

'The sky above the port was the colour of television, tuned to a dead channel': Music press discourses on post-punk industrial music and the construction of a dystopian urban space.

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Abstract

The British popular music press throughout the 1970s had a diverse and youthful readership in excess of 250 000. Thus, when avant-garde music such as post-punk industrial music is included within the popular music press some friction with its mainstream audience is almost inevitable. A range of discursive strategies and explanatory metaphors are encoded by journalists in order to bridge this gap. Therefore, contextualising the music and fulfilling the music press' role as 'gatekeepers'. Indeed, a dominant narrative emerged which argued that the deterministic power of place- specifically the powers of the industrial or post-industrial city- had 'tainted' its residents. As a result, it was argued that some people are simply compelled to reflect their surroundings. This paper uncovers the genealogy of the music press discourses on post-punk industrial music, finding a pervasive mythology of industrial place that is applied to post-punk industrial music as it was to previously noisy rock antecedents (such as the Stooges). In addition, attempts are made to reconstruct the metaphor of the city that emerges. It is evident that the city presented by the music press is a fundamentally literary and fictive construct and like 'the hood', as Foreman illustrates in reference to Hip Hop, transcends the limitations of a regionally specific explanation.

CV

Patrick Glen: I am a first year PhD student at the University of Sheffield researching 'Morality in the Popular Music Press, 1964-1989.' This is indicative of my main research interests: the media, popular and avant-garde music, the culture industry and popular morality in the twentieth-century. Currently, I am developing a rigorous methodology for the analysis of the music press whilst compiling a literature review. In addition, I am personally involved in making and reviewing experimental and avant-garde music; performing in London avant-rock band Khaos Alberto, writing for magazines and fanzines.