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**Recreating the Creation:  
Towards a Theory of the ReMix**

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**B**oth in self-descriptions and in the appreciation of others, the music of the band Sigur Rós is often described, as the German musicologist Ricarda Kopal pointed out, as being intrinsically bound to Iceland, its landscape, and its people.<sup>1</sup> While the music of the band defies clearly defined traditional stylistic characteristics, literature about Sigur Rós often creates land-centered discourses, whether referring to the linguistic, social, or local aspects of the band. Moreover, singer Jónsi Birgisson uses at times an invented language (“Hopelandic”) alongside singing in Icelandic with fellow members. The band’s personal recording studio was built in a closed-down and abandoned swimming pool just outside of their hometown Reykjavik, thus literally inscribing the band onto its social metropolitan landscape. The protagonists in their music videos and live concert recordings are for the most part Iceland’s people, rather than members of Sigur Rós themselves. The bond between land and people seems, at first glance, a somewhat superficial, if not an outright questionable strategy for staging a certain form of “authenticity.” But what set the band so pleasantly apart from others’ standard songwriting and arrangements are their gentle, slow and subtle musical expansions, and particularly their climaxes. Metaphors like “growth,” “evolution,” and “blossoming” seem to be obvious choices to describe the music of a band, whose members used to—not accidentally—dress up as birds for their concerts.<sup>2</sup>

In principle, treating humans, nature, and music as strictly separate, distinct entities seems no longer possible to me. In this context, nature is no longer imaginable as *natura naturata* as a passive expression of a nature that was already created. In times of a globalized economy, climate change, and

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<sup>1</sup> See Ricarda Kopal, *Musik aus dem Land der Elfen und Geysire. Islandklischees und die Musik von SIGUR RÓS* (Essen: Blaue Eule, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Listen to Sigur Rós, *með suð í eyrum við spilum endalaust* (EMI – 228 7282, Krúnk – 228 7282, 2008).

increasing overpopulation of the planet, nature appears to be solely formed by the spirit and the hand of man. From this perspective arises the imperative to conserve the creation, and hence the constantly reiterated stipulation to develop a responsible model of interaction with nature.<sup>3</sup> Art represents one of the fundamental means through which this attitude toward nature and the human in a “developing” world can be tested and further refined.<sup>4</sup> In this sense, bands like Sigur Rós provide an alternative not only to family or community models, but also to economic models, as their work constitutes a form of experimentation by thinking globally while acting locally. According to Ricarda Kopal, the artificiality of all this has to be kept in mind to avoid any naïve essentialism. There is no sound of the North; there is no music of nature; there are no poetics of Iceland. But there are constructs of sound, nature, and poetics that are worth considering, as there are “imagined communities,”<sup>5</sup> “invented traditions,”<sup>6</sup> and “musical poetics”<sup>7</sup> that can—on a sufficiently abstract level—be linked to “Idea of North” (Glen Gould).<sup>8</sup>

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I would like to demonstrate what this means with regard to Sigur Rós’s debut album *Von* (1997).<sup>9</sup> The low-budget production of the album took so long that the end result on CD differed greatly from the original intentions of the band. Rejecting the idea of re-recording the entire album, the band decided to entrust a remix of the album to Icelandic artists with whom they were friends, mostly coming from the field of electronic music. In this way, the band released control of their own creation so that other musicians could shape it, respectfully and benignly. This benign aspect plays out in the title of the album. The original name, *Von*, means “hope;” the name of the re-mix, *Von bríðði* (1998),<sup>10</sup> plays on the fact that these two words combined mean “disappointment,” but separately mean “variations on *Von*.” Along this dialectic of preservation and change, I would like to illuminate the musical experimentations of the aesthetically valued manipulation of pre-existing materials, therefore providing opening up

<sup>3</sup> Latin: crating nature/created nature. The terms refer to translations from commentaries on texts of Aristotle. The terms should help to tell the difference between products of nature that carry the stimulus of their development within themselves and artefacts that were created in a different way.

<sup>4</sup> For the metaphysical interrelations between music and nature see Carl Dahlhaus, “Formästhetik und Nachahmungsprinzip,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 4, no. 2 (December 1973): 165–174.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>7</sup> Adam Krims, *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Glenn Gould, *The Idea of North*, radio program (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 28 December, 1967; reissued on CD as Glenn Gould, *Glenn Gould’s Solitude Trilogy* (CD1, CBS Records PSCD 2003-3, 3 CDs, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> Sigur Rós, *Von* (Smekkleysa SM 67 CD, 1997). For band history, discography and further links see: <http://www.sigur-ros.co.uk> (accessed 1 November, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Sigur Rós, *Von Bríðði* (SM 67CDR, 1998).

thinking about a theory of remixing as a model for the responsible manipulation of human production in the sense of recreating the creation.

My considerations began with three questions, and I will turn to each in the subsequent discussions:

1. What is a pop song—and what is it not? And where are the historical roots of the connections between the aesthetics of pop music and nature?<sup>11</sup>
2. Where is the thin line between nature and art in pop music?
3. What does it mean to rework a pop song in a remix?<sup>12</sup>

Let me take a look back to the poetics and aesthetics of music. It only sounds paradoxical: As long as art's main role was to praise the Lord and his creation (as well as his clerical and mundane governors on earth), the relationship between art (in the sense of skillfully man made things) and nature was unproblematic. As long as music was “solo deo gloria,” as Johann Sebastian Bach still described some of his works, the perfection of music reflected the perfection of God's creation. When the Enlightenment disturbed this equilibrium between man, his products, and nature, a new balance had to be negotiated and established. After the religious and secular authorities started losing their monopoly on shaping taste, the question of the interdependencies between man, art, and world became a philosophical one.<sup>13</sup>

The moment in European history when art became an object of philosophical relevance, or what is called the aesthetic turn around 1800, was accompanied by numerous cultural changes. After the crisis of religion caused by the Enlightenment, art and the artist had to adopt tasks formerly carried by the church. The idea of the artist as a god-like creator (“art as religion”) and of the work of art as a complex organism, meanwhile, provoked a discourse on simplicity and naturalness. Nature, which was once considered the other of art and the folk song (even in the form of an “invented tradition”), became a paradigm of cultural critique after the Enlightenment. Simplicity was now linked to authenticity, a connection that continues to be expected (and tested) with unabated virulence in the debates on popular music in the twentieth and twenty-first century.<sup>14</sup> Thus, one criterion against which a pop song can be measured and evaluated is precisely that kind of authenticity, which is based on a kind of simplicity derived from nature.

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<sup>11</sup> Diedrich Diederichsen, *Über Pop-Musik* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> Julia Gerlach, *Material Re Material: (remix & Copyright); Texte und Statements des Symposions zur Sonic Arts Lounge, März/Musik 2003 [21. und 22. März 2003, Festival für Aktuelle Musik]* (Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2004); Eduardo Navas: *Remix Theory: The Aesthetics of Sampling* (Wien: New York: Springer, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Musikästhetik*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Köln: Musikverlag Gerig, 1976).

<sup>14</sup> See Carl Dahlhaus, *Klassische und romantische Musikästhetik* (Laaber: Laaber, 1988).

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In his *Critique of Judgement*, Immanuel Kant makes clear that the former poetic paradigm of “imitation of nature” was outdated: “*Genius* is the talent (or natural gift) which gives the rule to Art. Since talent, as the innate productive faculty of the artist, belongs itself to Nature, we may express the matter thus: *Genius* is the innate mental aptitude (*ingenium*) through which nature gives the rule to art” (§ 46).<sup>15</sup> The genius—like God during the creation of the universe—creates something new every time. This concept led to a spiral of outdoing. Every work of art, every piece of music created had to contain something new, both structurally and content-wise. Several times in music history, the aesthetics of innovation (each time in a different way) came to a halt.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the classical avant-garde discovered the “ready-made” or, how the Dadaists called it, the *objet trouvé*,<sup>16</sup> which referred to the sculptural extension of the concept of collage, and opened various possibilities to apply its principle in other areas of art. The marketability of the magnetic recording tape in the mid-1930s introduced the strategy of the ready-made into the field of sound and music. Sound engineer Pierre Schaeffer became the father of *musique concrète*, a musical genre that consisted of recording everyday noises on tape, and arranging them in loops and montages. Recording artists in the field of popular music have adopted these techniques and ideas since the 1960s, and turned them into some of the key issues of everyday’s music aesthetics.<sup>17</sup> As a result, the analogue (and since the 1980s digital) sound recordings have become a structurally complex flipside of the relatively simple and formal surface of pop music. Using recording equipment as a tool for composition and later rearranging pre-existing samples and not even recording something new is one of the main pillars created by the poetics of recording art.<sup>18</sup>

Theoretically, the possibilities for recording and rearranging recorded material are infinite. Once recorded on tape or hard disk, the sounds can be composed—in the literary sense of *componere* (lat.),

<sup>15</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement* [1790], translated by James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 53.

<sup>16</sup> See Klaus von Beyme, *Das Zeitalter der Avantgarden. Kunst und Gesellschaft 1905–1955* (München: C. H. Beck, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> For the terminology of collage, sample, bootleg and mash-up see David J. Gunkel, *Of Remixology: Ethics and Aesthetics after Remix* (Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 2016); for the phenomena of quotation, allusion, music about music, and intertextuality see the chapter *Bachting re-visited* in my book *Komponieren für und wider den Staat* (Weimar: Böhlau, 2009). If I talk about sampling and remixing in my essay, it is not about “beat-making” as Amir Said analyses it. Amir Said, *The Art of Sampling: The Sampling Tradition of Hip Hop/Rap Music and Copyright Law* (Brooklyn, NY: Superchamp Books, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> Frédéric Döhl and Renate Wöhrer, eds., *Zitieren, appropriieren, sampeln. Referenzielle Verfahren in den Gegenwartskünsten* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2014).

that is, putting together—again and again. Technically, the mastered musical material available on a CD or as a download is not necessarily the end product. In a fascinating way, recording art resembles—in parts—a classical music score: the score is not the work of art itself, but just provides more or less detailed information for an interpretation. That is exactly what a re-mix does with a piece of pop music. One has to keep in mind that pop music usually is recorded track by track and instrument by instrument, rather than by the whole band playing in an optimized live setting. The remix can either use the CD or the master tapes or sound files as its material basis. In the latter case, single tracks (selected instruments or voices etc., including previously unreleased material) can be extracted and rearranged, reworking a preexisting piece of music not only in time (horizontally), but also in its multi-layer structure (vertically). But this is only the technical side of sampling and re-mixing merely helping to begin to answer the crucial question: What does it *mean* to take noises or musics from their original soundscapes and to implant them somewhere else?<sup>19</sup>

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The sample has forerunners in music history in the form of:

- the quotation (i.e., Mozart quoting colleagues or even himself in his operas)
- the allusion (i.e., “stile antico”)
- the cover version (i.e., the Slovenian band Laibach rerecording the Beatles album *Let it Be*)<sup>20</sup>
- the arrangement (i.e., Mike Flowers transforming pop hymns into easy listening music)
- the interpretation
- the re-composition (i.e., Luciano Berio recomposing the slow movement from Mahler’s second symphony in his *Sinfonia*).

Incorporating these strategies in a remix, a pre-existing piece of music can be re-composed without losing its substance. A remix without traceable connection to the original is pointless. If the bridges between composition and re-composition are completely burned, it is simply an act of destruction, and the intertextual relationship between the pre-existing and its alteration would not be accessible. The remix is a child of DJ-culture<sup>21</sup> from the heyday of the disco era in the 1970s.<sup>22</sup> Aesthetically, a remix is

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<sup>19</sup> Paul Miller, ed., *Sound Unbound: Sampling Digital Music and Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIZ Press, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> Allmusic 1988.

<sup>21</sup> Bernardo Attias, Anna Gavanias, and Hillegonda Rietveld, eds., *DJ Culture in the Mix: Power, Technology, and Social Change in Electronic Dance Music* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Alan Jones, *Saturday Night Fever—The Story of Disco* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2005).

a paradigmatic act of de-construction by taking a piece of music apart in order to put it together again in a different way. If the act of alienation crosses the border towards destruction, it is no longer a remix but something else. As soon as the inter-textual relationship between the original song and its remix is no longer audible, it becomes pointless for the process of communication between producer, remixer and listener. In other words, the success or failure of re-mixing as an art form depends on finding the right balance between old and new, on striking an equilibrium based on a certain form of sustainability. Remixing can therefore be considered a paradigmatic field of experimentation to learn from produced music for further social as well as ecological behavior. Just to give two examples: The early records of the hip hop collective Public Enemy provide a “museum of Afro American sound culture,” a sounding history of black Americans.<sup>23</sup> The sampling praxis on *Von* more resembles Raymond Murray Schafer’s word sound project.<sup>24</sup>

### **Von reloaded**

In the following, I will turn to Iceland in order to discuss *Von* and its remix *Von brigði*. Yet what makes Iceland’s music scene in the last decades so special?<sup>25</sup> Is it a mere hype, a turn to regionalism in times of globalization, or some questionable backward-looking romanticism? In an interview, Bardi Jóhannsson, front man of the Icelandic band *Bang Gang*, offers a critical and surprising answer:

For the most part, Icelandic music is crap. Maybe not the musicians, but everything about it. Everybody is always in such a hurry, there’s no budget etc. And therefore, the results are bad. Yet, people keep asking me: Why is Icelandic music so special? The reason is that all the bands that are any good, they all know that their music won’t be played on the radio, they know they won’t sell more than 200 albums in Iceland, especially if it is a young band. So they make music just as they please.<sup>26</sup>

Jóhannsson points to the paradoxical situation, in which this most commercial of all music genres finds itself in Iceland: In this small country, pop music can partially ignore the music market because there is no music market of significant relevance.<sup>27</sup> An excellent example for taking an unusual artistic path due to the fact that significant commercial success is out of reach is Sigur Rós’ first CD from 1997: *Von*.

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<sup>23</sup> For the dense web of intertextuality in only one song see: <http://genius.com/Public-enemy-fight-the-power-lyrics> (accessed 1 November, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Simon Fraser University, *The World Soundscape Project*, <https://www.sfu.ca/sonic-studio-webdav/WSP/index.html> (accessed 1 November, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> Nicola Dibben, *Björk* (London: Equinox, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> Quoted from Magnússon, *Screaming Masterpiece*, 7.

<sup>27</sup> A population of 319,000 inhabitants on the volcano island has generated a huge number of musicians.

The CD *Von* is an unusual pop/ rock production.<sup>28</sup> The first question after listening to it the first time might be: Is it (pop) music at all? It lacks most of the features a pop album usually has: no danceable tracks; out of twelve tracks only four show a vague pop-song structure (‘Hún Jöru,’ ‘Myrkur,’ ‘Von’ and ‘Syndir Guðs’); most strikingly, the album is, to paraphrase Immanuel Kant’s famous sentence, “mehr Genuss als Kultur” (“more enjoyment than culture”) from his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (“Critique of Judgment”):<sup>29</sup> the album seems to be closer to nature than to traditionally defined culture. Using the full range of technical possibilities in multi-track recording, the result resembles more a skillfully curated exhibition of sounds rather than a suite of pop songs. The track ‘Myrkur’ is an outstanding example for the argument that this music is closer to nature than culture. The “instruments” of this track are stones, wind, and wind chimes. One could say that nature is the real musician on these tracks. This is even more apparent if we consider that, in the production process, mainly electronic imitations of natural sound effects, such as echo and delay, were added to the sounds recorded in nature.

After putting the album together, the band was perhaps concerned by its own radicalism. When they finished the production process, they immediately handed the master tapes and files over to friends from the local electronic music scene for them to rework. It seems significant that the band used the term “recycling” to describe this process. Something that was once useful or has already fulfilled its purpose in one setting—in the creative process of the “first” production cycle—was now to be reused in a different one. The concept of recycling seems also particularly fitting in this context, because it implies treating the material at hand with respect as well as creativity. Striking the right balance between the two ensures the success of remixing as an art form. With a little exaggeration, one can argue the band extended the concept of recycling—a concept that is closely related to industrial production—all the way to nature in the field of music by including sounds recorded in nature among the “recyclable” material.<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, it was not only the sound material that *Sigur Rós* offered for recycling and renegotiating. Upon first listening, the record sounds as if the band could not decide how to structure time and space, which could be a beginner’s mistake of ambitious musicians striving to redefine pop

<sup>28</sup> Tracklist *Von* (1997): 1. ‘Sigur Rós’ [9:46 mins]; 2. ‘Dögun’ [5:50 mins]; 3. ‘Hún Jörð’ [7:17 mins]; 4. ‘Leit að lífi’ [2:33 mins]; 5. ‘Myrkur’ [6:14 mins]; 6. ‘18 sekúndur syrir sólarupprás’ [0:18 mins]; 7. ‘Hafssól’ [12:24 mins]; 8. ‘Veröld ný óg óð’ [3:29 mins]; 9. ‘Von’ [5:12 mins]; 10. ‘Místur’ [2:16]; 11. ‘Syndir Guðs (opinberun frelsarans)’ [7:40 mins]; 12. ‘Rukrym’ [8:59 mins].

<sup>29</sup> Quoted from “§ 53. Vergleichung des ästhetischen Werts der schönen Künste untereinander,” *Immanuel Kant, Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 266.

<sup>30</sup> See also the track list of *Von brjóði* (1998): 1. ‘Syndir Guðs (Recycled by Biogen)’ [6:54 mins]; 2. ‘Syndir Guðs (Recycled by múm)’ [4:50 mins]; 3. ‘Leit af lífi (Recycled by Plasmic)’ [5:24 mins]; 4. ‘Myrkur (Recycled by Ilo)’ [5:28 mins]; 5. ‘Myrkur (Recycled by Dirty-Bix)’ [5:00 mins]; 6. ‘180 sekúndur fyrir sólarupprás (Recycled by Curver)’ [2:56 mins]; 7. ‘Hún Jörð ... (Recycled by Hassbræður)’ [5:17 mins]; 8. ‘Leit af lífi (Recycled by Thor)’ [5:32 mins]; 9. ‘Von (Recycled by GusGus)’ [7:22 mins]; 10. ‘Leit af lífi (Recycled by Sigur Rós)’ [5:01 mins].

music. Song structure and minimum tonality are essential to making music pop music—silence is the very absence of sounding structure.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, the production makes a profound contribution to the discourse of silence. Different sorts of silence are negotiated on both records. Some types of silence connect the original and the remix, others have autonomous roles within one particular track. Taken as a whole, the various kinds of silence in *Von* pose the fundamental question of the nature and preservation of this particular natural resource. Silence is a precondition for music and a resource as valuable as water, food, land, or heating material. Competing for water, food, land, and fuel, mankind kills and dies. Wars over natural resources are visible, high-profile, and generating media attention. If silence disappeared, humans would only notice it too late. In megacities like Los Angeles, one can purchase a membership for a “place of silence”—a tiny, walled-in zen garden or cross-coat like place with one purpose: to preserve silence. But, as Miss Smilla knows many sorts of snow,<sup>32</sup> there are several types of silence, as I would like to demonstrate using the example of Sigur Rós’s music and its remix.

The first type of silence is the technological silence one knows from the pauses between two tracks on a CD. Sigur Rós extends this effect by introducing a five minute pause before the last track on the CD, which is, in fact, nothing other than a backward version of track six from the album. One could say that the last track, on a basic level, is already the first step towards the remixed album *Von brögð*. Here I will call this type of silence “digital silence.”

The second type of silence is slightly different from the “no input to the medium” of digital silence. The track ‘18 Seconds before Sunrise’ by *Curver*<sup>33</sup> can be seen as a pop cultural reference to John Cage’s piece ‘4:33;’ it seems to be a recording with nothing recorded. If we export the audio file to a hard-disk recording program, however, we can see that even though we cannot hear anything, there is not “nothing” like in digital silence. If we amplify the track extremely, we hear, in a far distance, some environmental noises. The short recording demonstrates and preserves 18 seconds of almost perfect silence somewhere in Iceland. Less obvious than water and fuel, silence will be a highly contested resource in the future. And music is perhaps the most appropriate medium through which to preserve it. Electronic music collective Curver play on the very dialectics of natural silence “not being nothing” in their recycling of the track under the title ‘180 seconds of silence before sunrise’ (note that Curver explicitly identifies the sound in the title of their recycled version of the track). Curver made the silence

<sup>31</sup> “On the one hand, *chromos* describes time passing in a linear way, as with the beat of a clock. But there is also *kairos*, which relates to a sense of space and a subjective experience of a *lack* of *chromos*—of a time ‘our-of-time.’ Silence can create an impression of a temporality which erases any sense of movement.” Nicky Losseff and Jenny Doctor, eds., *Silence, Music, Silent Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), from the *Introduction*, 12.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Hoeg, *Miss Smilla’s Feeling for Snow* (New York: Farrar, 1993).

<sup>33</sup> Curver Thoroddsen is a member of Icelandic duo Ghostiggit.



audible by extreme amplification and added various samples from the title song ‘Von’ to the track, such as the drum-groove (maybe an alternative version, played with sticks and not with mallets), background harmonies, interference and background noises like turning the frequency knob on an old radio or plugging in an instrument or microphone to an amplifier, and another added musical layer, which opens a disturbing wide semantic field. In the remix of ‘18 seconds before sunrise,’ which in the end becomes a re-mix not of ‘18 seconds of before sunrise’ but a variation of the title song ‘Von,’ if we listen closely, we can discover something that does not come from the sounding universe of Sigur Rós and their natural environment. After one minute and a half, the remixers integrated a long melodic line that is taken from music history and not from the album *Von*. A close listening brings a strange finding. Woven into the dense texture of the remix, one can hear the Beach Boys song ‘I’m Waiting for the Day’ integrated into the remix.

What does this mean? Is it a ridiculous joke, mocking the fact that the West Coast “happy-go-lucky” surf sound from the 1960s has nothing in common with the highly melancholic “Idea of North” on the album *Von*? I would like to object the assumption of a ridiculous joke: Beach Boys’ mastermind Brian Wilson is rightfully famous for being one of the first musician-producers, who transformed the LP from a collection of isolated songs to a closed piece of art.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Wilson, with his androgynous, melismatic falsetto singing, is a clear point of reference for Jónsi Birgisson’s vocal style. And, last but not least, the ground-breaking LP *Pet Sounds* (1966),<sup>35</sup> from which the sample is taken, is the first record in pop music I know that uses long parts of recorded everyday noises. The song ‘I’m Waiting for the Day’ ends with a bell rung in warning of a passing train and several barking dogs. One thing becomes clear with the example of the Beach Boys’ production from 1966: Even before the Canadian composer Raymond Murray Schafer and his co-workers started their *World Soundscape Project* (WSP)<sup>36</sup> recording noises all over the world, particularly those in danger of extinction, Brian Wilson started preserving sounds of the everyday on record. The main difference between both initiatives might be that the recordings by WSP will probably never reach a broader audience. The aesthetic product embodies acoustic memory in the pleasure of listening. The sample in music gently bridges the alleged gap between noise and music. From this point of view, a seldom considered aspect of music productions comes into focus. The music recording is, at least in part, a museum of a past sounding reality. While the steam engine has disappeared from our daily lives, it is preserved eternally on LP, as is evident with The Beach Boys’ *Pet Sounds*.

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<sup>34</sup> See Charles Granata, “I just wasn’t made for these times.” *Brian Wilson and the making of the Pet Sounds* (Chicago: Vinyl Frontier 2003).

<sup>35</sup> The Beach Boys, *Pet Sounds* (Capitol Records, T 2458, LP).

<sup>36</sup> See also Simon Fraser University, *The World Soundscape Project*.

After becoming “recording art” after the early 1960s, pop music has become an ideal means to negotiate the interrelations between human beings, nature, and technology. Techniques like sampling and remixing stand in the very center of this process. On the level of aesthetics, pop culture offers alternative social, economic, and also ecological models—all we have to do is to listen, analyze, interpret, and communicate. *Von* and its recycling do all this in form, content, and production history, and they do even more by inviting the listener to consider an “Idea of North.”

Sampling is not the cold other of the warmth of playing an instrument, or as a member of the string quartet Amina who plays with Sigur Rós phrases it:

By using sounds from your everyday environment, sounds that people normally don’t associate with instruments, music has become more objective. It is no longer a gift from God. It has been brought to the people. By sampling cutlery or a passing car, it feels more personal. This is the difference between practicing violin all day, and messing around with the samples in your computer. The latter makes the music more personal.<sup>37</sup>

There is no direct link between music and nature, but music is a part of nature. The connection between the two is not mimetic or reflexive; it cannot be described by any other similar adjective. Music is abstract, and the only way it can refer to phenomena outside its sounding structure is to do so via its sounding structure. The sample has a privileged role in this discourse. It is a piece of reality, and, at the same time, it can become a very part of the musical structure. At this friction line, the relationship between the “creation” and the aesthetic creation can be negotiated, and artistic models for human’s behavior toward the world can be rehearsed.

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<sup>37</sup> Quoted from Ari Alexander Ergis Magnússon, *Screaming Masterpiece* (documentary film, Iceland: Ergis Filmproductions, 2005). See also the trailer (<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xwyza4>; accessed 25 November, 2019).