DECONSTRUCTION OF MELODY AND RHYTHM AS AESTHETIC ELEMENTS OF CONTEMPORARY POPULAR MUSIC
(THE CASE OF KANYE WEST'S ALBUM «YEEZUS»)

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Abstract

One of the main problems of the study of the verbalization of musical aesthetics is the phenomenon of consumption of musical products during the radical transformation of musical structures. What the audience is guided by when it comes to emotional and visual perception of music, if basic sound mechanics of influence on consciousness cease to be relevant? The melody serves as the basis for the *brainworm* phenomenon. But the paradox is modern music space are full of rhythm-based musical compositions. This is the basis for the designation of a new musical aesthetics. It is important to understand that we talk about popular music. According to *Nielsen* for 2017, hip-hop has become the most popular genre in America. An important precedent phenomenon that changed the vector of development of mass music was the release of the sixth Kanye West album "Yeezus", called a "protest against music" by the musician himself, but later established as a new aesthetic model, which became the dominant feature in modern pop music. Deprived of the traditional mechanisms of broadcasting musical pop aesthetics, the album occupied the top-3 of the American and English charts, and later became "platinum". The eclectic mix of different genres suddenly turned into a mainstream. Among the main elements of the "sound canvas" of "Yeezus", we can point out "ragged" rhythms, "tracks within tracks" and "aggressive" auto-tuning. In this study, we used the methods of qualitative and quantitative content analysis as well as musicological analysis. Quantitative content analysis allowed us to determine the emotional coloring of the comments of the audience and the texts of the authors of posts on the social network VKontakte immediately after the release of the precedent phenomenon. Qualitative content analysis is used to determine what verbal techniques were used to describe the object of study. Musicological analysis allowed us to isolate from the sheet music elements inherent in the new musical aesthetics and to highlight their functions partially. We concluded that the deliberate merging of many imaginative, semantic, historical and cultural plans is a key feature of modern musical aesthetics, and the postmodernist phenomenon of polystylism acquires a new life. With such a mechanism of creating a "musical canvas", a feeling of harmony is created within the framework of the modern picture of the world, but there are a lot of contradictions when considering each of the elements separately, if the context is understood, a condition that cannot always be met by a mass audience.

1. Introduction

Modern popular music has been functioning in the paradigm of postmodernism for a long time. It is a complex and multi-level phenomenon. The commonality of mass culture and postmodern is noted, for example, in the works of G. Yu. Litvintseva.[1] On the one hand, it demonstrates a number of features characteristic of mass culture such as desire for universality and, the primacy

of commercial function, style diversity, internationality, broadcasting of archetypical images established in the mass consciousness, the use of postmodern game, meaningful deconstruction and "moderate" mixing of cultural codes inherent in different traditions. On the other hand, mass culture is distinguished by reliance on clearly defined style dominants and interrelated musical traditions. A. G. Beltyukov identifies four basic traditions: African-American folklore, elements of Anglo-Celtic folklore, elements of Latin American folklore, and European academic tradition of the XIX - XX centuries. In his opinion, there is a special connection between the basic traditions, which ensures the development of musical culture from style to style, and the musical genre is the key carrier of this connection.[2]

However, in the modern musical picture of the world obvious tendencies to destructurize the genre system are outlined, in connection with which the principle of continuity on the grounds of basic traditions ceases to be relevant in some cases. The transformations of the structures of popular music genres, which are the current trend in musical aesthetics, have changed the principles of translation of cultural dominants, caused their mixing, and therefore, a number of features can be found within the framework of European music that appeared in a "concentrated" form only in the beginning of this decade in American, or even African music.

The key problem in the study of contemporary musical aesthetics lies in the phenomenon of the consumption of musical products during the radical transformation of musical structures. It is not completely clear what the audience is guided by when it comes to emotional-figurative perception of music, if the basic mechanisms of the effect of sounds on consciousness cease to be relevant.

According to Zettl[3], applied media-aesthetic analysis is not an abstract concept, but a process that considers the interaction between different media elements, and the perceptual reaction to them. One of these elements, in terms of musical aesthetics, is melody. It creates a logical combination of easily remembered sounds, readable by consciousness. It serves as the basis for the phenomenon of earworm or brainworm, the involuntary repetition of musical images[4]. However, melodies more and more often perform secondary functions (creating arrangements, postmodern "game") while rhythms become the "core" of compositions.

A number of researchers agree that aesthetics of form plays a key role in modern music. According to Kramer, B.[5] numerous streaming services provide users with individual musical proposals, thereby creating a new taste-forming paradigm, based not on the interaction of people and verbalized judgments, but on situational emotional preferences and aesthetics of form. This is also indicated by Hagen, A.[6], who claims that playlists that form the basis of music streaming services are constantly evolving and showcasing new ways of collecting music information through streaming services, as a result of which they constantly shape and adjust the musical tastes of their owners.
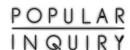
Edelmann, A. Mohr, W. J.[7] believes that the growing development of a more formal theory of culture over the past two decades is due to the fact that the audience has ceased to perceive meaningful concepts. Continuing this thought, it can be assumed that the audience listens exclusively to cells or clusters torn from concepts, but not the product as a whole. Absorbs the form, ignoring the content. Bennett, A.[8] exploring the empirical study of music in the UK in the aspect of the concept of the neo-tribes Maffesoli, wrote that the musical tastes and preferences of people in the coming decades will not be tied to any specific social or cultural settings. The basis of popular music will be bright, but rapidly disappearing precedents. At this moment, it can be said that this hypothesis has been partially confirmed. Rapidly changing and extremely fluid eclecticism almost completely eliminated any taste statics, which makes it more and more often heard that music circulating in the framework of postmodernism is becoming increasingly stagnant and not quite justified. In our opinion, it would be more correct to say that genre stratification, reducing the role of music journalism, the disappearance of "generational" genre forms that marked whole generations and the secondary nature of ideas, against the background of total domination of hip-hop music, is a consequence of attempts to overcome the crisis that already has a place to be for a long time. Experiments with the form of modern musicians, which by the way performed within the framework of postmodernism yet, often turn out to be paradoxically successful, even within those cultural fields where their failure would seem inevitable. In fact, such precedents allow us to talk about the emergence of a new musical aesthetics, the main feature of which is the dominance of rhythms over melodies in the general musical context. The main platform for such experiments has become hip-hop.

According to Nielsen for 2017, hip-hop became the most popular genre in the Americas, with a margin of 12% ahead of the total number of albums sold and listening to streaming services from rock and pop music, which every year lose their positions more and more[9]. This trend is also present in Russia. One of the main moderators of the largest network of music groups in the social network VKontakte, E: music claims that users have become less disdainful about unfamiliar music associated with this genre, and the number of subscribers in thematic public pages is growing rapidly[10].

2. Methods

In this study, we used the methods of qualitative and quantitative content analysis as well as musicological analysis. Quantitative content analysis allowed us to determine the emotional coloring of the comments of the audience and the texts of the authors of posts on the social network VKontakte immediately after the release of the precedent phenomenon. Qualitative content analysis is used to determine what verbal techniques were used to describe the object of study.

Musicological analysis allowed to isolate from the sheet music elements inherent in the new musical aesthetics and to highlight their functions partially.

3. Results

As a study material, we chose Kanye West's sixth album "Yeezus" released in 2013. The work, called by the musician himself "protest against music", subsequently established a new aesthetic model that became the dominant feature of modern pop music. Deprived of traditional mechanisms of broadcasting pop music aesthetics, the album occupied the first lines of the music charts of the United States, Britain, Australia, Denmark, Russia and New Zealand, and also turned out to be in the Top 30 of almost all world ratings, becoming "platinum".

At the time of the release of the album, Kanye West was already a cult musician, whose works were included in the authoritative rating of 500 Greatest Albums of All Time by the American publishing house Rolling Stone. However, this album provoked a rather ambiguous reaction from both the professional public and fans. Russian editorial office of Rolling Stone gave it four stars out of five, but at the same time, did not write any reviews. Non-professional media on the social network VKontakte (having more than one hundred thousand subscribers at the time), - Fast Food Music, New Albums, E: \ music and Drugs And Booze also did not write any reviews or critique, limiting themselves to a few quotes from the musician himself (I just talked to Jesus, he said "what up Yeezus? I said Shit I'm chilling, trying to stack these millions")[11], information notes with contextual information (Winner of 14 Grammy Awards, producer, director, actor and just one of the most successful rap artists, Kanye West. The new album with the "modest" title Yeezus and the track "I am God" is available for listening)[12] or by links to reputable musicians (The best album of 2013 acc ording to Jack White. Awesome!)[13]. It can be assumed that for the critical discourse at that time there were not enough applied tools (musicological terms) or word-shaped keys (means of artistic expression that can describe such music so that the audience becomes interested in listening to it).

Opinions of subscribers of the above public pages is divided. While some praised the work noting a unique sound in particular, unlike the popular music and an eclectic musical component, others noted mediocrity and " dirtyness" of sound, and Kanye West himself was accused of saying that all his fame was nothing more than a consequence of outrageous behavior against the background of the degradation of the musical content of his new albums, or the exploitation of outdated styles.

But after a couple of months, an eclectic mix of industrial, punk, trap, acid house and modern experimental hip-hop suddenly turned into a mainstream, shifting traditional melodic, and seemingly universal, pop music. Among the main elements of the sheet music of "Yeezus",
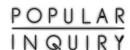
we can point out "ragged" rhythms, "tracks within tracks", "aggressive" auto-tuning, intentional sloppiness, frequent rhythmic "breaks", and the absence of traditional melodic audience "hooks" Polystylistics, which is an integral part of the musical culture of postmodernism, has long reached the stage when the "stitches" in the compositions became almost invisible, the boundaries between "own" and "alien" are blurred. However, in modern realities genre assimilation does not contradict the presence of collage effects created by quotations, but complements them, which is especially noticeable in "Blood on the Leaves" and the closing track "Bound 2". In the first case, Nina Simon's looped phrase from the bluesy standard "Strange Fruit" is distorted by autotune throughout the composition. In the second, a deliberately distorted musical soul-funk accompaniment (imitating lo-fi sound), belonging to the Ponderosa Twins Plus One group, deliberately mismatched with sharp industrial elements, vocal R&B pieces of singer Charlie Wilson, mid-century pop singer Phrases L and and the aggressive recitative of Kanye West himself. We should also mention the constantly changing rhythms crushing any melodies arising in the "musical canvas" without any transitions or preparation. The compositional elements described here are found throughout the entire album in one volume or another. It is possible to interpret their use in different ways, the synthesis of classical and modern or the collision of high musical style and modernist noises are only two of the possible ways. Despite such sharp oppositions, the comic effect is not created; moreover, often the sound is atonal and synthetic, filled with alarming artificiality. In our opinion, the sharp corners of stylistic contradictions are designed to destroy any stable images that arise when a particular musical element appears. It maintains a constant sense of cognitive dissonance. Subsequently, a similar scheme began to be used by musicians in various genres: from guitar instrumental music to all sorts of subgenres of hip-hop.

4. Conclusions

We concluded that the deliberate merging of many imaginative, semantic, historical and cultural plans is a key feature of modern musical aesthetics, and the postmodernist phenomenon of polystylism acquires a new life. With such a mechanism of creating a "musical canvas", a feeling of harmony is created within the framework of the modern picture of the world, but there are a lot of contradictions when considering each of the elements separately, if the context is understood, a condition that cannot always be met by a mass audience. Perhaps, the answer to the question about the emotional-imaginative perception of music, with the deconstruction of the basic mechanisms of the effects of sounds on consciousness, should be sought not so much within the framework of music, as in the context of changes in the perception of time and space by a modern audience.

POPULAR
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