

**Massimiliano Raffa**

**Reviewing the popular: trends, ambiguities and future of pop music criticism**

Music criticism in the context of popular music clearly shows the intrinsic transversality and elusiveness of a practice traditionally hanging between *duty to inform* and *need to apply a critical method based on complex theoretical tools*. Unlike literary, artistic or classical music criticism, pop music press has often renounced recourse to the strictly theoretical and formal instruments of the discipline, shifting its focus to the multiple relationships that musical phenomena have had with technologies, production systems, identity, image, social impact. Indeed, popular music implies sociological, technological, mediological, literary and economic knowledge so that it can be understood in its protean aesthetic dimension. Through their reviews, pop/rock critics have been able to weave narratives capable of orienting collective taste and contributing to the cultural legitimation of musical facts that have often been neglected by musicology and academic research. The way today's conditions of media circulation transformed the social spaces within which taste and opinions are defined and other circumstances ascribed to media digitalisation seem to have launched a process of 'pulverisation' of the main functions normally fulfilled by music criticism. This presentation aims to offer an overview over pop and rock music reviews with references to journalists, magazines and significant trends, paying special attention to the opportunities and threats posed by cross-medialisation, participatory culture and technological convergence.

Keywords: popular music, criticism, journalism, media and society.

**Massimiliano Raffa**, graduated with honours in *International Relations* at the University of Bologna, is PhD student in *Communication, Markets and Society* at IULM University. He is internal lecturer of *New Media Theory, History of Music and Research, Practice and Society* at SAE Institute, and adjunct lecturer of *Popular Music Studies* at the IULM Master in Music Production and Publishing. He has held lectures on *Music Criticisms* at the University of Salento. His research interests include: Media industries, contemporary and historical; music, society and culture, including popular music; aesthetics of popular culture.