of these movements entails tensions, the risk of stepping on or pushing each other, literally or metaphorically.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

This article is based on a small exploratory research carried out during a time of pandemic and restrictions regarding contacts, concerts and forms of nighlife linked to dancing. The fieldwork includes ten in-depth interviews and the observation of online videos of rock dancing situations at festivals and concerts. This article focuses on the analysis of these ten interviews. Participants were recruited using the snowball technique, starting with announcements on social networks, and from friends and acquaintances, seeking to interview adult male rock lovers who were interested in talking about their rock dancing experiences.[1] This search for interested participants found fans and enthusiasts of rock and concerts, and also four with a more professional relationship with rock: a dance teacher, a guitarist and singer of a rock group from the eighties and nineties and two amateur musicians. The interviewees range in age from 32 to 65, they are all nongypsy and white and have diverse occupations and places of residence: teachers (university, vocational training), computer scientists, car mechanics, farmers, civil service candidates or architects, in cities such as Madrid, Bilbao, Murcia, Cuenca, Segovia, Santa Cruz de Tenerife or Arrecife. For this reason, in addition to the limitations of the pandemic, most of the interviews were conducted via video call in September and October 2021.

1 The relevant variables for the selection of participants were: being male and rock fans to explore the dynamics between masculinity and dance, being adults to seek a certain experiential homogeneity and better correspond to the ages of the majority rock audience today, and being interested in this musical practice and in participating in research on rock dancing since our research experience tells us that the quality of research increases when we can count on interested participants.

When I asked for help to contact them, the question arose as to what I understood by rock. I replied that whatever the interested parties understood as such, that they felt challenged by this call to participate, and then we would see in the interviews what music each person danced to.[2] Rubén López Cano, a musicologist friend, humorously observed the contradiction of dancing rock, since rock is not danced. My answer was similar: I consider dancing what the participants questioned by the proposal understand, and then, in the interviews, we would see how, when, what and where it is danced. In some interviews, this question came up explicitly, especially for those who dance different types of rock and in different ways. Tono, the dance teacher, wanted to know if we were going to talk about "Elvis-type" rock'n'roll or more modern rock "from The Who to Extremoduro". Other participants who also dance classic rock'n'roll, more recognized as dance music, and modern rock with its labels hard, heavy, indie, Americana, pop-rock, etc., directly go on to describe how they dance the music they prefer without asking for more precision, comparing the different situations and dancing sensations. Some interviewees explicitly expressed ambivalence about whether rock is danced or not, stating both things at the same time or diferentiating between dance and "body movements":

> Rock is not made for dancing,
> it may be made for people to bounce,
> the whole audience bouncing in waves.
>
> It is movement, it can be an expression of
> dance, it is a body expression,
> dance is that,
> a body expression from what music transmits.
> (Tono, 32)

In the interviews, we address corporeality in a conversation about how they move and what they feel when they dance; we recall particularly intense dance situations and compare dance situations in different contexts: concerts, festivals, bars, parties, home. Investigating corporeality in dance requires, in addition to collecting and describing conversations about the body, the practice of listening to bodies in and through the participants' narratives exploring various levels of attention in the interview and in the analysis, both to what the words say about the body and to the way in which bodies tell the stories we collect in the interviews (Chadwick, 2017). Embodied experiences leave audible traces in these conversations about dance, as energy incorporated in the conversation and the narration of lived experiences, as Rachelle Chadwick explains based on Julia Kristeva's theoretical framework of the speaking body. The processes of meaning-making involve grammar, syntax, symbolism, as well as body and sensual rhythms and energies, embodied in intonation, rhyme, repetition and rhythms, which in turn pose a constant threat of disruption to the logic and coherence of discourse. It is therefore necessary to preserve body energies in converting words into text, in transcription and in analysis, as well as the embodied and body idiosyncrasies of speech as a vital performative element of meaning. In addition to producing transcriptions capable of transmitting the cadence, the viscerality and the emotions of speech,[3] Chadwick proposes strategies to listen to the corporeal excesses and contradictions in the speech of the people interviewed, since subjectivity comprises multiple competing, potentially contradictory voices, paying attention both to the use of the first person, the Ivoice, and to the contrapuntal voices, both to the manifest content of what is being told and to the background that interrupts and alters the clear and ordered meaning in moments of the narrative of excess, contradiction, ambiguity,

2 The groups mencioned at the interview are: Screamin' Cheetah Wheelies, Black Crowes, Allman Brothers, Levon Helm, Neil Young, Mago de Öz, Platero y Tú, Status Quo, Joni Mitchell, Les Innocents, Mano Negra, Béruriers Noirs, Rolling Stones, Nick Cave, Arctic Monkeys, Garbage, Gossip, Radiohead, Placebo, Nirvana, Wet Leg, The Pretenders, The Smiths, INSX, Skunk Anansie, PJ Harvey, Juliette Lewis, Asian Dub Foundation, Ska-P, The Black Keys, Rosendo, The Clash, Ramones, Los Suaves, Barricada, Janis Joplin, Iron Maiden, Jimmy Hendrix, Deep Purple, Barón Rojo, La Polla Records, Elvis Costello, MClan, Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Queen, Triana, Santana, Creedence, Joe Cocker i JJ. Cale.

3 This is what also inspired me to make the transcriptions that can be read in this article.

and incoherence, which do not fit neat and univocal analytical interpretations, and which we often leave out of our qualitative analyses, which are more focused on detecting common aspects, themes, and continuities.

In the case of this research, in addition to paying attention to these ambivalences and inconsistencies, I try to listen in the interviews to check whether the dancing body sneaks into the speech that describes the dance experiences, whether it acts in its words, whether the narratives are imbued with bodily joy, embodied pleasure, or the anxiety and restlessness sometimes experienced in these situations. I also pay attention to the gestures that accompany the moments in which they describe the dance situations, when most of the interviewees move their hands and arms, and how at certain moments the gestures accompany and underline what is said. The movements become broader and more energetic, unlike other moments in the conversation. They close their eyes when they remember intense moments of ecstatic dancing. They close their fists and move them up and down when they talk about moments of energetic and visceral dancing. They open their hands and arms when they describe sensations of evasion, of gliding with the music. Other examples of corporality in the speeches are the outbursts of humming or singing, as Tono does with the chorus of the song *Molinos de viento*, by Mago de Öz, "drink, sing, dream, feel that the wind has been made for you", when entering into resonance with the memory of the concert, or when describing his taste for Ska: "it has the chumpa, chumpa, chumpa, chumpa that makes you get up". In other interviews, similar uses of onomatopoeia are found when describing the sensations and senses of listening and dancing, difficult to describe with words alone, in music that makes you feel "aaaarrrggg", you follow the rhythm "boom, boom", "I usually like an emotional melodic variety within the song more than when it is turutututu trutrutru or pumpumpum or anything very repetitive". The rhythmic cadences of the speech also reveal this corporality in speech, as in these two descriptions of pogo:

> I think that that particular dance
> has a lot to do with anger,
> has a lot to do with rage,
> has a lot to do with contained energy.
> (Saúl, 33)

> Memories of ecstasy,
> of having a lot of fun,
> of the pogo kind,
> in more concerts.
>
> With a very beastly energy,
> very euphoric,
>
> Circles are formed with the people,
> bouncing,
> you bump into people
> but you are doing your thing,
> with music,
> of pure euphoria,
> then I remember a Reincidentes concert where
> I feared for the physical integrity of two of my
> friends, because I saw them flying, literally.
>
> (Tono, 32).

In which the rhythmic cadence of the enunciation of the recollection of dance is broken when it goes from the description of dance to talking about the inconsiderate people at pogo.

Researching eroticism and eroticism of research

The questions about what they feel, how they feel, what emotions they experience, how it affects them..., are not always easy to answer; they are not questions they usually talk about, they take time to find the words, they use metaphors and clichés. But there is no refusal to do so; these are participants interested in talking about their dancing experiences, they are rock fans, or musicians. They had no qualms about telling how they feel when they dance: "I feel like I have a body", "Drogas makes me feel".

Dyer proposes studying the different musical genres based on their eroticism, departing from the pleasures

and dispositions of body that they facilitate, taking into account that, in addition to pleasure and enjoyment, eroticism refers to a vital and sensorial intensity, to a mutual affectation of bodies among themselves and of the objects and sounds that surround them, which can also imply pain or displeasure. Eroticism implies an experience of rupture or interruption, of desubjectification, also of gender and masculinity in this case, which translates into the potential to undo or destabilize it. This research questions eroticism in listening to rock dance and attempts to mobilize the power of eroticism in research, understanding eroticism as the availability for contact and vital force for politics, as Audre Lorde (1978) points out, but also for research, insofar as it is a creative force that allows us to meet other people always understood as embodied subjects (Esteban, 2019).

Mari Luz Esteban invites us to consider the vitality of our research and presentations, and their potential to affect our audiences by generating a host of sensations. Esteban proposes three elements to feed eroticism in research, which I also try to include in it: the theoretical-methodological framework of body, from body and with body, not as a mere object of study; the feminist character understood as a political act and interactive relationship; and the autoethnographic perspective that blurs the boundaries between subject and object of study, putting the body in the research, rebalancing the power relations with the participants, so that the research can be considered as an active and creative positioning in the face of current ideological and moral disputes, where the conquests of social movements, feminism and LGTBIQ coexist with reactionary positions regarding body, pleasure and sexuality in churches, the media and recalcitrant right-wing parties.

We will now describe the participants' dance experiences from two apparently contradictory aspects that stand out in the interviews: the experience of feeling out of place and the connection with the environment and the others.

MALE BODIES OUT OF PLACE

The flexibility and volatility of bodies means that, depending on the situation, norms, expectations and spaces, they can be and feel out of place or in place. Body politics, sexual politics and gender politics involve the construction, learning and repetition of gestures, a style, a body presentation, which mark what is appropriate and inappropriate, what is in and out of place (McDowell, 2000; Grosz, 1994). Disciplining bodies and their social choreographies produce the embodiment and reproduction of normality at home, school and the workplace, and can come into tension in places of leisure and dance, where possibilities of other gestures, movements and embodiments emerge, which coexist with these norms.

The participants point out various ambivalent entanglements and tensions in rock dancing. Rock appears as a masculine genre (Frith and McRobbie, 1978; Martínez, 2003) in their own words or in those of their friends who tell them that "rock and guitars are for men". Tom also refers to the masculinity of rock when he talks about the absence of rock in gay bars and how music would be more appropriate for bars where the atmosphere is (hyper)masculine instead of the "drag race" type of music they usually play. He considers himself a queer gay and an outsider rock fan who connects with female rockers who laugh at stereotypes, and even with his own male fans, making his own the gestures and the instrumental and musical expertise that are supposedly reserved for men:

> I like garbage,
> it's not like an elder white male group,
> it's not surprising that I almost levitate with groups of powerful women:
>
> Chrissy Hynde, Shirley Manson, PJ Harvey, because there's this idea that women aren't allowed to do these things.
>
> When you see how they play and the guys who say they can't do it...

I connect with them
and the music too,

I love female rockers,
I don't know why,
maybe I tend to identify with them a little bit more.
(Tom, 49)

The conversations with all the interviewees show the ambivalence of the relationship between dance and masculinity and that dancing gives them the experience of feeling uncomfortable and out of place. In some cases, the tension between masculinity and dance is explicit, such as the possibility that dancing can lead them to other bodily gender experiences, of taking "a journey, even becoming another person of a different sex thanks to a song that I like or that excites me" or being a man "who connects with emotions that would be difficult to connect with otherwise". This tension is also pointed out by others, the friends who make jokes and quips because one dances or dances "too much", or by the stranger who approaches Tom in a club to tell him that he doesn't know how to dance. Tension is also present when Daniel tells how, when leaving a club, another young man asked him if he was a faggot because of how he danced, both a curious question and an insult. This memory leads him to consider that, in the past, it was frowned upon dancing if you were a man, and now this has changed. Although his story is full of current situations where he has received warnings, and even prohibitions from dancing, in bars and clubs, for being considered annoying and inappropriate. So that I could see his way of dancing, Daniel did some steps and sent me a short video of himself dancing after the interview. His way of dancing "strangely", moving the whole body and experimenting with different movements, of different amplitudes, is similar to that of Mick Jagger or Chris Robinson, the singer of the Black Crowes, who are also examples of the ambivalence of male dance, as they are recognized and celebrated among their fans for their way of moving, as part of their music and connection with the audience, while these movements are the object of mockery or, in the case of Jagger, attributed to a sexual ambivalence that generated attraction, discomfort and even moral panic (Peraino, 2005: 37).

Daniel's story describes the inappropriate nature of a man who "dances strangely" and therefore "stands out" and attracts the attention of other customers in bars and entertainment venues aimed at a heterosexual public. This attention is perceived as a nuisance that requires intervention by the venue's staff.[4] The gender asymmetry is evident, as women who dance in these same venues are not perceived as inappropriate, nor are they a nuisance or a problem for the bar owners, on the contrary. Although they also "dance strangely", as in my own experience.[5]

And well, I have a bit of an eccentric way
of dancing.

I move my whole body,
I move my whole body,
I do footwork,
on my knees,
on my heels,
whatever.

And one in four times they kick me out of the club,because they say:
"you're bothering the others",
"you're taking up too much space".

Sometimes I do things like that too,
I interacted with the wall
or interacted with objects in the room,
a railing or things like that.

I go under the railing,

4 In a personal conversation with a nightlife worker in Madrid with experience in various clubs and venues, she confirmed these practices and was surprised by my surprise, as it seemed completely normal to her that it was not appropriate to dance in nightclubs where customers might feel bothered or strange by the presence of a man who dances in a flashy manner and that the duty of the owners is to make sure that these customers are comfortable and continue consuming.

5 The asymmetry also occurs in who can expect assistance from the club's workers when they feel bothered since these interventions are not so frequent when it comes to female customers bothered by various male behaviours in nightlife situations.

I hit myself,
I do silly things,
the rest is dancing on my little step
letting people go to the bathroom and such,

Because I am respectful.

[...] As I moved away from the normativity of
the dance movement,
I became like a spectacle,
like a figure of attention,
and I like that a lot,
I really like
the exhibition and being seen.

But it also makes me shy
and it can also restrict me.

I can be cooler or not,
you can like it,
but I also like not being the centre of attention.

[...] It may be that, at the place, they say to you:
"You are not creating the atmosphere that
interests us in this place and that's it".

Then, what they are going to check is that you
don't bother anyone,
as soon as you bother someone,
one or two people,
maybe they come to you and say:
"Sorry, you can't dance here".

They may say, right from the start, you have to
leave.

Or, more normally,
"if you don't stop dancing like that, I'm going
to kick you out, and that's it,
we're going to kick you out".

I understand that
and depending on how I am that day,
how drunk I am,
how excited I am,
if I have somewhere else to go,
if I feel like ruining that man's half hour,
and maybe putting on a little bit of a show,
I can have many reactions.

I can stop for a bit and start
dancing weird on purpose,
without bothering anyone.

But I'm going to piss you off as much as I can,
always keeping in mind that I don't want
anyone to hit me,
I don't want to hit anyone.
(Daniel, 43)

This story also shows the masculine ambivalence of his position regarding this exhibition when dancing, which the rest of the interviewees reject and avoid because it makes them feel ashamed and embarrassed. Daniel feels both things: the desire to stand out and be recognized, to be the object of the gaze and attention of others, and the shyness and shame caused by this attention. In the same way, while he develops a suspicious gender performance according to the masculine norm, he can respond in a stereotypically masculine way, at least within his story, to the calls for attention made by the employees of the establishments, displaying a more traditional masculine performance of defence of his status and power with arrogance and threat of aggressiveness included (García, 2010).

The experience of the body out of place is manifested in the rejection of the majority of the interviewees to dance in bars, where it is easy to "make a scene" and feel the weight of the gaze of others, or in discotheques where, in addition, "you have to dance out of obligation". They want to dance when their body asks for it and the music deserves it, when they like the music and the performance. They are moved to dance by the aesthetic appreciation of what they hear, and not by the place asking for it, they say, responding to the modern masculine mandate of independence and autonomy (Kimmel, 1994; García, 2010).

Most of the interviewees prefer to dance at concerts and festivals, and in some cases also in the privacy of their homes, with the explicit, and also ambivalent, recognition of the shame that they feel when they feel that they are the object of other people's gaze when they dance. With the exception of Daniel, they

prefer shared dance situations at concerts, where the visual, seeing and being seen, does not prevail, both to avoid the shame of feeling observed and inappropriate, and for the possibility of feeling a greater intensity in the tactile and kinesthetic relationships with the music, their bodies and the environment. They recognize the difference between places where, if you dance, you are in plain view and attract the attention of others, such as bars and clubs, which cause discomfort and disorientation of the body out of place; and others such as concerts and festivals, where the spatial and situational arrangement allows you to share the presence and movements of others, to participate in a resonant physical listening, to feel the body in place, without being the object of the gaze of others, in an opposition between the visual and tactile regimes of different sound spaces of dance, also pointed out by Dyer.

The discomfort of dancing, the experience of a dancing male body seen as out of place, is also manifested in the consideration of the majority of participants that they do not know how to dance or that they do not dance well, this alleged lack of skill being a sign of appropriate masculinity, so it is not embarrassing to admit it, on the contrary, with the consequent ambivalence in the words of the interviewees. Thus, they say they do not have many movements when they dance, "very little capable of representing the rhythm in an orderly manner, although this dysfunction will make me experience it in a very personal and non-transferable way". More than dancing, they say that "they move their skeleton", that they lack coordination, that they move "without leaving the tile", "it is discreet, it is not something to show off, that makes it easier, because you do not have to be doing it better than others". "I am not a good dancer; I don't give a damn". They think they do not dance well, "but my partner tells me that I do because she sees me in a good light". "It's jumping around the kitchen while I sing", they do not move their hips or their butt, or "just a little, jumping, less now than before because of their age".

> Now, more calmly,
> without being in front,
> I move my little leg,
> I follow the rhythm with my head. But you
> start to get encouraged
> and then you move your whole body
> practically,
> you have a route, as I say, of one square meter
> and you move at your own pace.
> (Julio, 46)

The discomfort of dancing as an experience of the male body out of place is also manifested in the need to disinhibit oneself in order to dance and the importance, therefore, of the agents that facilitate this disinhibition, from the "chemical technologies of pleasure" (Gilbert and Pearson, 1999) such as alcohol, to the presence of others who dance and contribute to defining the dance situation as appropriate, as well as to sharing and diverting the focus of attention. But, again, this is an ambivalent recognition, since it implies recognizing the limits to one's own autonomy when deciding whether to dance or not, and therefore conflicts with the mandate of independence and autonomy of appropriate masculinity: "alcohol helps", but "I don't need it", "it's very important that you feel that you are in tune, also because people are dancing, you feel that the focus is not on you".

> If you're in a bar and people close their eyes,
> the light is dim,
> you pay attention to where the music is
> coming from, the speakers, the ceiling,
> if people are in that mood,
> well, it makes it much easier for you to lose
> your inhibitions too.
>
> If you're dancing alone and no one is dancing,
> you have to have a lot of personality,
> confidence or be very crazy to dance,
> unless you're "in your element" with the
> music.
>
> I think it requires strength, or madness.
> (Tono, 32)

Thus, a whole series of elements and bodies, human and non-human, make up the choreography that inhibits or disinhibits dancing, where an ordinary object and something traditional like the wineskin, which Jesús usually takes to concerts and sneaks into festivals, becomes a crucial device for socializing and accompanying the dance:

> There with the wineskin in Azkena,
> the best invention in the world for going to festivals,
> you don't have to leave from where you are,
> they don't charge you a fortune,
> the wine gets you better, it comes out so little,
> you get into the mood,
> and on top of that you socialize,
> it's shocking and you can easily share.
> (Jesús, 50)

EROTICISM OF BODIES IN HARMONY

Male ambivalence towards dance refers to the conflict between a modern Western conception of gender in which dance, emotions and body are feminine (Foster, 1998) and therefore cannot be appropriated by a masculinity that is defined as opposed to femininity (Kimmel, 1994; García, 2010), and the experience of connection with their bodies, of "feeling the body" with which dance provides them. On the one hand, they feel the discomfort generated by a practice that is not entirely appropriate and by the possibility of provoking something as unmasculine as attracting the gaze of others to their bodies. But, on the other hand, they also experience positive emotions and sensations, mediated by listening to music in rock dance, of connection with their own body, with the sound space and with themselves, therefore an experience of the body and of themselves within a place, in harmony with music and the environment. "You move, you don't even know how you are, happy with life", in sensations and feelings that do not refer to knowledge or meanings, in sensations and affections that recall the "whole-body eroticism" that Dyer finds in the experiences of disco music.

> I remember the feeling,
> I was happy,
> more than the specific situation.
>
> I remember because you force me to remember things,
> I remember sensations
> [...] I know I was moving because I am not able to feel that without moving
> (Jesús, 50)

In addition to the pleasure and happiness associated with movement, the interviewees speak of an intense connection with the music and the sound space: "you are very immersed in the concert", "the music makes you explode in some way, the drums grow, certain solos, certain riffs, certain choruses make you scream, make you dance, in a kind of *crescendo*"; and of the circulation of emotions and affections between music, the musicians, the space and the bodies of the others who dance. "I was brought to tears, all the people were in favour, close to the stage, you could see the good vibes of those who were playing, of the people around." Rock "makes it easier", "it short-circuits you", "everything flows". It is a "shared," "tribal" ecstasy, which is what they refer to when they talk about jumping when others jump, something that everyone does, or about "the energy and intimacy" of joining in a pogo, a dance that sometimes half of the interviewees do: "I am putting my body against yours, I am elbowing you, but at the same time it is an intimacy", it is "joy with energy," "very communal, vibrating energy and rubbing you, making a kind of contact". All the participants talk about the connection between rock and energy, and how that energy circulates through the sound space of the concert and energizes their bodies, as Silvia Martínez (1999) describes and analyses in her studies on heavy music and its fans.

This pleasure of dancing is felt as "moments of happiness" in common with what has been found in research on dance experiences of other music, such as electronic music (Lasén, 2003, Leste, 2020), and also as "being free, completely free", a freedom that translates into a complex articulation of connections

and disconnections, "dancing at a concert connects me with myself", while that connection can mean that "you forget your things".

> The difference for me is that rock is a feeling
> and you escape,
> you escape and dream at the same time,
> you're dancing
> there at the concert
> and you're thinking about your things,
> your dreams
> and your projects,
> and you're like flying,
> in quotes,
> and you let yourself go a little.
>
> It's a bit of an escape route for me.
>
> Even if you're with your companions, your friends,
> it's being alone,
> it's a feeling of being independent,
> in quotes,
> or being on your own,
> and being fine with yourself alone
> because you're flying a little
> and thinking about your projects and your dreams.
>
> It relaxes me,
> it makes me feel good,
> it relaxes me,
> it makes me disconnect from the world
> and there I am, listening to the music,
> and I'm with my companions the same,
> but at the same time I'm somewhere else,
> somewhere floating wonderfully.
> (Julio, 46)
>
> I feel very happy,
> it's like a meditation,
> you don't think about anything,
> you don't see what's going on around you,
> you forget about your things
> and you only think about music,
> in connection with music and musicians
> (Mariano, 65)

Dancing involves a change in body disposition that leads to other sensations and emotions, as the interviewed people acknowledge: it changes your mood, it prepares you for something different. "You lose yourself in the music and you start to feel the music instead of feeling what you felt before [...] anger or stress dissipates with dancing".

> Although people identify rock music with anger, aaarggg,
> for me it can go from feeling angry to feeling very relaxed,
> from being stressed to feeling happy and upbeat,
> maybe that's the reason why I dance [at home] when I associate it with getting ready for something different.
> (Tom, 49)

Listening to music in dance orients oneself, in the sense that Sara Ahmed (2019) gives to this term in her queer phenomenology, affecting how bodies inhabit spaces, in this case the sound spaces of the dance floor, the concert, or the home transfigured by music and dance, and how spaces are extended in bodies, affecting social relations and gender choreographies.

The participants' stories exemplify the experience of eroticism according to Georges Bataille (1979), which responds to the interiority of desire and throws us outside of ourselves, which makes us experience being inside and out of place at the same time, causing a break. An imbalance, "in eroticism I lose myself," says Bataille, as our interviewees lose themselves and connect in rock dance. Eroticism leads to indistinction, to the confusion of different objects, to the substitution of the isolation of being by a feeling of profound continuity. Writing from a very different position from Bataille, Audre Lorde (1978) also underlines the inner character of eroticism and its power, "firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed and yet-to-be-recognised feelings". But the mobility of bodies and subjectivities, as well as their relational character, make it not so easy or obvious to recognise the boundaries between interior and exterior, as we hear in our interviews. Eroticism

arouses nostalgia for the fullness and intensity experienced, which appears in the interviews in the desire and nostalgia to find oneself dancing again at a concert. Eroticism as an invitation to "live from the inside out", listening to desires, allowing us to let the power of the erotic illuminate our way of relating to the world, in an impulse that exceeds limits, including those of gender norms. Bataille's phrases resonate with the words of the participants.

> We talk about eroticism whenever a human being behaves in a way that is clearly contrary to the usual behaviours and judgements. Eroticism reveals the reverse side of a façade whose correct appearance is never denied; on that reverse side feelings, body parts and ways of being are revealed and make us feel ashamed.
> (1979: 115).

According to these authors, the power of eroticism, such as experienced when dancing, helps to free oneself from the suffering, self-denial and dullness caused by the normative order. In this case, the eroticism of rock and dance allows the norms of masculinity to be relaxed, as Eduardo Leste (2020) observes in men who dance to other music in his research on the Madrid Neobakala scene, where the conjunction of dance, music, drugs, and partying suspends everyday roles and allows masculinity to be "relaxed" as well, suspending social differences and interconnecting participants.

For Dyer (1979/2021), the materialism of music such as disco or rock refers, in addition to the prominence of the materiality of the bodies that resonate and vibrate, to the acceptance and celebration of the world, which we find in these experiences of connection and harmony when dancing rock. The immanence and insignificance of these kinds of music and their experiences are a condition of their politics, where the will to provoke pleasure, emotions and shared body experiences different from everyday normality prevails, and not that of expressing transcendent truths. This conception of the utopian, political and combative dimension of the dance floor, as a space where other ways of doing, feeling and relating can be experienced, another performativity of the body and gender, is a common thread in the analysis of dance cultures (Gilbert, 2006; Gilbert and Pearson, 1999; Pini, 2001; Lawrence, 2006, Lasén, 2003, Leste 2020) as well as the centrality of the party and the dance floor as the future of revolt and dissent to sex and gender norms in queer strategies (Hamilton 2019; López Castilla, 2015, 2018; Peraino, 2005; Leibetseder, 2012).

CONCLUSION. QUEER POTENTIAL OF DANCING ROCK

Dance, like other phenomena considered feminine, has received little theoretical and analytical, historical, aesthetic and sociological attention, which is necessary to be considered a significant social practice (Foster, 1998). This situation favours the articulation between feminism, gender studies and dance studies, since they all imply a critique of logocentrism by focusing on the body, as well as a critique of the sexist consideration of bodies and practices. Dance changes places and changes location, after its passage the site is not recognized, it is an example of a disruptive, agile and contingent strategy, an ad hoc tactic of resistance against hegemonic practices and expectations.

In this research, we find these aspects of dance in the male discomfort of the body out of place with respect to the normative attributes of masculinity, when dancing and being the object of the gaze of others, also performing movements that draw attention to the body, with the risk of emergence of shame as a situation in which one feels, and is visible, as inappropriate (Kimmel, 1994). The observations of Iris Marion Young (2004) on the differences in the ways of knowing through touch or through gaze are also useful to understand this situation, both the positive sensations of dance described, as well as the discomfort of the body out of place. Since tactility unites in the same action and experience, touching and being touched, one cannot separate the passive from the active, nor the interior from the exterior, it does not allow the distance of the visual ways of knowing, nor the separation between

object and subject, challenging those oppositions on which gender is also based, the opposition between masculine and feminine.

According to Lorde, contact with eroticism makes women rebel against the acceptance of powerlessness and affective states such as resignation, humiliation, despair, depression and self-denial. If we extend this question to our research with adult white men, we must ask ourselves what consequences can be brought about by weakening the norms of the power of eroticism inherent to the body experiences of dance: what is destabilized, how it affects their normal and normative impositions and dispositions, and whether these situations of plenitude, linked not to control but to abandonment and to sensitive and affective intensity, provoke both pleasure and discomfort, that discomfort that seems to be the effect of rock eroticism on dance for these men.

Music participates in the configuration, conceptualization and representation of subjectivity and identity, in the normalization of subjects and subjectivities. But these power relations, which are experienced in listening and dancing, are also potentially destabilizing and facilitate moments of disorientation such as those we have described, in that discomfort and feeling out of place. We can call *queer* the emergence of these experiences, that strange feeling when dancing or dancing strange, which question both the heterosexual norm and the binary gender and the claim of stability and naturalization of gender identities and subjectivities. Understanding queer as defined by Eve KosofskySedgwick (1993: 8): the open web of possibilities, gaps, interruptions, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning, when the constituent elements of gender or sexuality do not have, or cannot be made to have, a monolithic meaning.

Music as a technique, and also an erotic one, has the potential to question gender, its categories and meanings, as well as sexual identities, thanks to its resistance to legibility (Peraino, 2005). The anxiety and ambivalences that music and musical practices arouse in relation to gender and sexuality, as well as the multiple moral panics about this relationship from the origins of rock'n'roll to trap, refer to this queer potential, this double character of making and unmaking gender and sexual norm. The instability of sexuality and gender contributes to their appeal and cultural work, also as an opportunity for conflict between discipline and desire, both in performers and listeners and dancers. An instability recognized in its double effect of pleasure and restlessness, almost always inexplicable, by the participants in the research when describing their dance experiences, where they experience the disruption of the repetition of movements and bodily orientations considered masculine.

The discomfort of feeling inappropriate, out of place, disoriented, together with the ambivalent pleasure of getting lost and thus connecting with the body and the sound space make up the queer potential of the dance experiences described. Discomfort is a revealing sign of the potential political transformation of a practice for those in positions of privilege (Azpiazu, 2017). In this case, it would be a form of disorientation regarding normative heterosexual masculinity, which is not lived in a completely conscious and explicit way by these men. As Aspiazu reminds us, masculinity cannot be approached only from an aesthetic or identity point of view without dealing with the power and privileged position of men. A productive discomfort that questions one's own practices and transforms gender power relations requires that dancing be not only pleasurable and disorienting for men, but also a disempowering experience.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Ahmed, S. (2019). *Fenomenología queer. Orientaciones, objetos, otros*. Barcelona: Bellaterra.

Azpiazu Carballo, J. (2017). *Masculinidades y feminismo*. Barcelona: Virus Editorial.

Bataille, G. (1979/1957). *El erotismo*. Barcelona: Tusquets.

Butler, J. (1990). *El género en disputa. El feminismo y la subversión de la identidad*. Barcelona: Paidós.

Chadwick, R. (2017). Embodied methodologies: challenges, reflections and strategies. *Qualitative Research* 17(1): 54-74. doi.org/10.1177/1468794116656035.

Dyer, R. (2021/1979). En defensa de la música disco. *Resonancias* 25(48): 167-174. doi.org/10.7764/res.2021.48.9.

Esteban, M. L. (2020). La antropología y el poder de lo erótico. *AIBR. Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana* 15(3), 557-581. doi:10.11156/aibr.150307.

Fast, S. (1999). Rethinking issues of gender and sexuality in Led Zeppelin: a woman's view of pleasure and power in hard rock. *American Music* 17(3): 245-299. doi.org/10.2307/3052664

Foster, S.L. (1998). Choreographies of gender. *Signs* 24(1), 1-33.

Frith, S., & McRobbie, A. (1978). Rock and Sexuality. *Screen Education* 29: 3-19.

García, A. (2010). Exponiendo hombría. Los circuitos de la hipermasculinidad en la configuración de prácticas sexistas entre varones jóvenes. *Revista de Estudios de Juventud* 89: 59-78.

Gilbert, J. (2006). Dyer and Deleuze: post-structuralist cultural criticism. New Formations. *A Journal of Culture, Theory, Politics* 38: 109-127.

Gilbert, J., & Pearson, E. (1999). *Discographies. Dance music and the politics of sound*. London: Routledge.

Goffman, E. (1987). *Gender Advertisements*. Nueva York: Harper & Row Publishers.

Grosz, E. (1994). *Volatile Bodies. Towards a corporeal feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hamilton, M. aka Materia Hache (2019). El mapa del porvenir: una invitación a la fiesta del sótano a las azoteas: una línea de fuga del control y del disciplinamiento, in F. Vila & J. Sáez (eds.), *El libro del buen Amor*: 236-267. Madrid: Ayuntamiento de Madrid.

Kimmel, M. (1994). Masculinity as homophobia. Fear, Shame and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity, in H. Brod & M. Kaufman (eds.), *Theorizing Masculinities*: 119-140. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452243627.n7

Kosofsky-Sedgwick, E. (1993). *Tendencies*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Lasén, A. (2003). Notas de felicidad extrema. La experiencia musical dance. *Papeles del CEIC* 9. doi.org/10.1387/pceic.12083

Lawrence, T. (2006). In defence of disco (again). *New Formations. A Journal of Culture, Theory, Politics* 38: 128-146.

Leibetseder, D. (2012). *Queer tracks: subversive strategies in rock and pop music*. London: Taylor and Francis.

Leste, E. (2020). Ambivalencia y transformaciones de las fiestas neobakalas. *Disparidades. Revista de Antropología* 75(2), e020. doi.org/10.3989/dra.2020.020.

López Castilla, T. (2015). *Música electrónica y cultura de club: un estudio postfeminista de la escena española*. Doctoral dissertation. Universidad de la Rioja. dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/tesis?codigo=46122.

López Castilla, T. (2018). El perreo queer del lesbian reguetón, in A. M. Botella Nicolás & R. Isusi Fagoaga (eds.), *Músicas populares, sociedad y territorio: sinergias entre investigación y docencia*: 99-208. València: Universitat de València.

Lorde, A. (2003/1978). Usos de lo erótico. Lo erótico como poder, in *La hermana, la extranjera. Artículos y conferencias*. Madrid: Horas y Horas.

Martínez, S. (1999). *Enganxats al heavy. Cultura, música i transgressió*. Lleida: Pagès Editors.

Martínez, S. (2003). Decibelios y testosterona: una aproximación a las imágenes de género en el rock y el heavy metal. *Dossiers Feministes* 7: 101-117.

McDowell, L. (2000). *Género, identidad, lugar. Un estudio de las geografías feministas*. Madrid: Cátedra.

Peraino, J. (2005). *Listening to the sirens: musical technologies of queer identity from Homer to Hedwig*. University of California Press.

Pini, M. (2001). *Club cultures and female subjectivity*. London: Palgrave McMillan.

Young, I.M. (2005). On female body experience. *"Throwing like a girl" and other essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Amparo Lasén
She is professor of Sociology at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and member of the Ordinary Sociology research group. She obtained her PhD in Sociology from the Paris V-Sorbonne University (1998). Her main areas of research are digital culture, especially in relation to its participation in contemporary configurations of subjectivities and affects, gender relations, the study of youth cultures and practices and musical practices, especially electronic dance music and the role of technologies in making and listening to music.

DOI: doi.org/10.28939/iam.debats-138-1.4
ISSN 2530-898X (print)
ISSN 2530-8262 (digital)

Beatles and Boomers: Music Fandom as a Resource for Well-being

Candy Leonard
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLAR
candy@candyleonard.com
ORCID: 0000-0001-9135-3378

Received: 09/02/2022
Accepted: 17/04/2022

ABSTRACT

This piece weaves together three separate areas of research and shows how baby boomers' lifetime of deep engagement with music and music fandom are resources that can be leveraged by fans, families, and healthcare professionals to extend healthspan, mitigate loneliness, and otherwise improve quality of life for this first generation of "old fans" and those that follow.

First, drawing on an in-depth qualitative study of Beatles fandom, I will show that the band's constant presence in the culture and in boomers' lives through six critical years of development had a profound and enduring impact, and that this experience has been a lifelong resource for resiliency and well-being. Then, looking at research in neuromusicology and music therapy, I will show the many ways music functions as a health technology for older adults. Finally, looking at these issues in light of current and predicted decline in cognitive functioning and other indicators of well-being in this generation, this article proposes that boomers are uniquely primed and positioned to benefit from the therapeutic use of music for overall health and as support for the gerotranscendent stage of adult development.

Keywords: gerotranscendence, Beatles fandom, well-being, music therapy, cognitive decline, boomer health

SUMMARY

Corresponding author: Candy Leonard. candy@candyleonard.com
Suggested citation: Leonard, C. (2024), Beatles and Boomers: Music Fandom as a Resource for Well-being. *Debats. Journal on culture, power and society*, 138(1), pp. 33–46. DOI: doi.org/10.28939/iam.debats-138-1.4

INTRODUCTION

A unique confluence of technological, demographic, and other cultural factors—a "perfect storm"—made possible the frisson that occurred when the Beatles emerged on the world stage in 1964 and instantly became ubiquitous. Global media debated Beatlemania's impact on young people, critiqued their music, and probed their personal lives. Meanwhile, through extraordinary talent and modern marketing, the Beatles proceeded to enchant a generation. They opened young people's ears to music and made it a necessity in ways it had not been for previous generations. (Leonard, 2015).

The Beatles were a constant, joyful presence in the lives of millions of predominantly white baby boomers, offering a compelling and complicated nonstop flow of music, images, and ideas during six critical years of child, adolescent, and young adult development. The wraparound experience of hearing and watching the Beatles evolve in real time had an impact on tens of millions of first-generation fans—now in their sixties and seventies—that was profound and enduring.

Other artists from that era also have a loyal aging fan base—Bob Dylan, The Rolling Stones, David Bowie, and those mentioned in the quote below come to mind. But the Beatles' cultural authority and omnipresence in the sixties so informed the zeitgeist of boomers' formative years that the band still holds positive resonance for older adults across an eighteen-year age range, no matter what else they were listening to. A female fan born in 1946 recalled:

> I had a dear friend who smoked pot, loved the Grateful Dead, wore Eastern dresses, and knew

> nothing about politics. I was political and countercultural and I didn't use drugs. But we both liked the Beatles. (Leonard, 2016, p. 153).

This fan, a male twelve years younger, put it this way:

> Not everyone was listening to the same thing anymore—there were more options—Cream, Hendrix, Simon and Garfunkel, the Doors, the Monkees. But the Beatles were a common denominator regardless of what else you listened to. (Leonard, 2016, p. 153).

Along with the Beatles and other music of consequence, the post-war generation in the US grew up with great expectations—despite Cold War "duck and cover" drills, Vietnam, assassinations, and civil unrest. A cool young president promised this first tv generation a man on the moon by the end of the decade, and science delivered. The oppressive conformity of the post-war years was yielding to an ethos of greater personal freedom.

Landmark voting rights legislation was passed and Johnson's social welfare agenda lifted millions out of poverty. College was affordable for those who wanted to go. Emergent styles in the arts offered more expansive visions of the human experience. Baby boomers were infused with Great Society optimism while rejoicing in a pop music renaissance, devouring and cherishing texts that heralded a new era of human flourishing.

The West did enter a new era, but it was not the Age of Aquarius many were hoping for. Backlash to the liberalizing trends of the 1960s ushered in neoliberalism and a drastic cultural shift away from intrinsic and towards extrinsic values. After forty years of deregulation, market-driven individualism, soaring income inequality, and underfunded social supports, many of those great expectations have gone unmet, though hope is not necessarily abandoned.

The good news is that this generation of older adults are better educated, smoke less, are more inclined to exercise, and have longer life expectancy than previous generations. Many are "aging successfully," a somewhat problematic concept (Calasanti, 2016) which, most basically, means free of disability or disease, high cognitive and physical abilities, and meaningful interactions with others (Rowe and Kahn, 1987). The bad news is that a recent study shows reduced levels of cognitive functioning in boomers compared to previous generations (Zheng, 2021).

Contributing to this reduced cognitive functioning are lower household wealth, lower likelihood of marriage, higher levels of loneliness, depression and psychiatric problems, and more cardiovascular risk factors, including obesity, physical inactivity, hypertension, stroke, diabetes, and heart disease. Further, it is predicted that cognitive impairment will become more common as the cohort ages. The increasing suicide rate is a concern as well (Krans, 2016).

Governments and other institutions around the world are ill-prepared for so many people living so much longer in states of economic precarity and poor health. Efforts to address the needs of this population are too often characterized by siloed, privatized approaches, tech solutionism, ageism, and an emphasis on lean efficiency to maximize profit.

In 1971, David Bowie advised young music fans to "look out" because "pretty soon now" they were "gonna get older." And here we are. But the life-enhancing aspects of music fandom—awesome aural experiences, sharing a passion with others, playfully engaging with texts, examining artifacts—become even more potent and valuable with age. Fandom expands into a different kind of resource, meeting a wider range of needs.

Recognizing that baby boomer identity and worldview were uniquely and extremely informed by the music of their youth, a growing body of research on fandom across the life course has emerged since Harrington and Bielby (2010) first introduced insights from gerontology into fan studies and called on others to do the same.

There is now a rapidly expanding literature on aging fans, much of it focusing on how the meaning, enactment, and experience of fan identity change with age (see for example, Vroomen, 2004; Bennett, 2013; Kotarba, 2013; Harrington & Bielby, 2017). This work is important for our understanding of the interplay between media, fan practices, and adult identity in later life. But with 10,000 boomers turning sixty-five every day (America Counts, 2019), their ongoing engagement with the music of their youth is a valuable resource with broad, societal implications.

Drawing on *Beatleness: How the Beatles and Their Fans Remade the World* (Leonard 2016), I will show how boomers' experience of growing up with the Beatles is stored deeply in their consciousness as a lifelong resource for resiliency and well-being, and that this generation's lifetime of deep engagement with music and music fandom are resources that can be leveraged by fans themselves, families, and health-care professionals to extend healthspan, mitigate loneliness, maximize engagement, and otherwise improve quality of life for this first generation of "old fans" and those that follow.

BEATLES AND BOOMERS: A UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP

The Beatles came to play a role in fans' lives that fits no existing category. Its scale, duration, and intensity distinguish it from other parasocial relationships. Many said the Beatles were not merely "like" family but were as important to them as family. A male fan born in 1950 explained: "They were more than a band; they were like your relatives. You felt close to them and knew so much about them. They were family. I identified with them intensely, and trusted them." A male fan five years younger, said, "They had as big or maybe even bigger impact on me than close family members" (Leonard, 2016, p. 255).

Several said the Beatles were like "surrogate parents," filling emotional voids and providing comfort their real parents could not. A female fan born in 1949 said, "My parents were alcoholics and there was lots of stress in the house. The Beatles took me away and made me happy" (p. 263).

Many felt the Beatles "had more interesting and useful things to say" than anyone else in their lives. A male fan also born in 1949, said, "I was learning more from them than I was from my father, who always called me a schmuck. They were guys older than me who understood things I was trying to understand" (p. 263). A female fan born in 1958 whose mother was "a career woman at a time when nobody's mom worked" said she and her siblings raised themselves, and "spent a lot of time alone listening to the Beatles" (p. 263).

Fans were grateful for the hope the Beatles provided during hard times and "took comfort in knowing the Beatles were in the world" (p. 255). A male fan born in 1950 said, "When I was young and I wanted to harm myself, they made me so glad and happy. I wanted to be alive so I could hear them. If not for them life would have been horrible for me" (p. 264). A male fan born in 1949 said, "They helped keep me sane during a turbulent period in which my family suffered several deaths and illnesses. I internalized qualities I admired in them and drew great strength from my identification with them" (p. 256).

The Beatles provided a way for awkward or quirky young people to be "accepted into a group for the first time" and many "still feel grateful to them" for that as well (p. 262). The Beatles were the friend who accepts you and "never judges you" (p. 263). As one female fan born in 1954 recalled, "They were my salvation until I could find real people who would make me feel like they made me feel." Asked how they made her feel, she said, "Understood; that I was okay the way I was" (p. 263). The Beatles made fans feel validated and supported as individuals. A female fan born in 1952 recalled:

> Everything I did, all the phases I went through, I followed and I actually learned from them. I think they were my friends when I was growing up. They made me feel special. Even though I

> didn't know them personally, it was like they were right there (p. 263).

The Beatles' message to a male fan born in 1957 was, "It's okay to take chances and push the envelope." A female fan of the same age heard, "Stand up for what you believe" (p. 261). Fans heard the Beatles saying, "Be yourself," "Be confident in who you are," "Follow your dreams," "Don't let the world drag you down," and "Don't be afraid to be different" (p. 262).

Fans of all ages thought they were "the perfect age to be part of it." A male fan born in 1951 said:

> I have always felt that I couldn't have been luckier than to be born in the summer of 1951. Being fully into them was a teenage, adolescent experience that was unique to our generation. The Beatles were and still are the biggest and best thing that has ever ha-ppened in my life. (p. 258)

The earliest memories of mid to late boomers are infused with Beatles. A female fan born in 1955 said, "They enhanced my childhood. They gave me something to hope for. They entertained me, but they also made my little bubble bigger—more worldly and attractive. They made us feel cool and bigger and older than we were, like we could be part of this."

A female fan born in 1961, one of the youngest interviewees said, "I have a powerful attachment to them because I was becoming a conscious human being at the time when they were everywhere." But the impact at the other end of the age range was also significant. A male fan born in 1947 said, "They made me question accomplishment without fulfillment."

Gratitude and joy are mentioned frequently. Fans "can't overestimate" or "express" the amount of joy the Beatles brought them. It's a feeling they "never want to let go of" (p. 264). A female fan born in 1957 says she was "hardwired for joy with the Beatles." The overriding emotion is also joy for this female fan born in 1951: "They brought me so much joy when I was growing up, and still do" (p. 264.) A male fan born in 1956 remembers the Beatles bringing forth new emotions: "I always felt in my heart that they were very special and meaningful to me. They sparked something in me that was new—inspiration, excitement, joy, happiness" (p. 264).

Fans cite moments that, for them, capture what one female fan born in 1961 called "the shimmer of joy" in their music: the cowbell on "A Hard Day's Night," the hand claps on "Eight Days a Week," the feedback on "I Feel Fine," the fuzz bass on "Think For Yourself," the count-in on "Taxman," the alarm clock on "A Day in the Life," the harmony on "Because," or, back to the beginning, Lennon and McCartney singing unison on the chorus of "She Loves You"—a record described by one female fan as "pure joy on a piece of plastic." (pp. 264-265)

It's quite common for fans to say "I grew up with them" because of the band's ubiquity during the sixties. A male fan born in 1956 recalled, "They were part of the fabric of your life, the backdrop." A male fan born in 1948 described it this way: "You brushed your teeth, you went to the bathroom, you went to school, you listened to the Beatles" (p. 139).

The phrase "I grew up with them," captures not only the band's constant presence but how they stimulated fans' intellectual, emotional, social, aesthetic, and spiritual development. As a female fan born in 1956 explains, "I grew up with them and because of them. They'd put something out there and I was ready to receive it" (p. 256). A female fan born in 1961 said, "As a Beatle fan, your mind is open to possibilities, more and sooner" (p. 257). Through their songs and their own high-profile seeking they encouraged fans to question and quest. Several fans said, "They made us think about things in different ways" (p. 257).

The Beatles' output functioned as an alternative curriculum, a spiraling curriculum to wander through repeatedly, getting something new each time yet also enjoying its familiarity. Now in their sixties and seventies, fans are still doing this.

The Beatles kept fans in the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978) where material just beyond their grasp is understood with the help of older peers. Early on, fans came to expect the Beatles to provide them with joyful, immersive experiences, and by repeatedly exceeding those expectations the Beatles created delight.

A reservoir of trust was established, ensuring fan engagement as the band's output required more work. Even those who said they were frightened by "Strawberry Fields Forever" were nevertheless in-trigued and kept listening (Leonard, 2017). The Beatles challenged this generation in a wholly unique way.

The Beatles trip to India to study meditation in 1968 captured the attention of fans and the world press. Many younger fans remember thinking "it was part of their mystique." Others thought they "needed guidance" or "just didn't want to be bothered anymore" (Leonard, 2016, p. 158). Some thought the Beatles "were lucky to have the money to travel to places like India and seek truth, not caring what anyone thought" (158). A male fan, age seventeen at the time, said the Beatles "made everyone think about aspiring to spiritual enlightenment" (p. 159).

Recalling the Beatles trip to India at its fiftieth anniversary, *American Veda* (2010) author Philip Goldberg said,

> It was as though planet Earth tilted on its axis in February 1968, allowing India's ancient wisdom to flow more easily and quickly to the West. The infusion would impact healthcare, psychology, neuroscience, and especially the way we understand and engage our spirituality. (Goldberg, 2018)

Spirituality remains part of the Beatles meaning for fans of all ages (Leonard, 2021). But spiritual themes in their music and the phenomenon itself may have special relevance for older fans as a resource for moving towards gerotranscendence, a stage of adult development which will be discussed further below.

Fans had strong reactions to news of the Beatles breakup in April of 1970. A female fan, age fifteen at the time, remembers the day vividly: "It was my mother's fortieth birthday party that day; I was devastated, like someone died. I sat in my room and cried. I was heartbroken" (Leonard, 2016, p. 246). Another female fan, also fifteen at the time, explained "it was like your parents getting divorced; you were never alone in the house and always felt safe, then one day they break up and you're devastated." Many said it was "like losing a family member." (p. 246)

A male fan, age fifteen at the time recalled, "It's like they were saying 'the seventies are starting, you're on your own'" (p. 253). A male fan age, eighteen at the time, put it this way:

> I was heartbroken when they broke up. I was graduating high school and going off to college. I was starting a new chapter of my life, and the thing I had to hang on to was gone. I had to grow up but I continued to carry them inside me. They are part of me and always will be. (p. 253)

BEATLES FAN PRACTICES

What Beatles publicist Derek Taylor referred to as "the twentieth century's greatest romance" (1996, p. 3) continues into the twenty-first.

Fans from all over the world discuss the Beatles 24/7 on social media, where an interesting post can elicit hundreds of comments in minutes. These conversations are stimulating for fans of all ages, but for lifelong fans, reviewing lived history and joyful experiences that still hold positive energy functions as a kind of reminiscence therapy, which has been shown to relieve depressive symptoms and improve well-being (Routledge et al., 2016).

Though the connection is virtual, it reduces loneliness because something personally meaningful is shared (Hari, 2018). In addition, nostalgic experiences increase confidence and motivation, and disrupt thought patterns that perpetuate loneliness (Abeyta

et al., 2020). Often considered a reactionary response to discontent in the present, nostalgic reflection is a way of accessing meaningful memories from the past in order to approach the future with greater purpose (FioRito and Routledge, 2020).

Though most fans discussing the Beatles on social media have never met, or perhaps see each other occasionally at Beatles events, shared love for the Beatles is a basis for genuine friendship, even among people who might have little else in common. When someone becomes ill or shares the loss of a parent or a beloved pet, others post heartfelt responses. Posters thank their "Beatle family" for the support. This fan, a child of seven when Beatlemania erupted, put it this way:

> The Beatles have made my life joyous. My children listen to the Beatles, my home is filled with Beatles memorabilia as well as music. They taught me about love and kindness and how music can touch my heart. The internet has connected me to other fans and a world of new friends. (Leonard, 2016, p. 271)

Fans share pictures of their Beatle rooms, spaces of refuge from life's stressors, where they're surrounded by images and objects with deeply personal yet shared meaning. Though not all fans have the luxury of a Beatle room, fans display Beatle images in their homes for the same reasons family photos are displayed: to elicit feelings of love, gratitude, and self-continuity. A casual glance can provide a comforting interlude.

For first generation fans, the Beatles have been the most consistent, enduring, and unfailing thing in their lives, aside from their own sense of continuous self—and the two are intertwined. Friends, spouses, and jobs come and go, children grow up and move away, yet "side two" of *Abbey Road* is as reliably pleasing—if not more so due to remastering—as it was a half a century ago.

Beatles tourism generates £82 million annually for the city of Liverpool, and the Beatles-related economy is expected to continue growing long into the future (Liverpool Echo, 2016). Standing at the shelter in the middle of the roundabout at Penny Lane is affirming and satisfying because it makes real what the song conjured in imagination countless times.

Fans feel both privileged and humbled seeing the Beatles childhood homes. That these homes, some rather ordinary, are historic "blue plaque" sites affirms fans' belief in the Beatles' historical significance and fans' own sense of being part of history. These feelings are empowering and can mitigate the ageism that considers fannishness inappropriate in adults.

Many fans look forward to remastered music and buy it as soon as its available, despite having purchased it in many previous formats over the years. Demos and outtakes reveal the Beatles' creative processes and offer glimpses into the mysteries of their craft. Candid banter is of great interest because fans gain insight into who they are as real people.

Part of the appeal of Peter Jackson's *Get Back* (2021) —documenting the band's daily activity in the weeks leading up to their last live performance on the Apple rooftop on January 30, 1969—is that it includes demos, outtakes, and banter. The music and images of the embodied Beatles are primordially familiar yet still seems fresh.

Since 1974, Mark Lapidos has been convening fans for three days of "Beatleing" at the Fest for Beatle Fans, which takes place annually in New York and Chicago. The Fest draws fans of all ages from all over the US and beyond for live Beatles music, panel discussions, author presentations, films, vendors, art shows, trivia contests, and most importantly, to just be with other fans. Attendees say it's the "three of the best days of the year" and they "can't ask for a better vacation" (Leonard, p. 272).

Attending these gatherings is an act of self-care. Fan practices—sharing things one finds meaningful, listening to favorite music, group singing and music-making, engaging with texts, reminiscing, moving to music—are all health-promoting. The

fans jamming all night in the lobby may be losing sleep but they're preventing the cognitive decline of healthy aging (Román-Caballero et al., 2018).

A RESOURCE FOR WELL-BEING

Documentaries like Alive Inside (Rossato-Bennett, 2014) and the work of Daniel Levitan (2019) and Oliver Sacks (2007) have raised public awareness about the power of music. Yet, boomers' lifelong engagement with the Beatles and other music is an underutilized resource for addressing cognitive decline and other health issues.

Musical leisure activities and music therapy have many potential benefits for cognitive, motor, emotional, and social functioning for normal aging as well as for older people with neurological illnesses such as stroke and dementia (Särkämö 2018). Simply listen-ing to favorite music improves brain plasticity and may have long-lasting effects. (Fischer et al., 2021).

For many music fans now in their sixties and seventies, the practice of listening to music fell away gradually over years of work and family responsibilities. Today, internalized ageism may inhibit boomers from expressing enthusiasm about the music of their youth because it doesn't seem age appropriate. A Beatleness interviewee born in 1953 who "didn't have much to do with the Beatles for long stretches of time" (Leonard 2016, p. 270) realized an important source of joy had been missing from her life.

A 2016 study found millennials listen to 75% more music than boomers (Resnickoff, P. 2016). More recently, a 2019 study by Deloitte found only 20% of boomers subscribe to a music streaming service, and they value the service least among all ages groups (Ciampa, 2019). No reasons are offered but it's a worthwhile research question. Perhaps boomers perceive an unwanted agent interfering in their intimate relationship with music. Artful album covers and liner notes are absent from the music streaming experience, perhaps making it less appealing for some. Technostress could also be a factor (Nimrod, 2018).

Based on my own experience as a volunteer working with healthy people in their seventies and beyond living alone in the community, people this age have enormous interest in learning how to stream music and make playlists. They will eagerly tell you who their favorite artists are. Music streaming services like Spotify should consider offering discounts to older adults, as they do for students.

Musicologist Even Ruud considers music a "cultural immunogen," something people use in their everyday lives to improve their health and well-being. (Ruud, 2013). Thinking about the millions of older adults whose well-being would be enhanced by reconnecting with the Beatles or any music they love, several strategies come to mind.

Adult children could ensure aging parents, especially those living alone, have frictionless access to their favorite music. And while it may seem less impotant than social security numbers and passwords, adult children should know what songs their aging parents' would be most responsive to. That information is important for music therapists working with Alzheimer's or stroke patients who may not be able to communicate but will respond to music stored deeply in memory.

In primary care settings, providers could take a moment to ask older adults if they have access to music and encourage them to listen on a regular basis. In addition to the health benefits of making patients feel cared for in a personal, holistic way, it could hasten a cultural shift, beginning with this first "rock generation," that routinely encourages music for well-being and integrates it into care practices when appropriate.

Family members could also be sure loved ones in residential care have access to music, even if they have to provide it for them. Research shows "wash and feed" and "too busy" mindsets are barriers to

the widespread therapeutic use of music despite awareness of its known benefits to both residents and staff. (Garrido et al., 2021, p.1197). An older fans' encounter with the Beatles scrapbook they lovingly curated as a teenager, or other memorabilia, could activate memories and encourage communication.

Because hearing is the last sense to go, favorite music can also ease the process of dying. As Harrington observes in her study of fandom and the US death system, "the potential remains for fannish identities and practices up to the moment of death" (2019, 197).

Music is also useful for pain management, with no side effects. According to Tia DeNora's research on music as a medium of consciousness and a "health technology," people suffering from chronic illness can use music to "instill courage" and a different attitude toward pain (2015, p. 112). Perhaps adding music therapy to care plans could mitigate the "silent epidemic of chronic pain in older adults" (Domenichiello and Ramsden, 2019) and the associated problem of polypharmacy (Yeager et al., 2020).

Online social learning platforms have been effective in connecting older adults with shared interests, thus mitigating the negative impact of the social isolation necessitated by the pandemic. (Heape, 2021) I led a 12-week series called "Growing Up With the Beatles" on one such platform where participants shared stories as we listened to music, discussed images, and moved through the Beatles timeline and contemporaneous historical events.

Like the blue plaques on the Beatles' homes, these conversations—among people who are technically strangers, yet aren't—are empowering because they situate boomers in proximity to events in collective consciousness that are also uniquely theirs; events they lived through and witnessed. The sessions tap into rich veins of deeply stored memories and offer opportunities for insight into former selves, adding continuity and coherence to participants' ongoing personal narrative.

Age brings added poignancy to reflection, often with heightened spirituality and movement toward gerotranscendence (Tornstam, 2011). With this stage of development comes greater feelings of connection to past and future generations, less attachment to egoic identity, and a shift away from materialistic concerns and superficial relationships. Gerotranscendence can also bring about "emancipated innocence"—a playful, carefree state with little concern about the judgement of others.

Music therapist Faith Halverson-Ramos uses music in a variety of ways to support gerotranscendence, noting that spiritual themes in Beatles' songs such as "The Word" and "Within You Without You," may be especially resonant for boomers (2019).

The enduring music fandom of older adults also suggests new models of community living after retirement. Ninety percent of boomers want to "age in place" despite the potentially high cost of doing so (Khalfani-Cox, 2017), and show little interest in typical 55+ communities (Geber, 2021). Communities based on fan identity may hold the answer, as evinced by the success of Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville (Regan, 2021)—though many boomers would find that particular aesthetic and lifestyle unappealing, unaffordable, or both.

Based on their study of aging Grateful Dead fans, Adams and Harmon (2014) have explored the possibility of an intentional retirement community for fans of the Grateful Dead, and conclude a community based solely on musical taste might not be sufficiently appealing but could serve as an initial filter for identifying subcommunities (Adams and Harmon, 2018).

Similarly, one could envision a retirement community based on Beatles fandom as an initial filter for identifying subcommunities (Leonard, n.d.). Age-restricted communities follow an 80/20 rule in the US, thus fan-based retirement communities would be intergenerational, with significant benefits for all involved. (Jacobs, 2021).

Millions of boomers are raising grandchildren, starting businesses, and volunteering in their communities. Many are retired and thriving; many are struggling. They've shed the great expectations of their youth but have not abandoned hope. Many want to stay healthy and engaged, working alongside young people to preserve democracy and a habitable planet.

I'm not suggesting music or Beatles fandom are the keys to health and happiness for today's older adults, or that it can mitigate the ravages of neoliberalism or of unhealthy lifestyle choices (Shen 2019). But we know that fan activity and listening to favorite music bring joy and enhanced well-being to boomers' lives today—just as it did a half century ago—and should be encouraged by those who care for and about them.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Abeyta, A.A., Routledge, C., Kaslon, S. (2020, June 23). Combating Loneliness with Nostalgia: Nostalgic Feelings Attenuate Negative Thoughts and Motivations Associated With Loneliness. *Frontiers in Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01219

Adams, R. G., Harmon, J. (2014). The Long Strange Trip Continues. In Harrington, C. L., Bielby, D., Bardo, A. (Eds.), *Aging, Media, and Culture* (Chapter 9). London: Lexington Books.

Adams, R. G., Harmon, J. (2018). Intentional Sub-communities and Identity Continuity Among *Baby Boo*ers: *Grateful Dead Fans*. In R.A. Cnaan and C. Milofsky (Eds.), Handbook of Community Movements and Local Organizations in the 21st Century (pp.337-351), Springer. DOI:10.1007/978-3-319-77416-9_21

America Counts (2019). By 2030 all baby boomers will be age 65 or older. *US Census Bureau* https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/12/by-2030-all-baby-boomers-will-be-age-65-or-older.html

Bennett, A. (2013) *Music, Style, and Aging: Growing Old Disgracefully?* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Bowie, D. (1971) Changes. *Hunky Dory*. RCA Records

Calasanti, T. (2016) Combating Ageism: How Successful Is Successful Aging? *Gerontologist*, 56(6), 1093-1101. doi: 10.1093/geront/gnv076.

Ciampa, D. (2019, August 7). Boomers haven't shown a 'whole lotta love' for music streaming. *Deloitte Perspectives*. https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/technology-media-and-telecommunications/articles/boomers-havent-shown-a-whole-lotta-love-for-music-streaming.html

DeNora, T. (2016). *Music Asylums: Wellbeing Through Music in Everyday Life*. New York: Routledge.

Domenichiello, A.F. and Ramsden, C.E. (2019). The silent epidemic of chronic pain in older adults. *Progress in Neuro-Psychopharmacology and Biological Psychiatry*, 93, 284-290.

FioRito, T.A. & Routledge, C. (2020, June 3). Is Nostalgia a Past or Future-Oriented Experience? Affective, Behavioral, Social Cognitive, and Neuroscientific Evidence. *Frontiers in Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01133

Fischer, C.E., Churchill, N.; Leggieri, M.; Vuong, V.; Tau, M.; Fornazzari, L.R.; Thaut, M.H.; Schweizer, T.A. (2021) Long-Known Music Exposure Effects on Brain Imaging and Cognition in Early-Stage Cognitive Decline: A Pilot Study. *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*, 84(2), (pp. 819-833).

Garrido, S., Markwell, H., Andreallo, F., & Hatcher, D. (2021). Benefits, Challenges and Solutions for Implementing Personalised Music Playlist Programs in Residential Aged Care in Australia. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Healthcare*, 14. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A673852970/AONE?u=mlin_m_minuteman&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=255c3a3f

Geber, S.Z. (2021) Hey Senior Living Pros: Boomers Don't Want Your Old, Tired Communities. *Forbes*, May 11, 2021.

Goldberg, P. (2010) *American Veda: How Indian Spirituality Changed the West*. New York: Harmony Books.

Goldberg, P. (2018) How the Beatles' Trip to India Changed the face of Spirituality in the West, *Elephant Journal*. https://www.elephantjournal.com/2018/02/how-the-beatles-trip-to-india-changed-the-face-of-spirituality-in-the-west/

Halverson-Ramos, F. (2019) Music and gerotranscendence: A culturally responsive approach to ageing. *Approaches: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Music Therapy, Special Issue* 11(1), (166-178).

Hari, J. (2018). *Lost Connections: Uncovering the Real Causes of Depression – and the Unexpected Solutions*. New York: Bloomsbury USA.

Harrington, C. L., and Bielby, D.D. (2010). A life course perspective on fandom. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 13(5), 429-450.

Harrington, C.L. and Bielby, D.D. (2017). Aging, fans, and fandom. In M.A. Click, & S. Scott (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom* (pp. 406-415). Abingdon: Routledge.

Harrington, C.L. (2019). Til death do us part? Fandom and the US death system. *Journal of Fandom Studies*, 7(2), 189-206.

Heape, A. (2021). Loneliness and Social Isolation in Older Adults: The Effects of a Pandemic. *Perspectives: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association*. 6 (6), 1729-1736.

Jackson, P. (Director). (2021). *Get Back* [Film]. Walt Disney Studios; Apple Corps; Wingnut.

Jacobs, K. (2021). Don't Mind the Gap in Intergenerational Housing, *The New York Times*, Sept 2, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/02/style/housing-elderly-intergenerational-living.html

Khalfani-Cox, L. (2017). Can You Afford to Age in Place? *AARP*, February 14, 2017. https://www.aarp.org/money/budgeting-saving/info-2017/costs-of-aging-in-place.html

Kotarba, J.A (2013). *Baby Boomer Rock 'n' Roll Fans: The Music Never Ends*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

Krans, B. (2016, December 5.). Baby Boomer Suicide Rate Rising, May Go Higher with Age. *Healthline*. https://www.healthline.com/health-news/baby-boomer-suicide-rate-rising-031515

Krznaric, R. (2020). *The Good Ancestor: A Radical Prescription for Long-Term Thinking*. New York: Experiment Publishing.

Leonard, C. (n.d.). candyleonard.com/projectblackbird

Leonard, C. (2016). *Beatleness: How the Beatles and Their Fans Remade The World*. New York: Arcade.

Leonard, C. (2015, January 26). 7 ways the Beatles changed boomer childhood overnight *Huffington Post*. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/candy-leonard/beatles-changed-boomer-childhood_b_6494786.html

Leonard, C. (2017, February 22). When the Beatles brought psychedelia to prime time. *Huffington Post*. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/when-the-beatles-brought-psychedelia-to-prime-time_b_58adbc3ae4b0598627a55f2c

Leonard, C. (2021). Beatles Fandom: A De Facto Religion. In Ken Womack & Kit O'Toole (Eds.), *Fandom and The Beatles: The Act You've Known for All These Years* (pp. 1-54). Oxford University Press.

Levitan, D. (2019). *This is Your Brain on Music: Understanding a Human Obsession*. London: Penguin.

Liverpool Echo, (2016, February 8). The Beatles add £82m a year to Liverpool economy. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-merseyside-35523070

Nimrod, G. (2018). Technostress: measuring a new threat to well-being in later life, *Aging & Mental Health*, 22(8), 1080-1087, DOI: 10.1080/13607863.2017.1334037

Regan, T. (2021, July 12). Demand Surges for Latitude Margaritaville Communities as Brand Seeks Westward Expansion. *Senior Housing News*. https://seniorhousingnews.com/2021/07/12/demand-surges-for-latitude-margaritaville-communities-as-brand-seeks-westward-expansion/

Resnickoff, P. (2016, June 2). Millennials Listen to 75% More Music Than Baby Boomers, Study Finds. Digital Music News. https://www.digitalmusicnews.com/2016/06/02/millennials-listen-more-music-baby-boomers

Román-Caballero, Rafael & Arnedo, Marisa & Triviño, Monica & Lupiáñez, Juan. (2018). Musical practice as an enhancer of cognitive function in healthy aging - A systematic review and meta-analysis. PLoS ONE. 13. e0207957. 10.1371/journal.pone.0207957

Rossato-Bennett, M. (Director). (2014). *Alive Inside* [Film]. Projector Media.

Routledge, C., Roylance C., Abeyta A.A. (2016) Nostalgia as an Existential Intervention: Using the Past to Secure Meaning in the Present and the Future. In: Russo-Netzer P., Schulenberg S., Batthyany A. (Eds.,) *Clinical Perspectives on Meaning*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-41397-6_17

Rowe, J.W. & Kahn, R.L. (1998) *Successful Aging*. New York: Pantheon.

Ruud, E. (2013). Can music serve as a "cultural immunogen? An explorative study. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being* 8(1), 1-12. DOI:10.3402/qhw.v8i0.20597

Sacks, O. (2007). *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*. New York: Knopf.

Shen, A. (2019) Marketing Preventive Health to Baby Boomers: What if Unhealthy Lifestyles are Attributable to the Counterculture? *Journal of Macromarketing*. Vol. 39 (2), 151-165.

Taylor, D. (1996). Introduction to *Beatles Anthology* 1. Apple Corps Ltd/EMI Records Ltd.

Thomas, B. (2015). *Second Wind: Navigating the Passage to a Slower, Deeper, and More Connected Life*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Tornstam, L. (2005) *Gerotranscendence: A Developmental Theory of Positive Aging*. Springer.

Vroomen, L. (2004). Kate Bush: Teen Pop and Older Female Fans. In A. Bennett, & R.A. Peterson (eds.), *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal, and Virtual* (pp. 238-253). Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Vygotsky, L. (1978) *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge: Har-vard University Press.

Yeager, C.A., Maginga, S.M., Hyer, L. (2020). The Impact of Polypharmacy on Health and Quality of Life for Older Adults. In L.T. Duncan, (Ed.), *Advances in Health and Disease*, Volume 21 (pp. 1-56). New York: Nova Science Publishers.

Zheng, H. (2021). A New Look at Cohort Trend and Underlying Mechanisms in Cognitive Functioning. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, Volume 76 (8), 1652-1663. https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbaa107

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Candy Leonard

Candy Leonard is the author of *Beatleness: How the Beatles and Their Fans Remade the World* (Arcade, 2014; 2016) and has written about Beatles fandom, boomers, and pop culture for a variety of publications, including academic volumes on the Beatles. She is an independent scholar with a PhD in Sociology from the University of New Hampshire and an MA in Human Development from Teachers College, Columbia.

DOI: doi.org/10.28939/iam.debats-138-1.5
ISSN 2530-898X (print)
ISSN 2530-8262 (digital)

Metal music in Argentina: debates in place and time about a music scene

Manuela Belén Calvo
INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR
nuna.calvo@gmail.com

Received: 23/03/2022
Accepted: 21/06/2023

ABSTRACT

Metal is a music genre that has generated its own scenes in each of the countries in which it circulates. In Latin America, they have a strong interaction with the local culture. This work approaches the Argentinian scene, which is made up in a heterogeneous way through the social relations of its members and its consequences disputes. The article analyzes the tensions that occur in a spatial and temporal way, considering that the scene is organized around a paradigm of authenticity. In addition to exalting the marginal, underground and DIY culture, that paradigm values positively the past (retromania), federalism and heteronormative masculinity. Despite the particularities of the Argentine socio-political context and the metal's characterization as a white, wes-tern and globalized musical genre, there is a strong tendency to construct the scene through values of traditionalism and the patriarchal system. Under these parameters certain productions, media, artists and fans are recognized and consecrated. This proposal is based on empirical work done in the capital city (Autonomous City of Buenos Aires) and the province of Buenos Aires in the period between 2011 and 2017, whose conflictive relationship shows the notion of «double periphery» and works as an example of the Argentine scene on a larger scale.

Keywords: metal; Argentine; Music Scene; retromania; federalism; masculinity

SUMMARY

Corresponding author: Manuela Belén Calvo. Universidad Nacional del Centro de la Provincia de Buenos Aires, Instituto de Geografía, Historia y Ciencias Sociales. Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Cientificas y Técnicas / Centro Científico Tecnológico Conicet - Tandil. Arroyo Seco 2960, B7000 Tandil, Provincia de Buenos Aires, Argentina.
Suggested citation: Calvo, M. B. (2024). El metal a l'Argentina: disputes espaciotemporals d'una escena musical. *Debats. Revista de cultura, poder y sociedad*, 138(1), 77-90. DOI: http://doi.org/10.28939/iam.debats-138-1.5

INTRODUCTION

A unique confluence of technological, demographic, and other cultural factors—a "perfect storm"—made possible the frisson that occurred when the Beatles emerged on the world stage in 1964 and instantly became ubiquitous. Global media debated Beatlemania's impact on young people, critiqued their music, and probed their personal lives. Meanwhile, through extraordinary talent and modern marketing, the Beatles proceeded to enchant a generation. They opened young people's ears to music and made it a necessity in ways it had not been for previous generations. (Leonard, 2015).

The Beatles were a constant, joyful presence in the lives of millions of predominantly white baby boomers, offering a compelling and complicated nonstop flow of music, images, and ideas during six critical years of child, adolescent, and young adult development. The wraparound experience of hearing and watching the Beatles evolve in real time had an impact on tens of millions of first-generation fans—now in their sixties and seventies—that was profound and enduring.

Other artists from that era also have a loyal aging fan base—Bob Dylan, The Rolling Stones, David Bowie, and those mentioned in the quote below come to mind. But the Beatles' cultural authority and omnipresence in the sixties so informed the zeitgeist of boomers' formative years that the band still holds positive resonance for older adults across an eighteen-year age range, no matter what else they were listening to. A female fan born in 1946 recalled:

> I had a dear friend who smoked pot, loved the Grateful Dead, wore Eastern dresses, and knew

> nothing about politics. I was political and countercultural and I didn't use drugs. But we both liked the Beatles. (Leonard, 2016, p. 153).

This fan, a male twelve years younger, put it this way:

> Not everyone was listening to the same thing anymore—there were more options—Cream, Hendrix, Simon and Garfunkel, the Doors, the Monkees. But the Beatles were a common denominator regardless of what else you listened to. (Leonard, 2016, p. 153).

Along with the Beatles and other music of consequence, the post-war generation in the US grew up with great expectations—despite Cold War "duck and cover" drills, Vietnam, assassinations, and civil unrest. A cool young president promised this first tv generation a man on the moon by the end of the decade, and science delivered. The oppressive conformity of the post-war years was yielding to an ethos of greater personal freedom.

Landmark voting rights legislation was passed and Johnson's social welfare agenda lifted millions out of poverty. College was affordable for those who wanted to go. Emergent styles in the arts offered more expansive visions of the human experience. Baby boomers were infused with Great Society optimism while rejoicing in a pop music renaissance, devouring and cherishing texts that heralded a new era of human flourishing.

The West did enter a new era, but it was not the Age of Aquarius many were hoping for. Backlash to the liberalizing trends of the 1960s ushered in neoliberalism and a drastic cultural shift away from intrinsic and towards extrinsic values. After forty years of deregulation, market-driven individualism, soaring income inequality, and underfunded social supports, many of those great expectations have gone unmet, though hope is not necessarily abandoned.

The good news is that this generation of older adults are better educated, smoke less, are more inclined to exercise, and have longer life expectancy than previous generations. Many are "aging successfully," a somewhat problematic concept (Calasanti, 2016) which, most basically, means free of disability or disease, high cognitive and physical abilities, and meaningful interactions with others (Rowe and Kahn, 1987). The bad news is that a recent study shows reduced levels of cognitive functioning in boomers compared to previous generations (Zheng, 2021).

Contributing to this reduced cognitive functioning are lower household wealth, lower likelihood of marriage, higher levels of loneliness, depression and psychiatric problems, and more cardiovascular risk factors, including obesity, physical inactivity, hypertension, stroke, diabetes, and heart disease. Further, it is predicted that cognitive impairment will become more common as the cohort ages. The increasing suicide rate is a concern as well (Krans, 2016).

Governments and other institutions around the world are ill-prepared for so many people living so much longer in states of economic precarity and poor health. Efforts to address the needs of this population are too often characterized by siloed, privatized approaches, tech solutionism, ageism, and an emphasis on lean efficiency to maximize profit.

In 1971, David Bowie advised young music fans to "look out" because "pretty soon now" they were "gonna get older." And here we are. But the life-enhancing aspects of music fandom—awesome aural experiences, sharing a passion with others, playfully engaging with texts, examining artifacts—become even more potent and valuable with age. Fandom expands into a different kind of resource, meeting a wider range of needs.

Recognizing that baby boomer identity and worldview were uniquely and extremely informed by the music of their youth, a growing body of research on fandom across the life course has emerged since Harrington and Bielby (2010) first introduced insights from gerontology into fan studies and called on others to do the same.

There is now a rapidly expanding literature on aging fans, much of it focusing on how the meaning, enactment, and experience of fan identity change with age (see for example, Vroomen, 2004; Bennett, 2013; Kotarba, 2013; Harrington & Bielby, 2017). This work is important for our understanding of the interplay between media, fan practices, and adult identity in later life. But with 10,000 boomers turning sixty-five every day (America Counts, 2019), their ongoing engagement with the music of their youth is a valuable resource with broad, societal implications.

Drawing on *Beatleness: How the Beatles and Their Fans Remade the World* (Leonard 2016), I will show how boomers' experience of growing up with the Beatles is stored deeply in their consciousness as a lifelong resource for resiliency and well-being, and that this generation's lifetime of deep engagement with music and music fandom are resources that can be leveraged by fans themselves, families, and health-care professionals to extend healthspan, mitigate loneliness, maximize engagement, and otherwise improve quality of life for this first generation of "old fans" and those that follow.

BEATLES AND BOOMERS: A UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP

The Beatles came to play a role in fans' lives that fits no existing category. Its scale, duration, and intensity distinguish it from other parasocial relationships. Many said the Beatles were not merely "like" family but were as important to them as family. A male fan born in 1950 explained: "They were more than a band; they were like your relatives. You felt close to them and knew so much about them. They were family. I identified with them intensely, and trusted them." A male fan five years younger, said, "They had as big or maybe even bigger impact on me than close family members" (Leonard, 2016, p. 255).

Several said the Beatles were like "surrogate parents," filling emotional voids and providing comfort their real parents could not. A female fan born in 1949 said, "My parents were alcoholics and there was lots of stress in the house. The Beatles took me away and made me happy" (p. 263).

Many felt the Beatles "had more interesting and useful things to say" than anyone else in their lives. A male fan also born in 1949, said, "I was learning more from them than I was from my father, who always called me a schmuck. They were guys older than me who understood things I was trying to understand" (p. 263). A female fan born in 1958 whose mother was "a career woman at a time when nobody's mom worked" said she and her siblings raised themselves, and "spent a lot of time alone listening to the Beatles" (p. 263).

Fans were grateful for the hope the Beatles provided during hard times and "took comfort in knowing the Beatles were in the world" (p. 255). A male fan born in 1950 said, "When I was young and I wanted to harm myself, they made me so glad and happy. I wanted to be alive so I could hear them. If not for them life would have been horrible for me" (p. 264). A male fan born in 1949 said, "They helped keep me sane during a turbulent period in which my family suffered several deaths and illnesses. I internalized qualities I admired in them and drew great strength from my identification with them" (p. 256).

The Beatles provided a way for awkward or quirky young people to be "accepted into a group for the first time" and many "still feel grateful to them" for that as well (p. 262). The Beatles were the friend who accepts you and "never judges you" (p. 263). As one female fan born in 1954 recalled, "They were my salvation until I could find real people who would make me feel like they made me feel." Asked how they made her feel, she said, "Understood; that I was okay the way I was" (p. 263). The Beatles made fans feel validated and supported as individuals. A female fan born in 1952 recalled:

> Everything I did, all the phases I went through, I followed and I actually learned from them. I think they were my friends when I was growing up. They made me feel special. Even though I

> didn't know them personally, it was like they were right there (p. 263).

The Beatles' message to a male fan born in 1957 was, "It's okay to take chances and push the envelope." A female fan of the same age heard, "Stand up for what you believe" (p. 261). Fans heard the Beatles saying, "Be yourself," "Be confident in who you are," "Follow your dreams," "Don't let the world drag you down," and "Don't be afraid to be different" (p. 262).

Fans of all ages thought they were "the perfect age to be part of it." A male fan born in 1951 said:

> I have always felt that I couldn't have been luckier than to be born in the summer of 1951. Being fully into them was a teenage, adolescent experience that was unique to our generation. The Beatles were and still are the biggest and best thing that has ever ha-ppened in my life. (p. 258)

The earliest memories of mid to late boomers are infused with Beatles. A female fan born in 1955 said, "They enhanced my childhood. They gave me something to hope for. They entertained me, but they also made my little bubble bigger—more worldly and attractive. They made us feel cool and bigger and older than we were, like we could be part of this."

A female fan born in 1961, one of the youngest interviewees said, "I have a powerful attachment to them because I was becoming a conscious human being at the time when they were everywhere." But the impact at the other end of the age range was also significant. A male fan born in 1947 said, "They made me question accomplishment without fulfillment."

Gratitude and joy are mentioned frequently. Fans "can't overestimate" or "express" the amount of joy the Beatles brought them. It's a feeling they "never want to let go of" (p. 264). A female fan born in 1957 says she was "hardwired for joy with the Beatles." The overriding emotion is also joy for this female fan born in 1951: "They brought me so much joy when I was growing up, and still do" (p. 264.) A male fan born in 1956 remembers the Beatles bringing forth new emotions: "I always felt in my heart that they were very special and meaningful to me. They sparked something in me that was new—inspiration, excitement, joy, happiness" (p. 264).

Fans cite moments that, for them, capture what one female fan born in 1961 called "the shimmer of joy" in their music: the cowbell on "A Hard Day's Night," the hand claps on "Eight Days a Week," the feedback on "I Feel Fine," the fuzz bass on "Think For Yourself," the count-in on "Taxman," the alarm clock on "A Day in the Life," the harmony on "Because," or, back to the beginning, Lennon and McCartney singing unison on the chorus of "She Loves You"—a record described by one female fan as "pure joy on a piece of plastic." (pp. 264-265)

It's quite common for fans to say "I grew up with them" because of the band's ubiquity during the sixties. A male fan born in 1956 recalled, "They were part of the fabric of your life, the backdrop." A male fan born in 1948 described it this way: "You brushed your teeth, you went to the bathroom, you went to school, you listened to the Beatles" (p. 139).

The phrase "I grew up with them," captures not only the band's constant presence but how they stimulated fans' intellectual, emotional, social, aesthetic, and spiritual development. As a female fan born in 1956 explains, "I grew up with them and because of them. They'd put something out there and I was ready to receive it" (p. 256). A female fan born in 1961 said, "As a Beatle fan, your mind is open to possibilities, more and sooner" (p. 257). Through their songs and their own high-profile seeking they encouraged fans to question and quest. Several fans said, "They made us think about things in different ways" (p. 257).

The Beatles' output functioned as an alternative curriculum, a spiraling curriculum to wander through repeatedly, getting something new each time yet also enjoying its familiarity. Now in their sixties and seventies, fans are still doing this.

The Beatles kept fans in the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978) where material just beyond their grasp is understood with the help of older peers. Early on, fans came to expect the Beatles to provide them with joyful, immersive experiences, and by repeatedly exceeding those expectations the Beatles created delight.

A reservoir of trust was established, ensuring fan engagement as the band's output required more work. Even those who said they were frightened by "Strawberry Fields Forever" were nevertheless intrigued and kept listening (Leonard, 2017). The Beatles challenged this generation in a wholly unique way.

The Beatles trip to India to study meditation in 1968 captured the attention of fans and the world press. Many younger fans remember thinking "it was part of their mystique." Others thought they "needed guidance" or "just didn't want to be bothered anymore" (Leonard, 2016, p. 158). Some thought the Beatles "were lucky to have the money to travel to places like India and seek truth, not caring what anyone thought" (158). A male fan, age seventeen at the time, said the Beatles "made everyone think about aspiring to spiritual enlightenment" (p. 159).

Recalling the Beatles trip to India at its fiftieth anniversary, *American Veda* (2010) author Philip Goldberg said,

> It was as though planet Earth tilted on its axis in February 1968, allowing India's ancient wisdom to flow more easily and quickly to the West. The infusion would impact healthcare, psychology, neuroscience, and especially the way we understand and engage our spirituality. (Goldberg, 2018)

Spirituality remains part of the Beatles meaning for fans of all ages (Leonard, 2021). But spiritual themes in their music and the phenomenon itself may have special relevance for older fans as a resource for moving towards gerotranscendence, a stage of adult development which will be discussed further below.

Fans had strong reactions to news of the Beatles breakup in April of 1970. A female fan, age fifteen at the time, remembers the day vividly: "It was my mother's fortieth birthday party that day; I was devastated, like someone died. I sat in my room and cried. I was heartbroken" (Leonard, 2016, p. 246). Another female fan, also fifteen at the time, explained "it was like your parents getting divorced; you were never alone in the house and always felt safe, then one day they break up and you're devastated." Many said it was "like losing a family member." (p. 246)

A male fan, age fifteen at the time recalled, "It's like they were saying 'the seventies are starting, you're on your own'" (p. 253). A male fan age, eighteen at the time, put it this way:

> I was heartbroken when they broke up. I was graduating high school and going off to college. I was starting a new chapter of my life, and the thing I had to hang on to was gone. I had to grow up but I continued to carry them inside me. They are part of me and always will be. (p. 253)

BEATLES FAN PRACTICES

What Beatles publicist Derek Taylor referred to as "the twentieth century's greatest romance" (1996, p. 3) continues into the twenty-first.

Fans from all over the world discuss the Beatles 24/7 on social media, where an interesting post can elicit hundreds of comments in minutes. These conversations are stimulating for fans of all ages, but for lifelong fans, reviewing lived history and joyful experiences that still hold positive energy functions as a kind of reminiscence therapy, which has been shown to relieve depressive symptoms and improve well-being (Routledge et al., 2016).

Though the connection is virtual, it reduces loneliness because something personally meaningful is shared (Hari, 2018). In addition, nostalgic experiences increase confidence and motivation, and disrupt thought patterns that perpetuate loneliness (Abeyta

et al., 2020). Often considered a reactionary response to discontent in the present, nostalgic reflection is a way of accessing meaningful memories from the past in order to approach the future with greater purpose (FioRito and Routledge, 2020).

Though most fans discussing the Beatles on social media have never met, or perhaps see each other occasionally at Beatles events, shared love for the Beatles is a basis for genuine friendship, even among people who might have little else in common. When someone becomes ill or shares the loss of a parent or a beloved pet, others post heartfelt responses. Posters thank their "Beatle family" for the support. This fan, a child of seven when Beatlemania erupted, put it this way:

> The Beatles have made my life joyous. My children listen to the Beatles, my home is filled with Beatles memorabilia as well as music. They taught me about love and kindness and how music can touch my heart. The internet has connected me to other fans and a world of new friends. (Leonard, 2016, p. 271)

Fans share pictures of their Beatle rooms, spaces of refuge from life's stressors, where they're surrounded by images and objects with deeply personal yet shared meaning. Though not all fans have the luxury of a Beatle room, fans display Beatle images in their homes for the same reasons family photos are displayed: to elicit feelings of love, gratitude, and self-continuity. A casual glance can provide a comforting interlude.

For first generation fans, the Beatles have been the most consistent, enduring, and unfailing thing in their lives, aside from their own sense of continuous self—and the two are intertwined. Friends, spouses, and jobs come and go, children grow up and move away, yet "side two" of *Abbey Road* is as reliably pleasing—if not more so due to remastering—as it was a half a century ago.

Beatles tourism generates £82 million annually for the city of Liverpool, and the Beatles-related economy is expected to continue growing long into the future (Liverpool Echo, 2016). Standing at the shelter in the middle of the roundabout at Penny Lane is affirming and satisfying because it makes real what the song conjured in imagination countless times.

Fans feel both privileged and humbled seeing the Beatles childhood homes. That these homes, some rather ordinary, are historic "blue plaque" sites affirms fans' belief in the Beatles' historical significance and fans' own sense of being part of history. These feelings are empowering and can mitigate the ageism that considers fannishness inappropriate in adults.

Many fans look forward to remastered music and buy it as soon as its available, despite having purchased it in many previous formats over the years. Demos and outtakes reveal the Beatles' creative processes and offer glimpses into the mysteries of their craft. Candid banter is of great interest because fans gain insight into who they are as real people.

Part of the appeal of Peter Jackson's *Get Back* (2021) —documenting the band's daily activity in the weeks leading up to their last live performance on the Apple rooftop on January 30, 1969—is that it includes demos, outtakes, and banter. The music and images of the embodied Beatles are primordially familiar yet still seems fresh.

Since 1974, Mark Lapidos has been convening fans for three days of "Beatleing" at the Fest for Beatle Fans, which takes place annually in New York and Chicago. The Fest draws fans of all ages from all over the US and beyond for live Beatles music, panel discussions, author presentations, films, vendors, art shows, trivia contests, and most importantly, to just be with other fans. Attendees say it's the "three of the best days of the year" and they "can't ask for a better vacation" (Leonard, p. 272).

Attending these gatherings is an act of self-care. Fan practices—sharing things one finds meaningful, listening to favorite music, group singing and music-making, engaging with texts, reminiscing, moving to music—are all health-promoting. The

fans jamming all night in the lobby may be losing sleep but they're preventing the cognitive decline of healthy aging (Román-Caballero et al., 2018).

A RESOURCE FOR WELL-BEING

Documentaries like Alive Inside (Rossato-Bennett, 2014) and the work of Daniel Levitan (2019) and Oliver Sacks (2007) have raised public awareness about the power of music. Yet, boomers' lifelong engagement with the Beatles and other music is an underutilized resource for addressing cognitive decline and other health issues.

Musical leisure activities and music therapy have many potential benefits for cognitive, motor, emotional, and social functioning for normal aging as well as for older people with neurological illnesses such as stroke and dementia (Särkämö 2018). Simply listen-ing to favorite music improves brain plasticity and may have long-lasting effects. (Fischer et al., 2021).

For many music fans now in their sixties and seventies, the practice of listening to music fell away gradually over years of work and family responsibilities. Today, internalized ageism may inhibit boomers from expressing enthusiasm about the music of their youth because it doesn't seem age appropriate. A Beatleness interviewee born in 1953 who "didn't have much to do with the Beatles for long stretches of time" (Leonard 2016, p. 270) realized an important source of joy had been missing from her life.

A 2016 study found millennials listen to 75% more music than boomers (Resnickoff, P. 2016). More recently, a 2019 study by Deloitte found only 20% of boomers subscribe to a music streaming service, and they value the service least among all ages groups (Ciampa, 2019). No reasons are offered but it's a worthwhile research question. Perhaps boomers perceive an unwanted agent interfering in their intimate relationship with music. Artful album covers and liner notes are absent from the music streaming experience, perhaps making it less appealing for some. Technostress could also be a factor (Nimrod, 2018).

Based on my own experience as a volunteer working with healthy people in their seventies and beyond living alone in the community, people this age have enormous interest in learning how to stream music and make playlists. They will eagerly tell you who their favorite artists are. Music streaming services like Spotify should consider offering discounts to older adults, as they do for students.

Musicologist Even Ruud considers music a "cultural immunogen," something people use in their everyday lives to improve their health and well-being. (Ruud, 2013). Thinking about the millions of older adults whose well-being would be enhanced by reconnecting with the Beatles or any music they love, several strategies come to mind.

Adult children could ensure aging parents, especially those living alone, have frictionless access to their favorite music. And while it may seem less impotant than social security numbers and passwords, adult children should know what songs their aging parents' would be most responsive to. That information is important for music therapists working with Alzheimer's or stroke patients who may not be able to communicate but will respond to music stored deeply in memory.

In primary care settings, providers could take a moment to ask older adults if they have access to music and encourage them to listen on a regular basis. In addition to the health benefits of making patients feel cared for in a personal, holistic way, it could hasten a cultural shift, beginning with this first "rock generation," that routinely encourages music for well-being and integrates it into care practices when appropriate.

Family members could also be sure loved ones in residential care have access to music, even if they have to provide it for them. Research shows "wash and feed" and "too busy" mindsets are barriers to

the widespread therapeutic use of music despite awareness of its known benefits to both residents and staff. (Garrido et al., 2021, p.1197). An older fans' encounter with the Beatles scrapbook they lovingly curated as a teenager, or other memorabilia, could activate memories and encourage communication.

Because hearing is the last sense to go, favorite music can also ease the process of dying. As Harrington observes in her study of fandom and the US death system, "the potential remains for fannish identities and practices up to the moment of death" (2019, 197).

Music is also useful for pain management, with no side effects. According to Tia DeNora's research on music as a medium of consciousness and a "health technology," people suffering from chronic illness can use music to "instill courage" and a different attitude toward pain (2015, p. 112). Perhaps adding music therapy to care plans could mitigate the "silent epidemic of chronic pain in older adults" (Domenichiello and Ramsden, 2019) and the associated problem of polypharmacy (Yeager et al., 2020).

Online social learning platforms have been effective in connecting older adults with shared interests, thus mitigating the negative impact of the social isolation necessitated by the pandemic. (Heape, 2021) I led a 12-week series called "Growing Up With the Beatles" on one such platform where participants shared stories as we listened to music, discussed images, and moved through the Beatles timeline and contemporaneous historical events.

Like the blue plaques on the Beatles' homes, these conversations—among people who are technically strangers, yet aren't—are empowering because they situate boomers in proximity to events in collective consciousness that are also uniquely theirs; events they lived through and witnessed. The sessions tap into rich veins of deeply stored memories and offer opportunities for insight into former selves, adding continuity and coherence to participants' ongoing personal narrative.

Age brings added poignancy to reflection, often with heightened spirituality and movement toward gerotranscendence (Tornstam, 2011). With this stage of development comes greater feelings of connection to past and future generations, less attachment to egoic identity, and a shift away from materialistic concerns and superficial relationships. Gerotranscendence can also bring about "emancipated innocence"—a playful, carefree state with little concern about the judgement of others.

Music therapist Faith Halverson-Ramos uses music in a variety of ways to support gerotranscendence, noting that spiritual themes in Beatles' songs such as "The Word" and "Within You Without You," may be especially resonant for boomers (2019).

The enduring music fandom of older adults also suggests new models of community living after retirement. Ninety percent of boomers want to "age in place" despite the potentially high cost of doing so (Khalfani-Cox, 2017), and show little interest in typical 55+ communities (Geber, 2021). Communities based on fan identity may hold the answer, as evinced by the success of Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville (Regan, 2021)—though many boomers would find that particular aesthetic and lifestyle unappealing, unaffordable, or both.

Based on their study of aging Grateful Dead fans, Adams and Harmon (2014) have explored the possibility of an intentional retirement community for fans of the Grateful Dead, and conclude a community based solely on musical taste might not be sufficiently appealing but could serve as an initial filter for identifying subcommunities (Adams and Harmon, 2018).

Similarly, one could envision a retirement community based on Beatles fandom as an initial filter for identifying subcommunities (Leonard, n.d.). Age-restricted communities follow an 80/20 rule in the US, thus fan-based retirement communities would be intergenerational, with significant benefits for all involved. (Jacobs, 2021).

Millions of boomers are raising grandchildren, starting businesses, and volunteering in their communities. Many are retired and thriving; many are struggling. They've shed the great expectations of their youth but have not abandoned hope. Many want to stay healthy and engaged, working alongside young people to preserve democracy and a habitable planet.

I'm not suggesting music or Beatles fandom are the keys to health and happiness for today's older adults, or that it can mitigate the ravages of neoliberalism or of unhealthy lifestyle choices (Shen 2019). But we know that fan activity and listening to favorite music bring joy and enhanced well-being to boomers' lives today—just as it did a half century ago—and should be encouraged by those who care for and about them.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Abeyta, A.A., Routledge, C., Kaslon, S. (2020, June 23). Combating Loneliness with Nostalgia: Nostalgic Feelings Attenuate Negative Thoughts and Motivations Associated With Loneliness. *Frontiers in Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01219

Adams, R. G., Harmon, J. (2014). The Long Strange Trip Continues. In Harrington, C. L., Bielby, D., Bardo, A. (Eds.), *Aging, Media, and Culture* (Chapter 9). London: Lexington Books.

Adams, R. G., Harmon, J. (2018). Intentional Sub-communities and Identity Continuity Among *Baby Boo*ers: *Grateful Dead Fans*. In R.A. Cnaan and C. Milofsky (Eds.), Handbook of Community Movements and Local Organizations in the 21st Century (pp.337-351), Springer. DOI:10.1007/978-3-319-77416-9_21

America Counts (2019). By 2030 all baby boomers will be age 65 or older. *US Census Bureau* https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/12/by-2030-all-baby-boomers-will-be-age-65-or-older.html

Bennett, A. (2013) *Music, Style, and Aging: Growing Old Disgracefully?* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Bowie, D. (1971) Changes. *Hunky Dory*. RCA Records

Calasanti, T. (2016) Combating Ageism: How Successful Is Successful Aging? *Gerontologist*, 56(6), 1093-1101. doi: 10.1093/geront/gnv076.

Ciampa, D. (2019, August 7). Boomers haven't shown a 'whole lotta love' for music streaming. *Deloitte Perspectives*. https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/technology-media-and-telecommunications/articles/boomers-havent-shown-a-whole-lotta-love-for-music-streaming.html

DeNora, T. (2016). *Music Asylums: Wellbeing Through Music in Everyday Life*. New York: Routledge.

Domenichiello, A.F. and Ramsden, C.E. (2019). The silent epidemic of chronic pain in older adults. *Progress in Neuro-Psychopharmacology and Biological Psychiatry*, 93, 284-290.

FioRito, T.A. & Routledge, C. (2020, June 3). Is Nostalgia a Past or Future-Oriented Experience? Affective, Behavioral, Social Cognitive, and Neuroscientific Evidence. *Frontiers in Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01133

Fischer, C.E., Churchill, N.; Leggieri, M.; Vuong, V.; Tau, M.; Fornazzari, L.R.; Thaut, M.H.; Schweizer, T.A. (2021) Long-Known Music Exposure Effects on Brain Imaging and Cognition in Early-Stage Cognitive Decline: A Pilot Study. *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*, 84(2), (pp. 819-833).

Garrido, S., Markwell, H., Andreallo, F., & Hatcher, D. (2021). Benefits, Challenges and Solutions for Implementing Personalised Music Playlist Programs in Residential Aged Care in Australia. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Healthcare*, 14. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A673852970/AONE?u=mlin_m_minuteman&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=255c3a3f

Geber, S.Z. (2021) Hey Senior Living Pros: Boomers Don't Want Your Old, Tired Communities. *Forbes*, May 11, 2021.

Goldberg, P. (2010) *American Veda: How Indian Spirituality Changed the West*. New York: Harmony Books.

Goldberg, P. (2018) How the Beatles' Trip to India Changed the face of Spirituality in the West, *Elephant Journal*. https://www.elephantjournal.com/2018/02/how-the-beatles-trip-to-india-changed-the-face-of-spirituality-in-the-west/

Halverson-Ramos, F. (2019) Music and gerotranscendence: A culturally responsive approach to ageing. *Approaches: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Music Therapy, Special Issue* 11(1), (166-178).

Hari, J. (2018). *Lost Connections: Uncovering the Real Causes of Depression – and the Unexpected Solutions*. New York: Bloomsbury USA.

Harrington, C. L., and Bielby, D.D. (2010). A life course perspective on fandom. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 13(5), 429-450.

Harrington, C.L. and Bielby, D.D. (2017). Aging, fans, and fandom. In M.A. Click, & S. Scott (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom* (pp. 406-415). Abingdon: Routledge.

Harrington, C.L. (2019). Til death do us part? Fandom and the US death system. *Journal of Fandom Studies*, 7(2), 189-206.

Heape, A. (2021). Loneliness and Social Isolation in Older Adults: The Effects of a Pandemic. *Perspectives: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association*. 6 (6), 1729-1736.

Jackson, P. (Director). (2021). *Get Back* [Film]. Walt Disney Studios; Apple Corps; Wingnut.

Jacobs, K. (2021). Don't Mind the Gap in Intergenerational Housing, *The New York Times*, Sept 2, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/02/style/housing-elderly-intergenerational-living.html

Khalfani-Cox, L. (2017). Can You Afford to Age in Place? *AARP*, February 14, 2017. https://www.aarp.org/money/budgeting-saving/info-2017/costs-of-aging-in-place.html

Kotarba, J.A (2013). *Baby Boomer Rock 'n' Roll Fans: The Music Never Ends*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

Krans, B. (2016, December 5.). Baby Boomer Suicide Rate Rising, May Go Higher with Age. *Healthline*. https://www.healthline.com/health-news/baby-boomer-suicide-rate-rising-031515

Krznaric, R. (2020). *The Good Ancestor: A Radical Prescription for Long-Term Thinking*. New York: Experiment Publishing.

Leonard, C. (n.d.). candyleonard.com/projectblackbird

Leonard, C. (2016). *Beatleness: How the Beatles and Their Fans Remade The World*. New York: Arcade.

Leonard, C. (2015, January 26). 7 ways the Beatles changed boomer childhood overnight *Huffington Post*. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/candy-leonard/beatles-changed-boomer-childhood_b_6494786.html

Leonard, C. (2017, February 22). When the Beatles brought psychedelia to prime time. *Huffington Post*. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/when-the-beatles-brought-psychedelia-to-prime-time_b_58adbc3ae4b0598627a55f2c

Leonard, C. (2021). Beatles Fandom: A De Facto Religion. In Ken Womack & Kit O'Toole (Eds.), *Fandom and The Beatles: The Act You've Known for All These Years* (pp. 1-54). Oxford University Press.

Levitan, D. (2019). *This is Your Brain on Music: Understanding a Human Obsession*. London: Penguin.

Liverpool Echo, (2016, February 8). The Beatles add £82m a year to Liverpool economy. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-merseyside-35523070

Nimrod, G. (2018). Technostress: measuring a new threat to well-being in later life, *Aging & Mental Health*, 22(8), 1080-1087, DOI: 10.1080/13607863.2017.1334037

Regan, T. (2021, July 12). Demand Surges for Latitude Margaritaville Communities as Brand Seeks Westward Expansion. *Senior Housing News*. https://seniorhousingnews.com/2021/07/12/demand-surges-for-latitude-margaritaville-communities-as-brand-seeks-westward-expansion/

Resnickoff, P. (2016, June 2). Millennials Listen to 75% More Music Than Baby Boomers, Study Finds. Digital Music News. https://www.digitalmusicnews.com/2016/06/02/millennials-listen-more-music-baby-boomers

Román-Caballero, Rafael & Arnedo, Marisa & Triviño, Monica & Lupiáñez, Juan. (2018). Musical practice as an enhancer of cognitive function in healthy aging - A systematic review and meta-analysis. PLoS ONE. 13. e0207957. 10.1371/journal.pone.0207957

Rossato-Bennett, M. (Director). (2014). *Alive Inside* [Film]. Projector Media.

Routledge, C., Roylance C., Abeyta A.A. (2016) Nostalgia as an Existential Intervention: Using the Past to Secure Meaning in the Present and the Future. In: Russo-Netzer P., Schulenberg S., Batthyany A. (Eds.,) *Clinical Perspectives on Meaning*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-41397-6_17

Rowe, J.W. & Kahn, R.L. (1998) *Successful Aging*. New York: Pantheon.

Ruud, E. (2013). Can music serve as a "cultural immunogen? An explorative study. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being* 8(1), 1-12. DOI:10.3402/qhw.v8i0.20597

Sacks, O. (2007). *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*. New York: Knopf.

Shen, A. (2019) Marketing Preventive Health to Baby Boomers: What if Unhealthy Lifestyles are Attributable to the Counterculture? *Journal of Macromarketing*. Vol. 39 (2), 151-165.

Taylor, D. (1996). Introduction to *Beatles Anthology* 1. Apple Corps Ltd/EMI Records Ltd.

Thomas, B. (2015). *Second Wind: Navigating the Passage to a Slower, Deeper, and More Connected Life*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Tornstam, L. (2005) *Gerotranscendence: A Developmental Theory of Positive Aging*. Springer.

Vroomen, L. (2004). Kate Bush: Teen Pop and Older Female Fans. In A. Bennett, & R.A. Peterson (eds.), *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal, and Virtual* (pp. 238-253). Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Vygotsky, L. (1978) *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge: Har-vard University Press.

Yeager, C.A., Maginga, S.M., Hyer, L. (2020). The Impact of Polypharmacy on Health and Quality of Life for Older Adults. In L.T. Duncan, (Ed.), *Advances in Health and Disease*, Volume 21 (pp. 1-56). New York: Nova Science Publishers.

Zheng, H. (2021). A New Look at Cohort Trend and Underlying Mechanisms in Cognitive Functioning. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, Volume 76 (8), 1652-1663. https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbaa107

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Candy Leonard

Candy Leonard is the author of *Beatleness: How the Beatles and Their Fans Remade the World* (Arcade, 2014; 2016) and has written about Beatles fandom, boomers, and pop culture for a variety of publications, including academic volumes on the Beatles. She is an independent scholar with a PhD in Sociology from the University of New Hampshire and an MA in Human Development from Teachers College, Columbia.

institució
alfons el magnànim
centre valencià
d'estudis i d'investigació

Diputació
de València

ISSN: 2530-898X

6,00 €