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FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Liberal Arts And Humanities

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The Role of the International and Czech Independent Music Media and Journalism in the Context of the Latest Economical and Technological Changes

Bachelor Thesis

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Prague 2020

I declare that I have created the thesis by myself. All sources and literature used have been duly cited. The work was not used to obtain another or the same title.

In Prague 05.08.2020   Signature…………..

CONTENT

Introduction

Throughout the history of popular music journalism numerous studies were conducted to define its role and functions in music industry. There are also a lot of examples of music journalism taking an active role in emerging and popularization of music genres culture or individual bands. Moreover, a lot of studies are devoted to different important factors that influence the music press, which in its turn has further impact on the music industry or vice versa. Most of the studies consider the Anglo-Saxon music and music media. The United Kingdom and the United States are the origin countries of music journalism and remain the major centers with biggest press corporations (McChesney 2001; Hracs 2012). In my research I will focus on Czech music press from the Western music media perspective. I will examine and analyze the major changes in the music industry, such as globalization, liberalization, development of new technologies, some economical changes with the emphasis on their impact on the music press in Czech Republic.

The last few decades were the time of big and important changes for music industry and media in the world. From the economical standpoint, starting from the 1990s, culture and creative industries were structuralized, regulated and supported with subsidies on the national level (Hesmondhalgh 2008). However, cultural industry, including music industry, is mostly regulated by the corporate production and obeys the capitalism market laws. Keith Negus uses the notion "industry produces culture and culture produces industry", where the second part means that "production does not take place simply 'within' a corporate environment structured according to the requirements of capitalist production or organizational formulae, but in relation to broader culture formations and practices that are within neither the control nor the understanding of the company" (Negus 1999: 19).

Furthermore, the globalization changed the role of the global and local media and music scenes; technologies made the music accessible for the wider audience, which was reflected on the means of production and functions of the different actors within the sphere. Globalization became the result of the development of new technologies, which in its turn also had a major straight impact on music industry and media (McChesney 2001). According to Fornas, technology is one of the crucial factors for music, this includes technology of instruments, studios, recording, distribution and media (Fornas 1995). Throughout the years new

technologies developed, and nowadays we are living in a digital world, which indeed has a great impact on all units of music field. Physical carriers of music recording like CDs are not popular anymore, all recordings are now accessible in the cloud. In the same way printed press is being replaced by online editions. In March 2018 British NME printed the last issue and continued publishing in online only format. Social media have enabled communication between different actors within music scene including audience, most importantly communication between music performers and their listeners without any mediators. These changes are obvious and visible for every individual audience member.

At the same time, there are more major changes that are not so obvious. The world media globalization and development of the technologies led to the creation of the oligopoly of the media. Major companies mostly centered in the US, the UK and few in Europe are now global and international instead of national (McChesney 2001).

As one of the results of globalization is formation of media oligopoly, a lot of smaller media have been swallowed by big media conglomerates (McChesney 2001). "New, large media conglomerates operate in new form of symbiosis with small, sectoralised units. This makes it hard to revitalize the clear polarity between dominating mainstream and subversive alternatives/indies" (Fornas 1995). Music press focused on popular music or individual genres usually falls into the category of independent niche media, which in its turn mostly belongs to some bigger media conglomerates or, in case with small local media like Czech media, to some bigger publishing houses. Besides entering different ways of music media production, new methods of music journalism have an impact on the interpretations and conceptualization of music texts and practices. The New Journalism influenced the music journalism with new styles of writings in the 1970s (Forde 2001).

Major mainstream media and independent alternative ones are in strong interdependence not only economically, but also informationally. Sarah Thornton shows this interrelation and functions of each category of media on example of "moral panic" around British club scene. We can differentiate types of media, each having its own function. Micromedia like flyers, listings and fanzines are for people who are already familiar with some particular culture. Fanzines are considered to be the active voice of the consumer and the mean of the subcultural communication, but they are slower than professional media. According to Thornton, amateur fan media can only pick up after the professional media (Thornton 1994).

In current environment any kind of information became accessible for the wide audience, and in case of music press this can threaten its major role, which was usually the selection of music and being the mediator between music performers and audience. Especially it can be evident in small local scenes, like the one in Czech Republic. Yet different forms of music media are still relevant and preserve some of their key functions adjusting their features to the current need and demand.

In my research paper I will explore local Czech independent music scene and focus on independent media accordingly. My interest and aim of this paper are to analyze and describe the impact of the major changes of the globalized music industry and media on local independent media and to investigate relevant approaches of local media that helped them to adjust to current environment and to be relevant in the circumstances of digitalization of music production, distribution and mediating. The findings of this paper can be useful for local music journalists and media agents, as they will provide information about functioning of the local music press and serve for better understanding of the interconnection within the local scene.

The study focuses only on current Prague-based music and cultural media and represents a qualitative research. For the theoretical basis of my work I will use ethnomusicology and popular music studies literature focused on global and media (McChesney 2001; Thornton 1995; Hracs 2012; Forde 2001; Fürsich and Avant-Mier 2012; Hesmondhalgh 2006; Baym and Burnett 2009; Hellman and Jaakkola 2011; Atton 2009; Negus 1999) and popular music (Fonarow 2006; Fornas 1995; Holt 2007; Connell and Gibson 2003). As the topic of my research paper is considered to be a part of the social sciences, I will use ethnographic methods, grounded theory, thick description and analysis of qualitative data. My ethnographic data is based on the interviews with Prague music journalists. In my opinion, the interviews with experts of the field are the most efficient source of ethnographic data and will provide the journalists' perspective on the music industry and music media environment in Czech Republic. I attached the interview questions I used in Appendix A (p. 44). In addition, I will look at online issues, social media, music press' web pages in order to describe and analyze them.

1. Culture And Music Industries

Music journalism is a branch of the broader field of cultural journalism, which, in its turn, is an indispensable part of the culture and music industries. In order to understand music media and music journalism from a broader perspective, it is important to consider the broader field of cultural production. In this chapter, I therefore introduce main characteristics of culture and music industries and related theories about their development. The main goal of this part of the study is to give an overview of the music industry and music journalism and how they are involved in cultural production. I also discuss the most influential historical, economic and technological changes in the culture and music industry. I will discuss the main theories about culture and music industry in terms of Bourdieu's fields and provide some information about its history and important approaches.

The aspects covered by this chapter are: an overview of culture and music industries from a historical point of view; a discussion of the impact the global economy and technological changes has on these industries. The last section is about the independent music industry, technology and economy in independent music. This theoretical introduction will provide the history and main theories of cultural and music production and serve as a background for further analysis of local music media today in the following chapters.

1.1 Culture Industry

The term 'culture industry' was popularized by Keith Negus and is still commonly used by scholars. Negus suggested that "cultural items were being produced in a way that had become analogous to how other industries were involved in manufacturing vast quantities of consumer goods" (Negus 1999). In other words, cultural products that are usually perceived as works of creativity necessarily involve the structure of capitalist production and distribution which can be compared to the manufacturing of consumer goods. Cultural products, such as journalistic texts and music itselfinvolve different aspects and features and should be considered with all their complexity. Negus assumed that 'industry produces culture and culture produces industry'. In the first case, by using the term 'industry produces culture' Negus is referring to "how entertainment corporations set up structures of organization and institute distinct working practices to produce identifiable products, commodities and 'intellectual properties'" (Negus 1999: 15-16). That is to say that cultural products are generated for the sake of entertainment or simple consumption and are organized in order to

get commodified the most effectively. Such perspective allows us to see cultural production as a way of manufacturing of cultural products which obey the business rules of any industry. In the second case, where 'culture produces industry', the cultural field should be seen as a structured institutional production organized in most sufficient way in order to achieve the most effective form of production. Nevertheless, the culture industry is dependent on different social, economical and political forces that should be considered for a better understanding of the demands of the industry.

The idea of the culture industry implies two processes inherent for industrial production. Firstly, it suggests application of industrial manufacture means of production to a field which was earlier seen as an independent and separate from business and commercial interest; cultural products need classification and the structure of distribution as any other consumer goods. Secondly, it assumes the standardization of form and content of cultural products according to the needs of industry, which means adjusting to economic, social and political conditions of the corporate world. Hence, production of culture involves many aspects and different processes that determine the culture industry.

For better understanding of the segregation and organization of the culture industry, it is useful to look at it from the perspective of Bourdieu's fields theory. "By 'cultural production' Bourdieu intends a very broad understanding of culture, in line with the tradition of classical sociology, including science (which in turn includes social science), law and religion, as well as expressive-aesthetic activities such as art, literature and music" (Hesmondhalgh 2006). David Hesmondhalgh adopts Thompson's definition of field as 'a structured space of positions in which the positions and their interrelations are determined by the distribution of different kinds of resources or 'capital'. By identifying key fields within a particular social space, Bourdieu is able to theorize interconnections between different areas of endeavourand the degree to which they are autonomous of each other (Hesmondhalgh 2006).

The key notions adopted by Bourdieu are cultural, economical and symbolic capital, which are crucial for different fields. Cultural capital can be though of as mainly a possessed knowledge, behavior path or skill-set of a person or a group of individuals (usually gained through education). Symbolic capital can be referred to honor, prestige or recognition available for an individual within one's field. In case of music industry it can be referred to music rewards and recognition among other actors in the field. Each of the field has also sub-

fields. In the following sections I will use the notion of different kinds of capital inherent to different poles of fields and subfields.

According to Bourdieu, "[cultural] field is more or less constituted by the relationship between two sub-fields: the sub-field of small-scale production (or 'restricted production') and the sub-field of large-scale production (grande production or mass production)". These are primarily distinguished from each other by the degree to which they are autonomous of the field of power. Small-scale, or restricted, production is described as having a relatively high degree of autonomy, but never full autonomy; mass production is mostly 'heteronomous' (Hesmondhalgh 2006). The small-scale production usually involves less economic capital than mass production, but it requires more of the cultural capital and obtains more field-specific symbolic capital, "a consecrated avant-garde have especially high levels of symbolic capital, in the shape of various forms of recognition, honour and acclaim (prizes, membership of academies)" (Hesmondhalgh 2006). In my research I will focus on the sub-field of small-scale production and will incorporate independent music industry with this notion later in this chapter.

According to Negus, "any attempt to study the 'production of culture' needs to do more than understand culture as a 'product' that is created through technical and routine process and institutionalized practices. We need to do more than simply read off or assume the characteristics of sound and images from patterns of ownership or the way commodity production is organized. We need to understand the meanings that are given to both the 'product' and the practices through which the product is made" (Negus 1999: 20). In this view the culture industry is different from other industries, as cultural products have more complex aspects; understanding the cultural product involves understanding the processes and conditions under which it was produced. Unlike other types of production of any industrial goods, where the social and political contexts are not important, the culture industry produces different type of goods which consist of intellectual or creative human labor. Cultural products should be seen from broader social perspective, where producing the goods also involves putting a meaning in the product which is influenced by external social, political or economical aspects of society. "Culture, thought of more broadly as a way of life and as the actions through which people create meaningful worlds in which to live, needs to be understood as the constitutive context within and out of which the sound, words and images of

popular music are made and given meaning" (Negus 1999: 20). Culture and cultural products are often the representation or reflection of people's lives and are open to interpretation.

Cultural goods, like movies, books and music recordings usually have high production cost. Such products require a relatively large amount of time and financial recourses. However, lack of finances is a typical weakness of culture industry, which is also associated with underemployment, temporary and short-term contracts, prevalence of freelance work, low earnings, a lack of social security, etc (Lee 2017). Poor consumer-based income in the industry does not cover the investment of resources, which led to a concept that Hesmondhalgh called 'the blockbuster syndrome', when massive amounts of money are spent on making a big hit which would cover the inevitable misses (Hesmondhalgh 2008: 554). This is an example of industry focusing mainly on mass production.

The culture industry has been recently expanded and a new term 'creative industry' emerged and has been commonly used since the late 1990s due to socio-economic and political changes that established new conditions in the cultural industry field. Hesmondhalgh writes that both culture and creative industries refer to a complex domain of cultural studies which focuses on analysis of how cultural goods are produced and disseminated in modern economies and societies (Hesmondhalgh 2008: 552). Creativity is seen here as a human input in the production process and can be viewed as a form of capital. From the point of view of capital, creativity can be understood as intellectual property and a form of labor that gives meaning and reflection of social and historical aspects of individual people's lives into the cultural goods (Lee 2017). Hesmondhalgh points out that the term 'creative industry' was applied in order to expand the culture industry with activities that also maintain some creative or intellectual labor but are not directly associated with culture. Thus, creative industry includes arts like visual art and dance, more craft-based labors like fashion and furniture design and even software production. This way of labeling enabled the expansion of the range of production that would be supported by governments with subsidies and creative industries helped to link 'the arts' to the commercial cultural industries, so that even the most subtle activities that consisted of intellectual property or creative labor were made a part of economic development (Hesmondhalgh 2008: 559). Creative industries can be seen as a transition of culture industries to post-Fordism, when cultural production became more sectionalized and the emergence of creative industries enabled the collaboration of big cultural conglomerates or, for example software producers, with small businesses and cultural workers. Moreover, the

protection of intellectual property was strengthened and strongly associated with the 'creative artist' (Hesmondhalgh 2008: 559).

Neoliberalism and democratization of late 20th century changed the perception of culture industry and drew more interest to it. On global and national levels culture and creative industries became supported by political institutions with subsidies. "Its first major policy use appears to have been by the British Labour government elected in 1997, though there were important precedents in other countries, notably the Australian Labor government's Creative Nation initiative of 1994" (Hesmondhalgh 2008: 559). Furthermore, seeing the creative industries as a way of future prosperity pushed governments to support the education of cultural sector workers with trained skills. The shift to creative industries can be described as a democratization among cultural industries, when even non-commercial cultural creative production received the support of the governments. However, proponents of neoliberalism of 21st century argued against financing of national cultural products based on the argument that cultural trade regulations can harm consumers and that subsidies inhibit the ability of nations to develop their own competitive cultural institutions (McChesney 2001).

1.2 Music Industry

The music industry, like the culture industry in general, has its own structure and institutions that are organized to provide the most efficient production of consumer goods. Music production involves a lot of different processes, from the creativity of composing through to the cooperative labor of a variety of people in different institutional settings, in order to efficiently produce a successful product. A variety of workers and actors involved within the music field maintain knowledge about the structure and organization of the music field to be able to function properly. For instance, media agents and promoters need to obtain some general knowledge for better understanding of the classification of music texts in order to come up with the most effective way of distribution. According to Negus, the issue here is "to stress how staff within the music industry seek to understand the world of musical production and consumption by constructing knowledge about it (through various forms of research and information-gathering), and then by deploying this knowledge as a 'reality' that guides the activities of corporate personnel. In economic terms this refers to the production,

circulation and use of various forms of market data or 'consumer intelligence'" (Negus 1999: 19). In the music industry, the actors and mediators involved in the sphere need not only data regarding the classification and structure of production of music texts, but also the marketing data and understanding of the needs and demands of the audience.

In Bourdieu's terms, the popular music field also has two major sub-fields of large- and small-scale production. It is usually differentiated as mainstream music that utilizes the methods of large-scale mass production, and independent music as a small-scale autonomous sub-field accordingly. Negus argues that music production in general terms involves musicians and other actors working within 'genre worlds' (Negus 1999: 25). Genre classification is necessary for culture industries as a tool for regulation of the circulation of vast musical practices and goods. Genre can also be seen as a set of codes, conventions and rules that can label the music and bring it to a proper field. "The apparatus of the corporate music industry is thoroughly organized in generic and market categories" (Holt 2007). When a musician starts working with any label, their music is being assigned to a particular category and then marketed and sold as a product registered with a particular generic code.

Such categories as mainstream popular music and other more individual genres were also important when the music industry was restructured in order to achieve product differentiation during the industrial shift from Fordism to post-Fordism during late 20th century. Mass production itself could not satisfy the whole market, so capitalist conglomerates were looking for creativity and innovations among a small specialized production line. Hesmondhalgh (1996) writes about 'flexible specialization' as a strategy of restructuring of the industry, when mass production methods were displaced by smaller forms of production specialized on market niches. In the music industry this flexibility was evident in partnerships and collaborations of major records label and small independent ones. In order to achieve the product differentiation, the majors were searching for refreshment among independent productions, because independents were able to fill the areas of markets where the large major productions could not reach (Hesmondhalgh 1996). Niche markets were different from the mass market with different preferences and demand of specialized music products – in this case particular genres of music. Post-Fordism suggested the horizontally integrated form of production and symbiosis of large conglomerates with small forms of production. In other words, in the music industry, major labels would collaborate with smaller labels or individual

producers on a temporary basis for the production of differentiated products instead of restructuring their own production or losing the niche market.

Another important issue is an impact of the technology in music industry. One of the most valuable conclusions made by Fornas is that "musics depend on technology, including technology of instruments, studios, recording, distribution and media" (Fornas 1995). Starting from the end of the last century, technologies have been developing fast and as a result today we do not have so many physical carriers of the music recording anymore, recordings are available in digital formats on electronic devices like laptops and mobile phones. According to Fornas, technology is one of the 'external' conditions of the music. For example, in the past decades technological advancements profoundly changed music recordings and audio carriers. In 1970s magnetic audiotapes or compact cassettes substituted the vinyl records and in 1980s compact discs started gradually substituting cassettes. However, these replacements were mostly evident in mainstream music, all formats ever created still exist on some level in niche areas, for example, music cultures like indie rock still value the physical artifacts like vinyl today. Eventually, starting from 2000s new technologies enabled the storage of big amounts of music digitally in MP3 format, which also changed the methods of distribution of music.

In 1999 Shaun Fanning founded Napster, the file sharing service, which distributed copyrighted music illegally and free of charge for consumers. It changed the Western music industry fundamentally. Internet and services like Napster enabled the development of a concept of 'gift economies', a practice of exchange of digital commodities, including image, movie, and sound files across the Internet. Peer-to-peer networks enabled the exchange of files between users without any mediation. At that time the music industry lacked a technological foresight that would prevent the distribution of copyrighted music, which immersed the music industry into an economic crisis (Hracs 2012). The music industry had to adjust to the new conditions in order to be still function. Firstly major labels focused and applied some legal actions on services like Napster, but then they expanded their focus also on individual consumers for stealing copyrighted music illegally. By prosecution of people stealing the music majors pushed away the markets. In order to bring them back they introduced online models of digital music distribution. At first, online music stores with subscription models failed, as people wanted to keep the music they have purchased. Among many online music distribution channels and business models that have emerged throughout the 2000s, Apple's iTunes online music store and its 'pay-per-song' model have become the leader of the market

in Western countries. One of the advantages of such a model is that listeners can buy only the songs they like and are not forced to pay for the rest of the record. However, at this point major labels had lost a big part of their dominance and power in the industry. They could no longer dictate the terms of the content, pricing, and distribution, but rather had to take "direction from the new and more dominant players on the distribution side" (Hracs 2012). Now the most popular form of music recording distribution is a subscription model of streaming services, where consumers pay for the time of subscription and get access to music storage. On streaming services like Spotify or Apple Music, that became the most popular and successful form of distribution in last ten years, listeners can have access to both: they can have the whole records or choose the individual songs to add them to their digital library.

These streaming services helped solve the problem of 'piracy' in the music industry and helped major labels to recover. However, revenues now come not from selling tangible music products like singles or albums, but from subscription and advertising. Although artists are also getting royalties from the streaming depending on how many people listen to their music, consumer-oriented music platforms do not give musicians complete freedom, as in most cases uploading of their music on the service requires cooperation with labels (Hesmondhalgh, Jones and Rauh 2019). In general terms, this alteration had important consequences for the pricing structure as well as the style of music that is being produced and marketed. Flexibility and product differentiation became necessary to keep the market occupied. At the same time, online stores and services give a privilege to hit singles over entire albums, which promotes the popularity of a narrow range of the most commercially successful songs. This has shifted the mainstream music production, distribution and reception to focus on a narrow range of commercially viable 'top 40' music. Thus, in order to prevail in the 'MP3-crisis', major labels used the approach what Hesmondhalgh called 'the blockbuster syndrome', or in case of the music industry 'hit-makers'. In other words, in order to reduce the risk of losses, the majors terminated many existing record contracts and focused their resources on a narrow range of established and commercially successful music products. Previously musicians would send demos to a major label hoping they would be able to sign on the major, now musicians often have to release one or even several albums independently before majors decide whether to sign the contract or not depending on the commercial potential (Hracs 2012).

1.3 Independent Music Industry

The central interest of my paper lies in practices integrated within the pole of small-scale production. Indie is a popular music genre mostly defined by the means of its production. Independent music is often associated with 'authenticity' and avant-garde and is usually a product of small record companies with sophisticated cultural capital and low level of economic capital. However, Hesmondhalgh points out that although "many small record companies were committed to aesthetic and political challenge and innovation, many were not" (Hesmondhalgh 1996). Not all independent companies are driven by a certain ideology, some are focused on profit making. Independent music was differentiated and defined by its means of independent or autonomous production. Indie is usually considered to be outside of mainstream and driven by certain inherent values, such as 'creative freedom' and freedom from the commerce-driven production. Punk activists in the 1970s took the idea of working independently from the industry due to it being too restraining in their view, a position which was then continued by post-punk. Independent music and the notion of creative autonomy have been romanticized, but it requires more complex approach for accurate discourse. As Hesmondhalgh argues, a lot of small independent record companies were often even more exploitative of their musicians than corporate majors (Hesmondhalgh 1996). In other words, independent music industry shares some common features and characteristics with major music production which it was trying to avoid in the first place.

Besides the autonomy of production, indie's ideology encourages the autonomy of individual musicians (Hesmondhalgh 1999). According to Hesmondhalgh, it was at first a British phenomenon; term 'indie' was adopted in 1980s, at that time analogous music genres in US were labeled as 'alternative'. Indie is rooted in punk culture and anarchistic politics that was continued by post-punk musicians and record labels, such as Rough Trade started by the owner of a shop of the same name Geoff Travis in 1976, or Factory Records founded by Tony Wilson and Alan Erasmus in 1978. "Creative autonomy from commercial restraint is a theme which has often been used to mystify artistic production by making the isolated genius the hero of cultural myth" (Hesmondhalgh 1999). However, indie emerged form the networks of post-punk companies who set up the chains of distribution in order to organize an easier way for indie musicians to reach a wider audience across the country.

"From its very inception, indie music was considered to have an antithetical approach to the mainstream production of music" (Fonarow 2006). In other words, indie will reject any

attributes of mainstream, such as popularity and commercialization. Indie opposes mainstream by resisting 'selling-out', which is seen as abandoning previously held political and aesthetic views for commercial success (Hesmondhalgh 1999). Indie avoids appearances on television and participating in popular charts in order not to be seen as 'sold-out' among its audience. Small independent record labels often balance on the edge of bankruptcy resisting being 'sold-out'. However, in order to maintain the niche market, independent music industry was forced to give up some of its DIY aesthetic concerns and collaborate with corporates.

As the independent music sub-field is a part of a broader music industry field, it is inevitably connected to and influenced by the major production. The interconnection between the two sub-fields is complex, and relations of different forms of capitals or autonomy and heteronomy of content and product types can be fluid. One example of fluidness of the fields regarding small- and large-scale productions poles is that the production of a large amount of any culture is achieved through the creation, collaboration or cooperation of partially autonomous fields. For instance, major record companies sign distribution or licensing deals with independent record companies (Hesmondhalgh 2006). There are advantages of such collaborations for both. For majors, such partnership is a way to flexibility and product differentiation in order to reach a wider audience and therefore larger revenue streams. For the independents, international licensing through majors makes it easier to trade and export the deals across the Europe and US. And perhaps most simply funding or distribution deals with majors provides independents with financing (Hesmondhalgh 1996). This flexibility helped the indies to establish also as a genre on one hand and to decrease the crisis on the other hand. Partnership and collaboration with major labels like Universal, Sony or Warner, established networks of distribution accessible for wide range of music practices. However, majors' financial investments into independent music industries reduced its autonomy from the corporates, as investment entails potential control over production (Hesmondhalgh 1999). Hesmondhalgh writes that when in the 1990s indie experienced a decline and economic crisis, by 1995 a new version of indie which was partly a result of indie labels' partnership with corporate majors occupied a British scene and was called 'Britpop'. As other indie genres, Britpop has its roots in post-punk rock tradition (Hesmondhalgh 1999).

Another example of the fluidness of the independent and mainstream fields is the possibility of 'crossovers'. In popular music this term supports the fact of interconnection between small specialized niche markets and mass pop music products. It refers to an ability

of musicians, labels and sometimes whole genres to travel through the field from small-scale production to mainstream (Hesmondhalgh 1996).

With transition to digital file exchange and distribution, independent artists received even more freedom from labels and possibilities for self-promotion. Social media enable communication of artists and audiences without mediators, music platforms offer an easy and efficient way of sharing music files. One of the first and most important social media that was widely used by independent musicians was MySpace. Established in 2003, it enabled musicians to find their audiences through labeling music and communicating with other music producers without necessary cooperation of the labels. However, consumer-oriented music services, like Spotify, still require musicians to work with the labels to upload and receive royalties for their music. After 2008 MySpace started to decline and was finally displaced by other social media like Facebook. Currently there are still some music platforms commonly used by independent musicians, such as Bandcamp and SoundCloud.

The current definition of indie as a genre is associated with particular sound of music and stylistic conventions. Indie was often considered to be a genre that contrasted mainstream and some other genres, like electronic dance music. Indie is usually characterized as punk-related, but artsy and melodic, with electric guitar combined with some sensibility in lyrics (Fonarow 2006). There are more specialized genres that aesthetically and ideologically fall under indie category, among them alternative, grunge and shoegaze.

One of the most important ideological characteristics of indie is simplicity. Indie values simplicity in everything; it values little elaboration in technology in music practices; for example, for indie genre low fidelity of production is inherent. The simplicity is also evident in styles and images of musicians and audience; basic outfits usually composed of T-shirts and jeans are common appearance of indie bands on stage (Fonarow 2006). Another manifestation of simplicity is the fact that independents set themselves against the focus on 'image' unlike mainstream pop music. For example, some of the most important indie bands like The Smiths refused to put their photo on the covers of albums; many indie bands valued designs on covers more than images of themselves. There was also a resistance against using the promotion by music videos which is common for mainstream music (Hesmondhalgh 1999). Even the 'indie' is the simplification of 'independent' and is usually written with a small 'i' in the beginning to stress the modesty as part of the identity (Fonarow 2006).

According to Hesmondhalgh, inception of indie represents a decline of post-punk which came up in early 1990s with bankruptcy of the iconic post-punk labels Factory Records and Rough Trade. Post-punk failed to completely transform and restructure the independent music industry, which proved that it is impossible to reconcile ideology of being outside the mainstream and punk's bias against elaborate production with making popular music. The new conditions of capitalist economies make the majors corporate methodology maintain its dominance.

This chapter gives an overview of the structure and organization of the culture and music industries with a range of approaches and reflections on different discourses about the economical, political and technological impact on those industries. The major influences on music industry were due to liberalization and digitalization of music production and distribution. The development of the technologies as external condition led to restructuring music and independent music industries. While the independent music industry was always seeking autonomy from the limitations of commercial mass production and in doing so preserved some of the aesthetical and ideological concepts of 'creative freedom', it remained in many ways inferior in relation to the productions and success of the dominant commercial music industry. At the same time, there are evident cases of fluidness and interdependence of both major and small independent music productions, where under some economical conditions the symbiosis of two proved to be the most efficient way of the production.

2. Music Journalism And Its Role In Music Industry

The study of music journalism requires several perspectives. Music media are categorized and classified according to their functions and characteristics. Like the whole music industry, music media are also influenced by social, political and economical changes such as globalization, development of new technologies and other economic changes. In this chapter I provide an overview of music media and a brief history of music journalism while focusing on important historical changes that influenced the ideology of music writers and affected music criticism. I also describe the main functions and methods of music journalism.

In the last section I proceed with the discussion of independent music journalism and its characteristics in relation to the new economic system.

This chapter serves as a broader theoretical context for the ethnographical and analytical third chapter in which I will continue examining the topic of music journalism with ethnographical and analytical case studies of Czech independent music journalism.

2.1 Music Media

Starting from the previous century, sociologists and musicologists have been studying the influence of the media on popular music and individual music genres and cultures. There are differing perspectives from which genres, cultures and music ideologies are influenced by different types of music press. In the same way as the music industry is being produced in the most sufficient way for profit making and music is identified and classified in order to fulfill market needs, music media are also classified and organized according to demands of different markets. Different types of music media have various functions and audiences, as they also cover different genres of music. Some of them concentrate on mainstream music and have a way of production inherent for corporate mass production; their main goals are to financially prosper and reach the broadest audience possible. Other media are directed towards niche markets and are more genre-oriented. Moreover, some media are differentiated according to their work organization and production as independent or autonomous media.

Fabian Holt suggests that music media are relevant for setting up genre networks. "The mass media have been necessary for establishing broad genre networks" (Holt 2007). Constant production of certain music practices depends on the spread and circulation of information about it in the form of texts, images and ideologies. Many local and translocal scenes and communities are gathered by the media which shape the scene and make interconnections. Music texts are interpreted and gathered into cultural knowledge by media. "Media are crucial to the creation, classification and distribution of cultural knowledge" (Thornton 1994). In this sense, the core function of media is to shape the cultures and operate with cultural knowledge. At the same time, music press is dependent on music cultures, as the key reason for the magazines' interest in music cultures is their need to target and maintain the readership. Monitoring and analyzing the music and especially youth music cultures has become a financial necessity for music media for attraction of audiences (Thornton 1994).

According to the genre classification, music press is aimed at certain target audiences. For example, mass media and tabloids are oriented on mainstream popular music and have the largest audience, which is usually heterogenous. Respectively, mass media workers do not have a lot of autonomy, as mass publications are consumer-oriented. This orientation affects not only content but also methods of writing: for mass media, house style of writing is inherent. In terms of content, mass media are usually influenced by niche music press (Thornton 1994). As representatives of music press of a smaller-scale production have more cultural capital and therefore cultural knowledge, they often operate within the subcultures or youth music cultures. To a great extent, media construct and shape these subcultures. Consumer-oriented music media therefore categorize social groups and arrange sounds along with aesthetic production and interpreting of music texts (Thornton 1994).

As I have already mentioned earlier, niche music press in usually genre-oriented. One of the examples of niche music press is *New Musical Express* (*NME*), the most influential British publication among independent rock communities, which gained its popularity during 1970s when it mainly covered punk and post-punk genres. Another niche media is *i-D* magazine, which arose on underground dance music like techno and acid house in late 1980s. Here are some other important music and cultural media: *Melody Maker*, which was similar but considered to be rival with *NME*, a lot of journalists worked for both of them (for example, Everett True); *Rolling Stone* was devoted to mostly mainstream music cultures; *Wire* and *The Quietus* are mostly music media but cover other cultural topics also. Other small media like fanzines are community-based and are focused around certain subcultures or particular marginal or niche interests (Atton 2009).

Except describing music sounds and explaining music genres, music press mainly emphasizes the social perspectives, subcultures and the meaning of the music for its audience (Atton 2009). By defining and stressing the cultural and subcultural characteristics it shapes the genre and designates the target audience for both music and writing about music. In today's globalized world music media are among those factors that create and connect communities and audiences of one particular genre despite geographical separation. For example, punk preserves its authentic subculture throughout time and across continents with help of mediation and communication.

Media often cooperate with other players of music industry, such as producers and record labels, in order to achieve the most effective form of production and shape the scene or

sometimes a whole genre. A good example of such cooperation of media with label in the process of creation and shaping of a genre is grunge and Nirvana from Sub Pop Records. Nirvana is mostly associated as a breakout from Seattle grunge scene. However, music similar to grunge, incorporating a mix of punk and metal has existed in Seattle long time before anyone had heard of grunge and Nirvana. Sub Pop record label was established by Bruce Pavitt and Jonathan Poneman in 1986. It grew up on Pavitt's zine where he would print reviews and distribute compilation tapes of underground rock bands. Significantly, Pavitt and Poneman created an identity for the record label itself from its very beginnings. They created the Sub Pop Singles Club, in which subscribers were sent a new record every month. Hip consumers very much liked to believe they were privy to a secret unavailable to the mainstream. Photographer Charles Peterson would go to the shows and take pictures not only of bands, but also of audiences, which helped Sup Pop to create a particular scene or closed community. The label would also fly the British music journalist Everett True, who was working in *Melody Maker* at that moment, to Seattle and in 1989 give him a guided tour of the scene showing other bands of the same genre (Moore 2009). At that time, British media like NME and Melody Maker were the most influential publications for new rock genres even in the US. British music journalists often explored US punk and avant-garde scenes searching for new material. By doing thoughtful promotion and with cooperation with media sources Sub Pop created and defined Seattle grunge scene. Mediation in form of local small-scale music press helped to define a genre and gather the audience into a community of a scene; promoting the local scene in global media with manifestation of its features helped grunge to become a prominent genre worldwide. Music mediation as a separate section of music industry is relevant not only for displaying the discourse about music genres and cultures, but also for elaborating, connecting and distributing of musical and cultural knowledge.

Media themselves are influenced by some external conditions. New technologies and new economic arrangements of the last two decades had a significant impact not only on music industry (see Chapter 1), but also on music media. According to McChesney, communication technology and globalization make global media empires (mostly US, UK or Western European based) feasible and lucrative. Before 1990s, national media systems consisted mostly of domestically owned radio, television and newspaper industries, centered on national concerns. National deregulation of media during democratization enabled big media firms to create global oligopoly in late 1990s, when the firms were moving

internationally and consolidating fast. "Get very big very quickly or get swallowed up by someone else" (McChesney 2001). Without cultural trade barriers, global media firms like Disney, AOL-Time Warner or Sony, spread across the world absorbing local and independent small media and creating media oligopoly.

Another consequence of the development of technology on media is related to the global digitalization. According to Paula Hearsum, in 1970s *NME* was selling 300,000 copies (Hearsum 2013: 107). In March 2018 the publisher announced the last *NME* printed issue, and the magazine became an online-only publication accessible for free. Some media organizations were founded as online-based from the very beginning; for instance, music magazine *Pitchfork* was established as digital publication in 1995 and remains so until today.

Other phenomena that influence music media starting from the 2000s are social media and music platforms. By means of social media musicians can communicate with their audiences directly; therefore the distributing role of mediation partly lost its function, because music recordings can be distributed to the media at the same time as to the rest of the audience. Besides, now, when music is accessible for all in one click, classical descriptive music reviews lost their relevance. Moreover, social media like MySpace, Facebook provided new ways of promotion and distribution for musicians. Independent musicians can spread their music freely and come up with their own strategies for release and promotion (Suhr 2012). Digital music platforms with subscription models like Apple Music and Spotify provide unlimited and easy-to-use access to huge music libraries. "The use of music streaming services by consumers has grown rapidly in recent years, and all serious analysts now see them as central to the economics of the recorded music industry over the coming years" (Hesmondhalgh, Jones and Rauh 2019). Moreover, streaming platforms also provide access to many playlists based on genres, moods or artists; some of playlists are made by professional editors and some are generated by algorithms.

However, labels are still involved in processes of music distribution. Most mainstream consumer-oriented music services like Spotify are based on corporate means of production and often require musicians who want to upload their music there to cooperate with labels. There is also another set of music platforms that differentiate themselves from consumer-oriented ones. Hesmondhalgh, Jones and Rauh called these platforms 'producer-oriented' to refer to the fact that they provide means by which musicians can upload their music without necessarily working with majors and independent record labels. Services like Bandcamp and SoundCloud

encourage producers to upload their music on the platform where it will be accessible to both people who are not musicians but are interested in music and other music producers (Hesmondhalgh, Jones and Rauh 2019).

2.2 Music Journalism

Pierre Bourdieu has adopted the concept of the 'cultural intermediary' to refer to those occupations engaged in 'presentation and representation… providing symbolic goods and services'. Negus has argued for the term 'cultural intermediaries' on the grounds that it directs our attention to questions of how production and consumption are mediated. He also suggested that further categories of workers, who are important in such mediation, but who have been relatively neglected, should be included, such as accountants. Hesmondhalgh suggests that we need a better specification of the division of labour involved in mediating production and consumption in culture-making organizations. Negus said that Bourdieu's intention was "to argue that recording industry personnel contribute to the 'words, sounds and images of pop' and he seemed to be using the term 'intermediary' to refer to this added contribution, which takes place between musician and audience. But in Bourdieu's sense of the term, it is critics that act as cultural intermediaries in the recording industry", as they gives meaning and interpretations of music texts (Hesmondhalgh 2006; Negus 1999).

A lot of writers on music media suggest that music journalism was started by music fans (Frith 1983; Forde 2001; Atton 2009); the roots of rock journalism lie in the 1960s in the specialised music magazines of the US and in the underground press of the UK, where writers began (and many remain) as amateurs and non-professionals (Atton 2009). At the same time, music critics often seek to be respected and valued by other music experts. "As Bourdieu argues, cultural critics are often the ideal-typical readers of their own titles and present a point of cultural identification/ empathy for the average reader. In interviews with journalists, a common theme raised was that their attraction to the career arose because they were dedicated and discriminating readers of particular titles and identified with particular writers' critical styles and viewpoints" (Forde 2001). Thus, music journalism arose among rock fans who were considered to be experts in the sphere. According to Forde, a music writer was hip and valued for their knowledge.

Music journalists are considered to be 'gatekeepers' and 'tastemakers' who inform the audience and stratify listening habits (Atton 2009; Hearsum 2013). Music journalism is involved in two fields: cultural and journalistic. It is in the cultural field, because writing about music requires creative writing and some cultural knowledge; a lot of writers claim that writing about music involves interdisciplinary knowledge about other cultural fields, in particular literature, for better interpretation of music texts and musical works. The journalistic field is also present, because in essence music journalism is newswriting. For cultural journalism and music journalism in particular certain duality is inherent; it mainly concerns the common journalistic newswriting work and leaning towards the aesthetic paradigm of cultural field, in other words, music journalism is balancing between news and commentary (Hellman and Jaakkola 2011). The common neutrality of the journalist cannot be fully applicable to music journalists, as their participatory observation and reflection in writings are necessary. Steve Jones mentions a statement that there are only two camps in rock music journalism: journalists and intellectuals. First category is consumer-guided and treats rock'n'roll like entertainment; and the representatives of the second one are "academics who drain it of all the joy and fury". Writers often have one foot in each camp or migrate between them (Jones 2002). According to Hellman and Jaakkola, there are two main paradigms of cultural journalism: aesthetic and journalistic . The aesthetic paradigm is characterized by an evaluative, opinion-based and educational approach, while the journalistic paradigm is supposed to be an informative, fact-based communication about the cultural subject (Hellman and Jaakkola 2011).

New Journalism (NJ) influenced music writers in 1970s and 1980s. The characteristics of NJ are usage of literary techniques in journalistic texts and a subjective perspective of the author. The major difference was the transition to polyglottism and signification of the personality of writer from stylistically homogeneous and standardized writing about culture; the music press no longer had a monopoly on the subject. Starting from 1970s, music journalism encouraged and valued the concept of personality of the writer being the participant, observer and initiator of the communication with the audience who immersed themselves into their reporting stories. "Often photographs of the writers would accompany features and their names would appear on the front cover, thereby creating a situation where headlines and bylines fused" (Forde 2001). Journalists would operate with conceptual, social and historical context of music texts rather than just simply identify and reflect the personality

of the musician, which made their work as relevant as creating music itself. New form of music journalism most evident in UK rock press embraced literary technics of hip writers, analytic approach of rock journalism and seeing writers as 'provocateurs'. "Features evolved into sprawling essays where musical textures and musicians were decoded, deciphered and deconstructed" (Forde 2001). The writers' concern was how music practices were communicated, circulated and perceived, which opened many new perspectives of music texts. Present-day journalists conceptualize music rather than describe it. Chris Atton sees this form of writing as music criticism with subcultural approach, where rock was given signification (Atton 2009).

Both Forde and Atton admitted that in 1990s music journalism struggled with a 'conformism of journalistic style' as a consequence of industrial rationalization, employment conditions and competition among writers and magazines (Atton 2009; Forde 2001). First, the work of journalists was organized and structured by the industry and by corporate means and interests. Second, most of the journalists, even those who were earlier encouraged to write in individual style, were obliged to write in a house-style which often made the writing homogeneous to a great degree. The fragmentation and over-saturation of consumer market in 1990s led to bureaucratization of music magazines and resulted in brand-centric music journalism. Each title was trying to brand and distinguish itself from other rival titles to attract the reader (Forde 2001). Atton claims that rock journalist was associated with "a particular ideology of universal critical values", however, it was challenged by alternative press which was more integrated in 'cultural studies' with cultural knowledge of writers who could apply it to avant-garde and experimental music discussions (Atton 2009). Starting from the 2000s, with the rise of online media, the readership of printed media was decreased, competition between the media and fragmentation of the audience led to the fact that media institutions have become more business-oriented (Hellman and Jaakkola 2011).

Hellman and Jaakkola suggest that currently profession of cultural journalist can be divided into three sub-professions: editor, reporter and freelance critic. In case of music journalism sub-division of freelance critics is the most important and common. However, these free critics are fully dependent on the commissions of editors, at the same time their work is not structured into a common routine (Hellman and Jaakkola 2011). The most common forms of journalistic texts are reviews of music artists, individual recordings and interviews with musicians or sometimes other actors involved in cultural field. "The function

of a review is to provide an account and an evaluation of the recording" (Atton 2009). The review is a form of journalism which is leaned and tied to aesthetic approach. Hearsum described a common structure of this form of writing, thus the review is supposed to 1) distinguish musical form; 2) give an explanation of production style 3) explore emotions and 4) contextualize (Hearsum 2013: 112). Contextualization requires possession of cultural capital, knowledge of social and historical aspects and the critic's ability to comprehend and interpret cultural themes. Interviews are still a very common form of text as they provide the subjective perspective of the artists themselves.

2.3 Independent Music Journalism

As mentioned before, independent music journalism is located on the autonomous pole of the journalistic field and is usually associated with alternative journalism; and therefore they usually have the same ideology as music practices of autonomous pole of the field characterized as avant-garde and experimental popular music . Alternative journalism is characterized with privileged amateur and autodidactic manners of production (music fans becoming critics), however it doesn't exclude professional approach (Atton 2009). Moreover, because professional training is not required for this type of music journalism , a lot of journalists used independent music journalist career as a bridge to later work in mainstream media. They would use independent music journalism to gain journalistic experience and gain the attention of mass media employers (Forde 2001). Atton notes that in alternative or independent music journalism categories of cultural agency are blurred across the field. In other words, readers or consumers can become writers or writers can become musicians, musicians often start writing about music or can be both, musicians and writers at the same time. Another characteristic of independent music publishing is that, as a consequence of the fluidness of roles of cultural agents within the field, they are usually interdependent and in close, often friendly, relationships (Atton 2009). There is a feature common for independent music journalism and represents a certain 'cultural elitism', as independent music is associated with high art and authenticity.

According to Brennan, independent music press has two audiences: the industry audience and the consumer audience. In terms of these two audiences, the industry one is more important in long term perspective and the consumers one is less significant. In the case of the

consumer audience, coverage in media does not directly encourage readers to buy the music product they have read about – in most cases there is no straight dependence between press coverage and music sales. But in the case of the industry, except for discovering and highlighting of new music, music press can label new music and create a 'buzz' around the cultural product, which will help to be noticed by the industry on the one hand, and to aim at the appropriate audience within the genre classification on the other hand. During the 1990s and beginning of 2000s musicians depended on music distributors, who would decide what exactly would get to the market (Brennan 2006). Independent musicians would promote their music and try to be noticed and appreciated by music distributors. Indie artists were highly competitive and would have to come up with better ways of promotion in order to get the retail packs in the store. "[Buyers are] looking for a picture of critical press coverage that's going to drive sales, and if they don't see that predicted, then they won't stock the album" (Brennan 2006). In other words, buyers and distributors were more likely to pick music they have read about or seen in media.

One more function of independent music journalism is being useful for musicians themselves. According to Matt Brennan, music journalism is important for musicians as a feedback to their music. A lot of musicians claimed they would accept even negative reviews on their music, because in this case they would understand what did not work out. For independent artists, these reviews are important for another reason. The matter is they often lack the money for promotion, and music press is essential for them, as distribution of their music is in direct dependence from good reviews on their albums (Brennan 2006). Good music reviews and even the mentions in music press itself influence also audience's preferences in case of independent music audience, as fans of indie are very influenced by indie music press. For example, *NME* was one of the most influential tastemakers among the indie rock and punk audience (Fonarow 2006). Young readers would rather buy something they have read about in the weekly press. "Critical acclaim can serve as a platform for low-profile and independent musicians to boost their audience" (Brennan 2006).

Even though in the current digitalized era all independent musicians have a possibility to do the promotion on their own through social media and other online music platforms like SoundCloud and Bandcamp, still many music producers lack some skill of 'self-branding', especially taking into consideration the fact that the new possibilities of social media increased rivalry of independent musiciansas there is a huge flow of different content in the internet

(Suhr 2012). "In this barrage of information, getting attention and getting the music heard is of paramount importance to musicians and labels, especially small ones" (Baym and Burnett 2009). There are some examples when musicians or bands were seen as completely independent and went from being obscure to world famous on their own. Although Radiohead decided to become independent and use social media as MySpace for promoting and distribution of their music, the band was signed to the EMI, a major label, before and it helped them to start their music career (Suhr 2012). Using label's channels, their single "Creep" with following first record received a lot of attention in British music press like *NME*. Another example was given by Hesmondhalgh, Jones and Rauh: independent artist Lorde, who was unknown when she posted her track "Royals" on SoundCloud in 2012, which was noticed and highlighted in *NME* and in other British music press, and led to her becoming an international superstar a year later. However, she was signed with the biggest record label Universal three years before that. Later similar stories surrounded Billie Eilish, who is now the global star and is favoured by music press and even mass media (Hesmondhalgh, Jones and Rauh 2019). In all these examples, careers of the artists most probably would not be so successful without cooperation with labels and media, if press had not have created and spread the buzz.

Another common form of independent music criticism is online blogs. Similar to music journalists, music bloggers are also fans who possess some extra knowledge and are seen like experts. Online forms of communication, for instance, social media like Facebook, sites like Last.fm, YouTube, Rate Your Music, or articles on Bandcamp, forums or individual bloggers' pages serve as platforms for music bloggers. According to Baym and Burnett, bloggers do a big part of the promotion of particular scenes and act like mediation for distributing independent music on a free of charge basis. "Together, these fans serve as expert filters as they sift, sort, label, translate, rate and annotate a large, disorganized, and geographically remote set of cultural materials for international consumption" (Baym and Burnett 2009). Baym and Burnett focused their research on Swedish independent music and fans community, but these practices of fans voluntary labor are evident in all parts of the world. This phenomenon allows musicians, producers and labels spread the music with little or no investment in promotion and distribution. Moreover, when fans contribute words about music they like on the sites like Last.fm, tag their favourite bands in social media or give 'likes' on the platforms like Bandcamp, these data are used for algorithms of online music platforms and other social media. Algorithms then spread and recommend the popular music to other

listeners, which is especially useful for independent musicians who lack coverage in music press.

Throughout the history of music industry, we can observe how music journalism is closely integrated with the industry, in that it strongly related to and shapes cultural knowledge. New conditions of today's digitalized world significantly influence music journalism. Even though it seems like social media and music platforms can take away the functions of music media, music journalism is still relevant today. In the over-saturated music market music press and individual writers are still experts and 'gatekeepers' who select from the great amount of material. Independent music journalism opposes the mass media and its homogenous approach to writing and interpreting the cultural material; it is mostly not consumer-oriented but rather leans towards the aesthetic paradigm and 'cultural elitism'. From the discussion of this chapter the conclusion can be made is that music critics who are fans dedicated to music practices are the main contributors to independent or alternative music journalism, and are as important as musicians themselves because they provide a reflection and conceptualization of music texts.

3. Czech Music Media And Independent Journalism

In the previous two chapters I provided an overview on the Western music media and journalism, mainstream and independent. I also discussed the major changes in the music industry, such as new economical environment, new technologies of music production and distribution and their influence on the music industry, music media and music journalism. In this chapter I will focus on Czech music journalism and independent music journalism in relation to global music media system. I will base my analysis in this chapter on particular case study of music journalism in Czech Republic from the point of view of different types of media and journalists.

The methods used in this part of my work are: qualitative research, thick description, ethnography based on interviews with people engaged with music media sphere, and analysis of journalistic texts about music. The goal of the case study based on Czech music media is to

show and explain the journalists' perspective about the role and functions of music media in the current time, especially in relation to economical and technological changes of music industry. In this chapter I will analyze three Czech media: two are primarily focused on music (*Radio Wave* and *Full Moon*) and one is mainstream public media with a broader cultural section often publishing music reviews (*Respekt*).

3.1 Recent History of Czech Music Media

In the last three decades plenty of cultural and particularly music media emerged in Czech Republic. In my research paper I focus only on three Czech media sources for their more detailed discussion. My main ethnographic data are interviews with experts from Czech music media field, among them journalists, independent writers, and editor-in-chief, and editor of the local magazines. Before I proceed with introducing the selected case studies from the current Czech music media sphere, I would like to give a general overview of the Czech music media.

In 1989 the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia affected the economic organization and liberalized the media from the censorship of the Communist Party (Kettle 1996). At that time, a lot of cultural media, including music ones, emerged. One of the first music media which appeared then and exists till today was *Rock&Pop* magazine appeared in 1990. Another music media about hard rock and metal called *Spark* was established in 1991.

Before I proceed with detailed introduction of the media sources of my choice, I would like to have the general overview on Czech media. The mass media in Czech Republic are mostly private and are published by big media groups (for example, MARFA media group owned by Andrej Babiš which publishes daily news magazines *Mladá fronta DNES* and *Lidové noviny*). There are also public media represented by Česká televize (Czech television), Český rozhlas (Czech radio broadcasting) and Česká tisková kancelář (Czech printed media agency). In the following sections I proceed with an overview of the media I selected for my analysis, namely *Full Moon*, *Radio Wave*, and *Respekt*, among which two belong to private publishing houses and one is a part of public broadcasting.

3.2 Full Moon

Full Moon, established in 2010, is a small independent and music-focused magazine based in Prague. It is published by the publishing house "Smile Music" which hosts another two music media: *Spark* (metal-oriented) and *Fakker* (metal and hardcore punk-oriented). *Full Moon* is multi-genre magazine which often covers other cultural topics like literature, films, art or photography. Chief editor of Full Moon Michal Pařízek describes the focus of the magazine as following: "We are primarily aimed at music but as you can see, music is not only what we are interested in. We try to look at it from different perspectives and to have an overview on fine arts, on literature… These things are connected, but a lot of people perceive them separately, so we try to smack it a little bit" (Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020).

According to Michal Pařízek, the main audience of *Full Moon* is represented by people mostly from 25 to 30 years old, but 15-20% of audience consists of people over 35 years old. Michal describes readers of the magazine as those who are not adsorbed by "mainstream machine", but "people who are profound and interested in culture" (Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020).

Full Moon is published monthly, each issue having a particular main topic. The design is made by graphic studio Carton Clan (Full Moon Website, "O Full Moonu", https://www.fullmoonzine.cz/stranka/ofullmoonu). Readers also can find information about where to buy a printed issue of the magazine. There is also an e-shop where consumers can order a printed copy or buy a digital version of each monthly issue. Texts are also placed on the website which can be accessed by consumers for free. *Full Moon* is also present in social media like Facebook and Instagram with short messages, news or descriptions of issues.

Being a small magazine, *Full Moon* is dependent on the overall economic situation. According to chief editor, the magazine was going to expand the staff and pay more to contributors, but the pandemic in the spring of 2020 followed by the global crisis changed the plans and influenced economical situation of the media. In the spring of 2020 the magazine had a small circle of editors of six people who were working on full-time, also two people on part-time. There are some people involved and paid for non-editorial part of work (accounting, production, and advertising). Around 100 people are non-paid contributors and do not work on regular basis, approximately 30 of them regularly contribute texts. There are also around 30-40 photographers who work for *Full Moon* and other media. The magazine is mainly established on a fan base (Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020).

…it is difficult to determine it so simply, the situation is changing, someone can be involved mostly in [writing about] concerts, there are people who don't have time to do it on a

regular basis but are interested in some particular concerts and would write a report for us or make some photos… We are primarily established on a fan base, otherwise we wouldn't be able to manage it financially.
(Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020)

A lot of independent music journalists work as freelancers, which I discussed earlier from the theoretical point of view. In case of *Full Moon* which is not supported by any national subsidies or sponsorship, such freelancers who are willing to contribute texts on non-paid basis are important for the magazine, as it benefits it with different content. This is an example of amateur music critics writing for media with non-commercial interest.

Although *Full Moon* was established in the digital era, when many music magazines started to focus on online production and publishing, this magazine is preserving the tradition of printed issues. Michal Pařízek explains the advantages of printed magazine:

There are some worldwide primarily internet media that started printing, like Pitchfork releases a printed magazine two times in a year, Louder Than War releases a magazine once in a quarter. Among the audience who read these web pages one can find plenty of people who would like to have it in their library, or toilet, or I don't know, those who just want to hold it in their hands. Who would predict that vinyl becomes popular again like for last 10-15 years? People still feel the need to be able to touch stuff. Also, from a practical point of view it is good to have it printed for all these advertisement or festivals… it is important for them to see it printed and they are willing to somehow increase the commercial support if it is printed.
(Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020)

The importance of physical objects and attributes of music are indie-specific values, indie rock especially values the LPs on physical carriers (Hesmondhalgh, Jones and Rauh 2019). However, Michal Pařízek notes that printing and distribution of a small independent press which is not a part of a big publishing house is unprofitable. In addition to cost of production and distribution, the cost of promotion of the magazine is also high. Nevertheless, Full Moon also pays a lot of attention to making good online content, as this is inevitable form of distribution and communication with consumers. The magazine avoids repeating itself in different forms of communication, in other words the content in social media, web and printed issues is connected and parallel, but different.

We are really doing our best to make a good magazine and to encourage people to buy it, but at the same time we also appeal to those who read us only on the web. The content on our web pages appears parallel to what we have in the magazine, sometimes what is in the magazine doesn't even get on our web, sometimes, when we want to support a band, we put half of the interview on the web to encourage people to finish reading it in the magazine. But we don't pair it, these are two different things. Also, we try to do something like that on our social media, we don't just use text from web, but we try to find something that people haven't noticed earlier…
(Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020)

Most importantly, Michal Pařízek describes the magazine as one which opposes the current trends of digitalization, and standardization by means of printed publication and by publishing non-standardized, sophisticated content discussing alternative and generally unpopular topics in the Czech Republic in the form of long texts.

...it is not so simple to be Full Moon's fan. Sometimes people write to us and say that they have the issue but they didn't have time to read it, and I understand that. We are going against the time a little bit, not many media issue 100 pages magazine each month about unpopular bands, but at the same time this is one of the reasons why Full Moon is still good.
(Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020)

The chief editor notes that today people do not have enough time and/or do not want to dedicate a lot of time to reading long journalistic texts; therefore, editors of *Full Moon* try to reduce length of texts, but the interviews are usually still long. Most importantly, the magazine stands for sophisticated texts about topics not covered by other media (Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020).

3.3 Radio Wave

Radio Wave is an online radio with 24/7 live programs and podcasts, which was established in 2006. It also creates a text content on their webpage primarily about music and other cultural topics. *Radio Wave* is a part of national and public Czech radio broadcaster *Český rozhlas*. According to its description on the official site, *Radio Wave* is aimed at young people and covers all music genres, from mainstream pop to hard metal scenes, locally and internationally (Radio Wave Website, "O Stanici", https://wave.rozhlas.cz/o-stanici-5675004).

According to Miloš Hroch, music journalist who works for several media sources, and a former moderator and supervisor of programs on *Radio Wave* (I had an interview with him in 2018, when Miloš Hroch was still working on the radio), the main audience of the radio are university students from 20 to 30 years old, who have "active cultural life" (Miloš Hroch, interview, 2018).

'Active cultural life' can be understood here as life of people interested in different aspects of culture, typically alternative non-mainstream culture. These people are usually considerate about culture and interested in new things. Michal Pařízek also noted that people who are interested in alternative culture often visit concerts and cultural events, or even travel for culture to different countries, for example, on festivals (Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020).

Journalists working for the radio have freedom in choosing the topics, genres and musicians they want to discuss with listeners and readers. This approach provides also an exclusiveness of content which is generated by individual journalists based on their preferences. Miloš explained that he had full freedom writing about genres or individual artists he liked:

Radio Wave is good for the content, which you wouldn't be able to find on some public media, Radio 1 is kind of similar in this way, sometimes they play some interesting stuff we used to play, but they don't have it classified so specifically… Speaking from the position of a writer, what I liked about Radio Wave is that there was no "not relevant enough topic" to write about, I could write about whatever I wanted.
(Miloš Hroch, interview, 2018)

On *Radio Wave*'s website, listeners and readers can find programs in audio archive or broadcasted live. There are 46 different recorded programs with different length (some are regular, some are not) each dedicated to particular genre of music or other cultural topics, such as literature, interviews with different artists or people, or even a gastronomy programs. On the website there is a section with programs each with its author's name (for example, Miloš Hroch was a moderator of program "Špina" [Dirt] primarily about DIY punk scene). Importantly, the topics are classified and categorized, each category is supervised by people specialized on particular genre or theme.

…there is a big range of genres in radio's portfolio, this means that there are some programs that address the dub scene and other genres, there is a program about techno scene or some EBM stuff and darkwave. Also there is a section, which is in a close contact with DIY guitar scene, or DIY synthesizer scene, it is very broad. Also there is a program that addresses metal scene and so on. There is even a section focused on so-called post-club scene.
(Miloš Hroch, interview, 2018)

Although *Radio Wave* is autonomous media source, it is still a part of a big public media broadcaster, which makes it different from independent small magazines like *Full Moon* supported mostly by fan base. This reflects the professional conditions of employers. *Radio Wave* has around 90 employers engaged with different activities, as editorship, dramaturgy, moderation, marketing, administration and other writing and non-editorial functions (Radio Wave Website, "Lidé", https://wave.rozhlas.cz/lide).

But from another point of view, there is Full Moon, for example, and you can also write about things you like there, but it would be more something like fan article, they would print it, but you wouldn't have any money for it. In our case, we could write about stuff we wanted and we were paid for that.
(Miloš Hroch, interview, 2018)

A lot of journalists work for different media or are independent contributors for different sources, for instance, Miloš Hroch writes for several editions.

3.4 Respekt

Respekt is a public weekly media writing mainly about politics, economy and society, focused both on local Czech news and worldwide international events. It was established in 1989 and is published by media house Economia. It is often described as one of the most influential media sources in Czech Republic. On the website the magazine is described as "liberal critical media which believes in freedom of human's spirit and which requires doubt for its everyday fulfillment" [*liberální, kritické médium, které věří ve svobodu lidského ducha a nutnost pochybovat při jejím každodenním naplňování*] (Respekt Website, "Kontakty", https://www.respekt.cz/kontakty). As it is a mainstream magazine, the audience of *Respekt* are people of all ages, from teenagers to retired people. It is popular among male and female genders in almost equal shares. However, according to one of the editors, it is most popular among people of middle age from 40 to 60 years old (Pavel Turek, interview, 2019).

Respekt also has a cultural section dedicated to music, films, etc., but there is no statistical data about the main audience of this section. I made an interview with one of the editors of cultural section of the magazine, Pavel Turek. Like above-mentioned journalists, Turek from *Respekt* does not follow any strict guidance or order regarding subjects of his writings and has freedom in choosing topics. At the same time, the organization of each issue of the magazine is a collaboration of all employees – this is how an agreement among journalists from different sections works.

> *I can write about anything I want, if we agree on that with our cultural heading [cultural section editors]. We have a conference every week, for example we had it today [Monday]. It is attended not only by writers from cultural section, chief-redactor's assistant and some editors of magazine also come, so we talk to each other and have to decide what will be in this issue. Everybody has some ideas, what they want to write, or sometimes we can inspire each other, that's how texts in cultural heading emerge. It's always a common decision what to write about.*
> (Pavel Turek, interview, 2019)

Turek also points out that his voice regarding the particular genres and bands to write about is important at *Respekt*. He is trying to maintain the diversity of the cultural section with writing about different genres, or sometimes even about non-musical subjects. As the audience

of the mainstream magazine is very heterogeneous and there is no particular community to be addressed by the mainstream media, the content has to be plain and clear for every reader. In case of mainstream media, the goal is to compose an "attractive" and "catchy" text, which will appeal to a wide range of people.

Considering the fact I work in mainstream media I have to be aware that people mostly don't know what I am writing about, I have to keep it in mind all the time. In independent magazines o fanzines people don't have to think about it, because they know that they write for some particular community, which have some knowledge, which are familiar with this scene, they go to concerts, so in those magazines publicists can speak to those people. Just when I write about some Czech band, which would play in smaller clubs, I'm aware of the fact that people won't go to their concert, but I have to find a motif for them to read this article.
(Pavel Turek, interview, 2019)

The organization of the mainstream magazine has an impact on the content, which has a goal to maintain the readership and to be clear for everyone. At the same time the schedules of the weekly publications can affect the function of newswriting. According to Pavel Turek, it is difficult to be topical and provide the novelties and new releases, as they are spread online immediately after they are released. However, it is different with alternative or underground music, genres which are limited to particular communities.

In weekly magazine I work with a great lateness comparing to online media, and I have to keep it in mind. For example, when I write about something underground this lateness doesn't matter, people don't know this stuff anyway.
(Pavel Turek, interview, 2019)

Respekt has a webpage, but the content is restricted there, and the majority of information is printed once a week, which influences the function of the media as newswriting due to the delay of printed media comparing to online ones. This delay affects mostly mainstream culture, as Turek points out, due to the range od readers unfamiliar with alternative culture and music in particular, topics about less famous bands are not affected by the delay of weekly publishing.

It is worth mentioning that the circle of Czech and, more precisely, Prague music journalists is small, and journalists who work in different media but are interested in music, both local and international, are interconnected with each other and often have friendly relationships. The interconnection of the journalists who often share the same music tastes determines the similarities in subjects and approaches.

Also there won't be such a distinction between different kinds of media here in Prague, all people involved in this sphere know each other, I would describe it like me writing for some independent but public media source, my friend from Respekt, which is public media

source and our colleague, who writes about hardcore for some fanzines, we all sit at the same desk and talk to each other, so it is very interconnected.
(Miloš Hroch, interview, 2018)

Some of the journalists write for different media at the same time: for example, Miloš Hroch writes for *Respekt*, *Alarm*, *A2* and *Hospodářské noviny*, he also used to write for *Full Moon* and *Radio Wave*. Sometimes the journalists and editors from different media ask other journalists from the circle to evaluate and give feedback of their work.

Once I wrote an e-mail to Pavel Turek and asked him to make some kind of micro analysis, if he could just look at it, because he reads Full Moon, so if he could find a time for an e-mail where he would write some things about it. So I just ask people about their opinion, or sometimes they send some feedback by themselves, it can be positive or negative, it doesn't matter…
(Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020)

The local music scene itself is also attached to the interconnection within the journalistic field. All interviewed journalists admitted that they know the majority of Prague music scene representatives personally, however, they also state that it does not affect objectiveness of their writing. The journalists claim they do their best to be fair and objective while writing about their friends. For example, Miloš Hroch points out that these friendships are often based on the similar likes and tastes; in other words, liking the music of certain artist or band often leads to a friendship. On the other hand, Pavel Turek does not write about people with whom he has close friendship as he finds it inappropriate.

I don't want people to think that I write about this person because we are friends… But you can't avoid being familiar with all these people, this scene is not that big. Therefore you have to think of some mechanisms how to stay professional in this surrounding. Actually it's quite similar in other spheres as well, people from one field know each other.
(Pavel Turek, interview, 2019)

3.5 Functions of Music Media From Journalists' Perspective

In previous chapter I explained how the music critic is valued for his/her personal skills of writing and cultural knowledge. The journalist as a narrator and interpreter of music texts is the common phenomenon within the Czech music journalism field. Firstly, according to Czech music journalists, the music journalist is ought to obtain the cultural knowledge from different cultural fields, not only music one, and have an ability to apply it in their writing in order to receive the "attractive" text, which would encourage people to read it (Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020). For instance, according to Pavel Turek, the music journalist or any cultural

journalist should be in touch with the development of the different aspects of culture and know as much as one can, because that would be an advantage for the journalist. Pavel remarks that culture includes many aspects, among them political, social, and economical, and that the person who operates in the cultural field should have the historical knowledge, as well as interdisciplinary knowledge connected to all cultural spheres to be able to compose some conclusions and texts (Pavel Turek, interview, 2019).

The approaches and goals of journalists from different kinds of media are different. For instance, in mainstream media addressed to the majority of people, the writer tries to be different from other journalists and to stand out among other authors in the field or in the magazine.

When I decide about which particular band to write, I'm thinking of the text I'll have. It may sound very stupid, but for me it is not about music or that band, it doesn't matter to me so much as an article that I'll have in the end. I just have to make sure that I'll be able to write a good article about that… I consider writing about music to be an author's creative work.
(Pavel Turek, interview, 2019)

Pavel explains that discovering new music is not a function of the mainstream magazine; he also admits that mentioning bands in his texts doesn't help them much. Magazines with narrow range of readers, specialized on music pay a lot of attention to searching for the new musical discoveries, new bands and artists. For instance, magazines like *Full Moon* and media like *Radio Wave*, despite their interest in global music, are aimed at finding and supporting the new local music. There are few ways for supporting the bands and artists. Firstly, mentioning performers' names in media texts, as discussed in previous chapters, can help the band to reach the audience. For instance, Full Moon, except giving highlights or writing texts about young Czech bands, also provides them with a possibility to make the first record and actively participates in setting up their performances (it can be concert releases of the records, or performance at festivals).

We are trying to support the local scene and to push it a little bit thanks to our effort. From the beginning, throughout these ten years we released approximately 70 albums. The majority of these were debuts, some of these bands became more popular and it is pleasant to know that they see Full Moon as one who helped them at the beginning and somehow still keep an eye on them. Beside big events like big festivals like Colours of Ostrava, we also do some small events only for our audience and for the bands.
(Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020)

Moreover, in contradistinction to Turek's mainstream media journalist perspective, specialized small media like *Full Moon* have a different perception of 'attractiveness' of the text.

Attractive text is the text that will make me play a [recording of a] band which I am not familiar with or which I didn't like at first. To my mind, this is the attractiveness, and at the same time a skill of a person who writes about it to explain to people that it is worth their attention.
(Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020)

For all the journalists I interviewed, the main reason for highlighting the artist or the band is their sympathy of, personal opinion and liking. For example, Miloš Hroch does not precisely define his writing about local bands as "promotion"; according to him, the success of the band is a merit of the band, not the journalists who write about it. However, Hroch supports and writes about the local music he likes.

But I can't say that it was a promo or something like that, because it feels stupid to me to assume someone's success because we wrote about him or her. We only do that because we like it.
(Miloš Hroch, interview, 2018)

One of the functions of media I mentioned in previous chapters is operation with cultural material and distribution of the music texts. However, the choice of particular music to write about is made by individual journalists based on their personal likings.

I just found them [band Pacino] in the borders of that punk indie scene, and when I find something like that, I'm saying to myself that this is cool and then I just write some articles. I knew that they were new on this scene and we used to have a special program for such music on Wave [Špina]. Then I decided that they were cool enough not only for that audience restricted by this scene, but they can be interesting for broader range of people.
(Miloš Hroch, interview, 2018)

In this case, highlighting of a band in media and change of categorization helped the band to reach a wider range of audience. According to Hroch, there is an underground DYI scene with certain "open-minded" kind of audience, but the audience is restricted (Miloš Hroch, interview, 2018). The media can help and highlight the bands from the small community and expand the audience, but they are not able to lead the band to the mainstream. Turek pointed out that the only way for a band or an artist to reach the mainstream is to be played on national TV channels or radio.

In Czech republic you can become popular if radio plays your songs, or the [national] television, or if you have a lot of views on Youtube. Writing won't make you famous, it can give some credits, it can create some narrative about band, but it is important for the band to be played, in that moment the band can get from underground to mainstream.
(Pavel Turek, interview, 2019)

Michal Pařízek agrees that getting into the mainstream can be complicated. According to Pařízek, in Czech Republic the mainstream is limited due to financing of the bands; those who do not have financing or investors will not reach the top (national TV and radio).

...comparing to those Dutch or British scenes, where they have a well-established show business, it is completely usual thing when the band becomes mainstream, but it doesn't happen here at all. Here there is a big gap between top mainstream which is on TV, on the [national] radio etc., then there are some bands, like Midi Lidi, who are supposed to be there, because they get sold out in MeetFactory, for example, but they will never ever get to mainstream, because nobody will let them in. That higher level is impervious. Those who are new there are just new generally, they didn't go through the lower floors.

(Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020)

In other words, media are able to expand the audience of the band and attract more listeners, thus moving some performers from completely small DIY community to a wider popularity. But popularity is not enough to reach the mainstream for Czech bands, as commercial investment is required. This is different to other European and US-based music industries, where the success of the band itself moves it into the mainstream.

3.6 Digitalization Of Music Industry From Journalists' Perspective

In previous chapters I described the digitalization of the music industry of the late 1990s and early 2000s from the theoretical point of view. All journalists with whom I had interviews assumed that digitalization, development of new technologies and the emergence of digital cloud-based platforms of music distribution had the major impact on the global music industry in general and on local Czech music production as well. According to them, the media and journalists do not have the power they had earlier, when music was not accessible to everyone and music critics were the ones to influence the market and suggested what would be successful among the audience.

The biggest change in the relationship between media and music occurred when music became available in digital format. Earlier, in the time when NME and Melody Maker had their power, a reporter was privileged, he would receive CDs by mail for free, CDs were quite expensive, but the reporter would get it earlier and he could listen to so much music nobody else could.

(Pavel Turek, interview, 2019)

According to the journalists, the new source of the influence in music industry are now the platforms like Spotify, SoundCloud and Bandcamp. They partly took the function of recommending the music to listeners, they can also pick the recommendation based on listeners' tastes counted and determined by algorithms.

Labels used to have control over mainstream music, but now control rise from other sources, such as playlists on Spotify, with the help of tutors of those the most followed playlists on Spotify, you can generate listening rate there and track data very effectively, how it works,

how it grow, when to replace one song with another. Now gatekeeping proceed in different way than it used to, earlier major labels worked when there was way less music, they released way less music than there is now in the network. Now you can just listen to all this music and think of what can be a mainstream, again playlists on Spotify show what is relevant and this is the most progressive way to do it right now.
(Pavel Turek, interview, 2019)

According to Pavel Turek and Miloš Hroch, SoundCloud and Bandcamp are the friendliest platforms for independent artists, where they can find their audience and have a control over their music and its distribution without cooperation with labels. Both journalists read the articles and highlights from Bandcamp.

Soundcloud and Bandcamp are those new places, where you can proceed as an underground artist, you can have freedom and control over your work, also you can somehow appeal and form your own audience. I like Bandcamp for it works also as a portal for music journalism, there are a lot of good texts about music there, they do some selections, where they describe, for example, Rome's electronic music and so on.
(Pavel Turek, interview, 2019)

The journalists are pointing out here a quite important aspect of the global mutual influence of the listeners created by global music platforms. As I have mentioned earlier in chapter 2, the algorithms of the music services are able to recommend and promote certain music based on the listeners' preferences. This means that popular music from certain region of the world can be commonly recommended by the music platforms in other part of the world.

When, for example, Spotify becomes accessible like SoundCloud or YouTube, it is possible that there will be a lot of songs influenced by Latin and Spanish music. I mean, these Latin songs will be more common among Western music production like Rosalía and others. This means that on the billboard and charts there will be more Spanish songs.
(Miloš Hroch, interview, 2018)

Pavel Turek agrees on the commercial success and popularity of Spanish music and explains his view further:

We're all interconnected by the music we listen to, for instance, when people in South America listen a lot to some Spanish Latin music, the listening rate is rising, so it will also show up in Middle Europe. We influence each other with what we listen, because there are mechanisms set up to track those algorithms.
(Pavel Turek, interview, 2019)

Nevertheless, Michal Pařízek prefers getting music directly from the artists or searching for it on his own, as he notes that the mechanics of algorithms are not fully clear, and the sources of control are not so plain. The mechanisms that control the music distribution are the capitalist means of most effective marketing and consumption.

On the other side, I'm not really sure if it is not better to distance yourself a little bit from these things, because it is actually some kind of an instrument and we don't know who runs it. The market system needs to get the big data, and from where does it get these data and what kind of data are these? I just think we should keep the distance a little bit from this.
(Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020)

Overall, it seems that today's source of influence in music industry is the market itself, based on consumers' preferences, determined and calculated by built-in mechanisms and algorithms in online music services and distribution platforms.

3.7 Role Of The Music Journalist Today

In this section I will discuss the role of the music journalism in current conditions from the Czech journalists' point of view. With digital accessibility of music, which enables not only releasing of music but also spreading it to particular audiences, the role of the music journalist partly lost its function of discoverer and tastemaker.

The thing is, nowadays the music journalist is not the one who discovers and shares music to people. This role took tutors of all types, including those who make playlists, furthermore it could be the algorithm which offers you music according to what you have listened. Yet the journalist provides reflection, talks about things, gives names to it, but music gets to the audience in a different way.
(Pavel Turek, interview, 2019)

Journalists from different types of media, small independent or mainstream, admit that now the role of the journalists is to provide the context of music, narrate a story behind it, or connect it with relevant social or political events. In other words, the journalists distance themselves from the classical music critic position, when the writer describes the music. Instead, they position themselves as creative authors and storytellers who are trying to differenciate themselves from the other journalists.

I try to come up with some context to place it in the text, context can be horizontal, like some chronology, development of music in time, or it can be in a cut of what it is going on now, for example, themes that are relevant, like some anxiety, things considering climate changes, the music can be about these things. I try to find this weighty topic, but not forcibly, it must be truth, it must make sense in the context of that piece.
(Pavel Turek, interview, 2019)

The global tendencies of music criticism, where a writer is seen as an interpreter of cultural texts, can be also evident in Czech music journalism. For example, in one of the album reviews, Pavel Turek writes about record *Keleketla!* of the band of the same name. Rather than explaining music from genre or stylistic point of view, Turek emphasizes the

African origins of the music and the collaboration of music project by British and South African musicians with different producers from independent label Ninja Tune.

Album Keleketla! je pozoruhodný počin propojení hudby několika kontinentů…Výsledkem je mnohobarevná koláž, která skládá poctu africké hudbě, jež se nachází v samotných základech dnešního globálního popu [Album Keleketla! is a remarkable act of interconnection of several continents…The result is a multi-colored collage that praises the African music which is in the very basis of todays global pop]
(Pavel Turek, *Respekt* 2020, 31:60).

Turek also uses the epithets to reflect the music texts; in my opinion, this review can also be interpreted as a reference to spring's 2020 global protests against racial discrimination.

Album Keleketla! v základu vychází z původního afrického dědictví a uchovává ryzí výraz hudebníků, kteří se dennodenně potýkají s komplikovanou realitou chudoby a rasismu [Album Keleketla! is based on original African heritage and reflects the pure expression of musicians, who face the complicated reality of poverty and racism on everyday basis]
(Pavel Turek, *Respekt* 2020, 31:60).

Other Czech music journalists share the interest of searching of meaning rather than describing the music itself.

Recently I found out I'm really interested in the style of writing like New Yorker's, that is to seek understanding of some social context of music, what means precisely, why particularly this band is playing these things in this particular time… Now it is more important to explain the context, so the role of the person writing about it is to explain the meaning of the music. So when I write about concept, I usually talk to those musicians because it is important to get some explanation from them also. But when I write a review, I write it only by myself. Now I'm not even interested in this genre of writing anymore, I'm more interested in looking for meanings and interdependences in music.
(Miloš Hroch, interview, 2018)

I mentioned earlier that connections between players of the music field in Czech Republic are strong; not only journalists are familiar with each other. In his podcasts on *Radio Wave*, Hroch often invites other journalists or musicians for discussion of particular records. For example, Pavel Turek was discussing Kim's Gordon LP *No Home Record* (2019) in *Radio Wave*'s studio with Miloš Hroch.

In case of interaction with the local scene's representatives, journalists sometimes involve musicians in discussion of their music. For better understanding of musical texts of the artists, the journalist writing the reviews often refers to artists as the direct source of information.

…when I'm writing someone's profile, I go to see them, to listen to them, and I just want to be empathic. I want to put their own voice in this public space.
(Pavel Turek, interview, 2019)

The chief editor of *Full Moon* sees interviews as one of the ways for conceptualizing and giving meaning to music texts.

There are the texts we try to emphasize, then there are also some contextual things there, some ways to see the music from the social perspective, or some other angles. But the interview is the basis of the whole thing, I think.
(Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020)

Thus, both music reviews and interviews with artists are the key methods of Czech journalists for conceptualizing and interpreting music in broad social perspective and reflection of artists. Michal also explains that journalists in *Full Moon* "always try to cover it from different perspectives" and find new angels of the subject (Michal Pařízek, *Full Moon*). For example, in *Full Moon* N109 in one of the articles several writers reconsider and explain the origins and importance of double records in today's musical environment where the whole record is not limited to the space on the carrier (rather CD, cassette or vinyl). The article starts with description of the first double record by Bob Dylan *Blonde on Blonde*.

Z dnešního pohledu je jen těžko pochopitelné, jak revoluční muselo album Blonde on Blonde ve své době být. Nejen díky délce, dvěma vinylovým kotoučům v jednom balení nebo textům, o kterých se dodnes píší diplomové práce [From today's point of view, it is difficult to understand how revolutionary the Blonde on Blonde album must have been in its time. Not only because of the length, two vinyl discs in one package, or texts that still serve as a basis for diploma theses].
(Michal Pařízek *Full Moon*, 2020 109:28).

The history of music records with reflection on contemporary perception can be explained with some historical analysis discussed in the article. Different authors contributed to this article with 11 short texts about certain double albums. Each was explaining the double albums by different artists from conceptual perspective. There are more reasons for existence and current production of double albums than just the limitation of the space on the carriers or the commercial benefit.

Dvojalbum opravdu nemusí znamenat jen past na peněženky fanoušků, většina zmíněných desek jsou skutečnými milníky hudební historie. Jejich autoři toho ve své době měli "opravdu hodně na srdci", řečeno s Mosesem Sumneym. Na jednu desku se jim to prostě nevešlo [The double album doesn't really have to mean just a trap for the fans' wallets, most of the mentioned [in the article] records are real milestones in music history. Their authors had "really a lot on their hearts" in their day, said Moses Sumney. It just didn't fit on one record].
(*Full Moon*, 2020 109:28)

Such historical retrospectives can be an example of journalistic approach of deeper understanding of meaning and context of music practices in the past, and in relation to contemporary works.

Another important function which remains one of the key goals of music journalism is gatekeeping. Although digitalization and globalization of the music industry caused music journalism to search for new methods, styles and ways of writing relevant texts, the selection of music remains an important function of music journalism. In today's market, oversaturated with music products, music critics select and pick up things that would interest the consumer.

But still one of the main functions of music journalism or actually any cultural journalism is some kind of selection among overwhelming amount of things that exist, which people can't absorb. To my mind, a journalist who is engaged in culture, should be able to pick interesting things and in some adequate way to introduce them to people, in the way in which he would explain what is particularly interesting about this thing and why it is worth their attention. This is actually the function of the review which has been the same even 50 years ago and is still the same today.
(Michal Pařízek, interview, 2020)

Based on the collected data about journalists' perspective over the music industry and music media in Czech Republic, a conclusion can be made that digitalization and globalization of music production that gives consumers an ability to determine the popular music based on mechanisms and algorithms of online platforms of music distribution changed the methods of music journalism. However, the main functions, such as gatekeeping and selection, are expressed in new form and style of reviews. Music reviews aim to reflect and conceptualize the music texts in wider social perspective. Music journalists in Czech Republic remain important supporters of the local scene by helping musicians to be seen and heard.

Conclusion

Music journalism in the important component of the global music industry. There are different types of music media, which serve for different purposes, have different audiences and distinctive methods. Mainstream media have the biggest heterogeneous audience and more standardized methods and styles of writing. Journalists in mainstream media often have less freedom for personal expression in their writings. Specialized music press is aimed at niche markets and operates with cultural knowledge, its audience is more familiar with the cultural and subcultural material; thus, the journalists that represent it have deeper understanding of the issues they write about.

The New Journalism of 1970s that influenced music journalists is still one of the important views of journalistic work and style of writing by the journalists themselves. Although the music journalism emerged from the UK and the US, it became a significant department of cultural journalism in other countries, including Czech Republic. Czech music journalists are in touch with the general tendencies and values of the music journalism. There are some differences between mainstream and independent specialized journalism on the local scale; these differences mainly concern the power of the media organization and the influence of individual journalists on readers' opinions and tastes in music. As the music field in Czech Republic is small and the interconnection between the journalists is very tight, they share very close interests and styles of writing. Music journalists in Czech Republic tend to conceptualize the music texts and find the meaning behind the music, rather than describing the music sound from musicological perspective. They value interdisciplinary knowledge of the cultural journalists who can show the connection of the different aspects of people's lives interpreted through the music. Czech music journalists are equally interested in global and local bands. Importantly, they are supportive of local scene and interested in promotion of the bands they like.

Digitalization and globalization of the 21st century influenced the music production generally and had an impact on music journalism. New technologies enabled the easy production and distribution of music, which made it accessible for a wider range of people. Online music platforms like Spotify obtain built-in algorithms and mechanisms, which promote the most listened music according to the capitalist economic laws. Moreover, the algorithms are able to select and recommend the music for the individual listeners based on the music they listen to. However, the Czech music journalists claim that the music media are still significant for gatekeeping. The review, as a form of the text and journalistic method, existed long before the emergence of digital technologies and is still relevant in current environment as the tool of selection and gatekeeping. The reason for that is the oversaturation of the market and need for highlighting music worth attention. However, the style of the music reviews changed with the accessibility of the music: for instance, descriptive style became meaningless. Instead, journalists are trying to come up with some context and meaning behind the music to keep the reader interested in both music and the texts themselves.

Appendix A

Interview questions:

Who is the target audience of the magazine?

What are requirements for the musical journalist according to you?

How do you cooperate with musicians?

Do musicians ask to cooperate with them?

How do you decide if a band/performer is worth any special attention? What are those factors that help you to decide?

Do you keep track of how many people reached any particular issue of the magazine?

What is professional organization of the magazine you work in?

What are other important media sources in Prague and do you cooperate with them?

Is there any interdependence between different media? For example if there is something highlighted in another media source do you feel the need to write about is in your magazine?

What are your methods of promoting bands/performers? And how useful it appears to be?

Do journalists involve musicians themselves in writing review on their music to get more specific information?

What are the most important changes in music industry in media that influenced the music journalism?

What are skills should the music journalist have?

What is the role of the music media now, according to you?

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