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Raphaël NOWAK & Andrew WHELAN, *Networked Music Cultures: Contemporary Approaches, Emerging Issues*

Shara Rambarran



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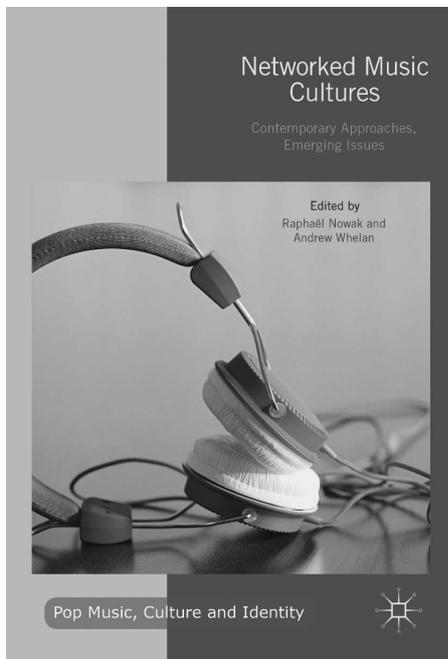
“Rethinking the Roles of Music through its Association with Life Narratives”, Nowak investigates how life narratives can alter one’s musical habits and listening practices. While the concept of ageing and forming identities are key factors, Nowak also considers how the material aspects of music consumption, interaction, and encounters can have a major impact on an individual and his/her “life narrative” over time.

Overall, Nowak does a splendid job in surveying music consumption in the digital age. While the theme carries a cultural-sociological approach, the book would appeal to researchers and academics in this field (especially under/postgraduate students). Nowak conducted the field research in Australia, and the participants are ordinary everyday listeners/consumers of music (in other words there is limited information on whether the responses included music practitioners, e.g. musicians, producers etc.). With this in mind, interested non-cultural sociologists will find some aspects of this books useful, particularly the fresh theories offered by Nowak that he applies to music consumption practices, via music technology, in the digital age. This book serves as a useful contribution to ongoing academic topics on music and digitalism.

Raphaël Nowak & Andrew Whelan, *Networked Music Cultures: Contemporary Approaches, Emerging Issues*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire & New York, 2016

By Shara Rambarran

In the exciting age of digitalism, music admirers, whether they are in the form of a consumer, practitioner, musician, educator, etc. (or all), are fortunate to have unlimited access to music. The Internet, for example, has provided a gateway for computer/digital based device users to search, share, listen and download music anytime and anywhere (Whiteley & Rambarran, 2016). Indeed, there are restricted factors that need to be addressed as unlimited “free” access to music for all, does not necessarily mean “free for all”. This means, economic circumstances need to be considered (e.g. consumers’ affordability to have access to music services; the music industry monitoring paid and unpaid consumption services), not forgetting censorship (where specific



geographic locations may restrict access to specific genres of music for various reasons, e.g. political issues), and intellectual property (e.g. copyright issues due to illegal access such as downloads). With this in mind, while the current methods in digital music consumption are generally appealing and part of everyday life, and practices are somewhat unlimited, there can, indeed, be consequences in certain types of consumption and distribution.

Editors Raphaël Nowak and Andrew Whelan, explore this concept in *Networked Music Cultures: Contemporary Approaches, Emerging Issues*. The book is part of the Palgrave Macmillan's "Pop Music, Culture and Identity" series and consists of chapters illustrating the different methods and, where appropriate, complications (and implications) in the patterns and practices of music distribution and consumption.

The book consists of thirteen chapters, where authors cover a vast range of topics from music industry practices to the impact that digital music distribution and consumption has on culture and society. What is intriguing about this edited collection (and further to what I have previously stated) is that the topics are not tied to a particular (geographic) location; for example, digital practices in other countries such as Cuba, Japan, Mexico, etc. are explored. Even though digital music distribution and consumption have evolved over the last twenty years, complications and implications have resulted from these practices. As the Editors correctly argue, "music and digital formats remains a 'new problem' (with downloading being the main issue)" (2). However, digital music consumption and distribution has resulted in connections and networks, amongst individuals and collectives, and in communications. With all of these issues in mind, the editors aim to address the following:

1. how everyday digital music is investigated via rituals, habits, legalities, streaming, composition, performing, data collection of specific practices;
2. to apply the methodological, theoretical and analytical approach on the intended research;
3. and to argue on how "networked music cultures are embedded within the contexts of their emergence" (6).

These arguments are presented in the thirteen chapters and are not structured in a particular order as the editors aim to show the reader "how the implications of networked cultures can be understood quite differently depending on where and how one looks" (7).

To begin, Tim Astley documents the practices of music file sharing in Cuba ("The

People's Mixtape: Peer-to-Peer File Sharing without the Internet in Contemporary Cuba"). Astley addresses that Internet access is limited, and discusses music file-sharing activity (via USB sticks). In Chapter Three, Robert Prey examines the "datafication" of (online) listening, mainly through streaming platforms such as Spotify and Pandora. He investigates how service providers monitor consumer patterns in selecting and listening to music (each platform has its methods in collecting data, e.g. by identifying specific music elements to genres, etc.), and how it helps them do the "future" listening for their consumers (in an Adornian sense, by constructing the consumers' future playlists, music, etc.). This methodological approach is perhaps more known as algorithms (the term would have benefited from a sounder definition and explanation). It is interesting to understand how the collected data attempts to analyse the listener's behaviours and music trends online.

The discussion on streaming continues in "The Legacy of Napster", where Matthew David asks where legal music streaming services can "tame unlawful access to music" (49). He neatly provides insight into digital music consumption and distribution practices and its problems (e.g. illegal downloads and copyright infringement), and how musicians resort to live performances to make an income. While he observes that consumers may find a way in obtaining "free" music, he insists that a policy must be in place for rewards for musicians so that they do not lose out on royalties. Noriko Manabe highlights digital consumption in Japan ("Streaming Music in Japan: Cooperate Cultures as Determinants of Listening Practice"). Here, she observes the industry's and culture's

reluctance in embracing and practising new ways in consuming digital music (especially streaming), and that the nation prefers to stick to traditional listening practices such as using the "Sony Walkman", a major brand that is embedded in Japanese (consumer) culture and business. Maintaining the theme of the physical musical format/device/medium, Víctor Ávila-Torres looks at CD copying and piracy in Mexico City. In "Making Sense of Acquiring Music in Mexico City", he surveys the Mexican music market and piracy, and uses Actor-Network Theory as a tool to understand "the discursive strategies used by individuals to make sense of their practices [...] of acquiring music" (78), and examines the cultural consumption practices of the user.

In Chapter Seven's "Reading Songs, Experiencing Music: Co-creation, Materiality and Expertise in Beck's Song Reader", Antoni Roig and Gemma San Connelio investigate the sheet music project "Song Reader" by Beck Hansen. They illustrate that this is a collaborative project (based on musical events, fan responses and nostalgia) between him and his fans. In the following chapter, Raphaël Nowak and Andrew Whelan look at "Digital Music Boundary Object" where they draw in theories of anthropology, science, technology and sociology, to illustrate the discourses on digital music and its placement (or even displacement) in the social worlds. Moving onto the discussion on how the impact digital distribution and consumption may have on independent musicians, Juho Kaitajärvi-Tiekso examines royalty distribution in streaming services (Spotify) based on the "long tail" model in "A Step Back to the Dark Ages of the Music Industry: Democratisation of Record

Production and Discourses on Spotify in Kuka Mita Hah?” Steve Collins and Pat O’Grady observe streaming services from another approach by examining how its data is collected and placed in the charts. Here, the authors argue that other means of online musical engagement should be taken into consideration when constructing the charts of popular music (Chapter Ten, “Off the Charts: The Implications of Incorporating Streaming Data into the Charts”).

In “Rethinking the Digital Playlist: Mixtapes, Nostalgia and Emotionally Durable Design”, Kieran Fenby-Hulse compares the traditional (or indeed the once popular) method of music consumption of mixtapes with the now popular digital playlists. He considers the mixtape to be a romantic artefact, and an “act of storytelling” (186) with a nostalgic feel attached to it, and of course, a physical object that one can keep – an argument that many music admirers would perhaps agree. He calls for more development and a better understanding on how constructed digital music compilations can shape and enhance the consumer’s listening experience, because when compared to the longevity and romanticism of the mixtape, this notion is currently lacking with digital playlists.

Moving onto the legal aspects of music cultures, Jim Rogers and Anthony Cawley scrutinise the economy of the music industry in Ireland, and call for policy reviews in regards to Intellectual Property Rights in their chapter, entitled “A Song for Ireland? Policy Discourse and Wealth Generation in the Music Industry in the Context of Digital Upheavals and Economic Crisis”. In the final chapters, Anthony Cushing examines mashup culture in “Pachelbel This Ain’t:

Mashups and Canon (De)formation, whereas Anja Nylund Hagen revisits streaming by exploring how this now popular method of music consumption impacts the listener’s everyday life (“Music Streaming the Everyday Life”).

Overall, the Editors have produced a different insight on the practices and issues on music distribution and consumption in the digital age. The book would generally appeal to researchers and academics in the study of cultural studies and sociology, and would serve as useful research for under/postgraduate students as well as set reading texts in degree programmes. Like with any academic research on music and digitalism, developments in this field are continually evolving, especially with consumption and distribution. Therefore, the timeframe should not matter as the book sets the foundations in understanding socio-cultural and economic practices in music consumption and distribution in various geographic locations. This book serves as a useful contribution to ongoing academic topics on music and digitalism.

Bibliography

Whiteley Sheila & Rambarran Shara (2016), *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Virtuality*, New York, Oxford University Press.