SPECIALE **Blaming or Defending Disco?**
Analyzing the historical development of the mainstream journalistic discourse about authenticity of electronic music in Germany during the decade 1975-1984

The Work of Music in the Age of Electronic Reproduction

With the description "a unique phenomenon of a distance, however near it may be"[1] Walter Benjamin defined the concept of *aura*. In his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), he observed a loss of the exclusive nature –the *authenticity* - of the artworks, which at that point started to be technically reproducible through the rise of new media technologies such as photography, phonography and film. In his view, these developments would ultimately turn art's function into a mere entertainment product. The new technologies would encourage the masses to take part in the artistic production, since these enable performers to test their acts in front of an equipment, and consequently wouldn't need an elevated degree of virtuosity.[2]

Similar socio-cultural consequences of technology-related transformations of artistic production and distribution techniques were also described by Theodor W. Adorno in his essay *Kulturindustrie* (1944)[3] under the notion of *Amusement*. With this concept he pictures a society where the cultural industry spreads its insubstantial products and subverts the revolutionary function of art by means of new media reproduction techniques, which would allow the serial reproduction of formerly singular artworks and cultural contents.[4] That allegedly leads to a popularization of cultural engagement (meant pejoratively), as well as to a growing degree of dilettantism on the artists' side, which would result in a loss of subversive potential through a style's unification brought by the new techniques' essence.

Adorno's abstract theory finds a specific application in other studies[5], where he counterpoises serious and popular music, which e believes correspond to the dichotomy of high/low culture. Here the concept of *Amusement* has been applied to the supposedly passive and automatic reception of popular music, in which he remarks the presence of pre-given and easily recognizable frameworks, that, in contrast to the structure of serious music, would not be constituted by a solid system of meticulously concatenated details. Music would therefore turn into an inconsistent medium for entertainment, whose principal aim is to relax the listeners worried by society's pressure, leading them to act like purchasers of consumable goods in order to satisfy their needs. Furthermore, as the author suggests[6], the "technologization" process of music lets the latter submit to the dominion's will of conformity with means of its omnipresent and standardized character, leading to an alleged loss of *aura* of the recorded artworks. The result, the mass-distribution of recorded music, appears to be the antithesis of what Adorno considers as the only authentic musical dimension one can still recognize in the artistic interpretation, the live performance.

This general discourse about popular music can be applied to the specific case of electronic music, as well as Walter Benjamin's arguments, since electronic-musicians and producers have also been affected by similar critiques in the past, mostly brought forth from the side of the Pop/Rock specialists. This predominantly concerns the alleged lack of *authenticity* and *virtuosity* due to their use of electronically-programmable-instruments, which principally allows them to program, register and test their musical actions on a medium before their "live performances", and therefore enable the possibility to always playback the same performance. Since their emergence, new electronic-music styles relying on computer technologies have been confronted and compared to the traditional way of performing music through acoustic (and electrically-amplified) instruments, where musicians have an aleatory approach to the performance, which therefore preserves its unique nature because of its intrinsic material impossibility of repeating exactly the same set more than once. For these reasons electronic-instrumentation has

SPECIALE been inculpated by Rock authors of emptying the performance from its central "authentic" values like exclusivity and unrepeatability, transforming it into a form of mere entertainment. Indeed, starting from the '60s, white Rock music (and later Psychedelic Rock) acquired its "hegemonic" status thanks to its rebellic and easily-sellable character, which smoothly led to a wide-accepted "auratic" attribution regarding the guitar-dominated style. During the following decade, electronic music further highlighted this quality acquired by Rock music, hence the alleged lack of *aura* and authenticity of the former, that has been strongly remarked as contrast to it.

Furthermore, new music technologies tend to allow more people to express themselves by music, since the equipment costs are lower and they give the possibility to produce good quality tracks without a proper studio. These developments have often been interpreted as a spreading wave of dilettantism in the musical environment by mainstream press and Pop/Rock avant-garde.

Nowadays, electronically-programmable and software-based instruments have been completely integrated into our culture, allowing musicians' creative processes to be developed within new parameters, through automating basic musical craftsmanship and allowing artists to concentrate on other production layers. The opportunities offered by the new instrumentation (e.g. huge variety of timbres, tones and semitones)[7] brought a deep change into long-established musical paradigms within the Western society. This was already predicted and desired by avant-garde composers in the early decades of the Twentieth Century, as e.g. Edgar Varèse (1936):

> "[…] The new instruments will allow me to write music as I conceive it, […] There will no longer be the old conception of melody or interplay of melodies. The entire work will be a melodic totality. The entire work will flow as a river flows."

> Edgar Varèse, "The Liberation of Sound", in Christoph Cox, Daniel Warner, *Audio Culture*, Bloomsbury Academic, New-York, 2004, pp. 17-21, pp. 17-18.

Fig 1 | Robert Moog at his own synthesizer in the early '70s

SPECIALE Music flow is one of the most characterizing elements in contemporary electronic and dance culture, which has its roots in the early 1900s when experiments were made in this field by personalities like the Russian Lev Termen, who invented the only one instrument playable without body contact: the Theremin.[9] Over the next decades, huge developments were made concerning new modes of musical expression by employing electronics, e.g. investigations on tapes' sound modifications in Pierre Schaeffer's *musique concrète* in the '40s[8], as well as the first computer technologies in the '50s, that represent the foundations for electronic-programmable-instruments introduced in the early '70s.

Shortly before the early '70s, the latter started to be serially produced by large manufactures like Moog, and, some years later, they became affordable for the most mass-consumers. Consequently, this kind of instrumentation started to be integrated into band projects mostly related to the Pop/Rock music productions, especially in Germany, where, since the early '50s, different pioneers like Robert Eimer and Karlheinz Stockhausen experimented on electronically-generated sound.[10] In fact, during the early '70s, the German musical landscape offered a great variety of popular music artists, which incorporated influences of Psychedelic Rock to the new musical tendencies in their works, giving birth to a unique music style (ironically) named "Krautrock" which was widely appreciated abroad but hardly recognized by the German audience. Exponents of these styles were bands like Ash Ra Tempel and Tangerine Dream, who both collaborated with the prominent musician Klaus Schulze, or Kraftwerk. The latter have been active since 1968 using exclusively electronically-programmable-instruments and in 1974 produced the first album belonging to the Synth-Pop genre, "Autobahn", that affirmed the potentialities of this new wave of German musicians worldwide.

Nevertheless, at that time, electronic influences on music production were heavily stigmatized from the Pop/Rock avant-garde, who, as argued by US author Richard Dyer in its article "In Defense of Disco" (1979), related it to a vacuous cultural-transmitter of "wrong values", such as capitalistic music production, superficial and escapist utopia, lack of oppositional and political message, excessive emotionality and unauthentic musical aesthetics.[12] In his essay, Dyer conversely praises the new music genres like Disco (which can be regarded as an electronically-influenced forerunner of the electronic-dance-music genres appearing at the same time in Germany), reconsidering them under another point of view, as being a kind of new musical approach, which would encourage personal contacts and offering a way out from everyday capitalistic life. Hence, he interprets them as, expressing a subversive potential under a new form.[13]

The aim of this paper is to investigate the point in time when a parallel cultural debate about the alleged problem of authenticity and virtuosity of electronically produced and performed music began to proliferate within the discourse about popular music in Germany, and what evidence has been brought forth to sustain mainstream and Rock avant-gardistic arguments, as well as what kind of discursive strategies were used toward artists embracing new technologies in their composition's concept.

Power and Discourse

In order to analyze the point in time when the discourse in focus started to become a fundamental topic for the mainstream press dedicated to a music-interested audience, and in order to understand the nature of accusations that have been leveled against artists using electronically-programmable-instruments, the used sample has been considered following Michel Foucault's theory in *The Order of Discourse*[12]. In his essay, published in 1971, Foucault introduces the idea that discourses cannot proliferate freely within society, but they are limited and controlled by societal institutions, which create specific mechanisms and procedures directing them into certain patterns in order to govern their power and subversive force.[14]

Foucault's theory has been applied by numerous other scholars interested in the relationship between discourse and power which led to the development of several different methods to analyze disparate aspects of this abstract concept. Fairclough's[15] and Gee's[16] guidelines have been chosen in the current case because of their concerns for the social structures that are affected by conventions of social institutions. Their technique of interpreting linguistic elements within a given framework by going beyond merely linguistic issues towards the ideology domain through social settings and intertextual contexts aims to deduce hidden rules and (de)legitimizing strategies of implicit mass-media discourse.

These instructions have been used on a sample of 50 articles[17] on musical artists active in Germany in the decade 1975-1985, who were working with electronically-programmable-instruments, in order to observe and critically discuss how discursive elements are imposed by the society by means of mass-media as mainstream divulgation tools.

The chosen articles were published in the mainstream generalist music magazine *Musikexpress* (first issued in 1969), edited by the German publishing house Axel-Springer-Verlag (founded in Hamburg in 1946), one of the largest publishing houses in Germany and in Europe, well-known for its corporate principles oriented at western capitalist liberal market economy. *Musikexpress* was at that time the only publication of Axel-Springer-Verlag focusing on a topic related to cultural and musical industry, alongside the most known *Rolling Stone* – magazine for Rock and Pop culture founded in 1967 -. In fact, the production-line of this enterprise, publisher of one of the best-sold newspapers in Germany (the daily *Die Welt*)*,* principally concerned with the news divulgation in a tabloid format, a journalistic style which tends to present the concerned topics under an entertaining perspective, as in the renowned *Bild-Zeitung* and *B.Z*.

Since the late '60s, the Axel-Springer-Verlag has been recurrently attacked concerning its political and business choices in the cultural field. As e.g. put by Kurt Becker (1968), "[...][The Axel-Springer-Verlag] positions itself in the market under a pseudo-entrepreneurial perspective and submits completely to the laws of the market-taste and the elusive entertainment-necessities [...]".[17] Under this point of view, media outlets published by the Axel-Springer-Verlag within the cultural field may be considered as acts of the ruling economic classes exercising hegemonic power in terms of masses' mentality and ideology. Therefore, I will consider the outlets of the Springer magazine *Musikexpress* as the "voice of the institution" throughout the present analysis.

The choice of analyzing a magazine like *Musikexpress* was taken in order to analyse how mainstream culture publication organs approached the music-cultural change in focus, at times when it may have been already successfully accepted by more specialist avant-garde Pop/Rock German publications as *Sounds* or *Spex*.

The decade 1975-1984 was selected because of the synthesizers' and drum machines' dramatic spread in the music market between the end of the '70s and the middle of the '80s. At this point in time, more advanced and cheaper technologies (e.g. Asian digital synthesizers, MIDI technology) were available, and a considerable amount of bands and musicians were no longer operating in the field of electronic-music under a pioneering perspective, but instead as a systematic choice. Specifically, interviews and reports about debutants have been adopted for this analysis with the aim of considering artists' direct reactions to provocations or appreciations of the journalists related to musician's authenticity and electronic-music's critical content.

Sample Index					
Year	N. Report/Interviews	Relevance [1]			
		•••	••	•	-
1975	0	-------			
1976	2	2	0	0	0
1977	3	0	1	0	2
1978	5	2	2	0	1
1979	3	0	1	0	2
1980	5	1	2	0	2
1981	6	2	1	1	2
1982	20	2	7	3	8
1983	3	0	1	0	2
1984	3	1	1	0	1
	50	10	16	4	20

Table 1: Sample Index

Table 1 | Sample index

Table 1 shows the number of articles (interviews and reports) published, during each year of the considered decade 1975-1984, as well as the degree they are related to the research question (an example of the considered artists can be found in Table 3). Some of the items appeared to be not relevant to the research's purposes, since they focused on other musicians' and bands' aspects (e.g. gender, theatrical temperament, particular voice timbre).

The most striking result regarding this index is the complete absence of reports or interviews related to the investigated topic during the year 1975, which shows the editorial choice not to consider musicians active with electronically-programmable-instruments under any point of view at that time, although synthesizers and drum machines were already in use.

During year 1976, except for the last two months (November and December), the editors of *Musikexpress* still didn't release any reports or interviews under the project's selection criteria, although it seems that the magazine somehow "prepared" its audience to the new tendencies by writing a four-episode dossier from June until September called *Musik aus der Steckdose*[19]. Within this special, the journalists depicted a profile of the emerging mass-phenomenon of electronic and dance music, dedicating each episode to another root of these new musical styles, as well as to the terminology necessary to talk about and understand their operating principles by means of a glossary. Starting from the end of that year, the monthly periodical began to partly direct its editorial interests to the emerging genres, even though until 1982 the number of reports and interviews in the researched context seem to be limited to a certain modest amount. Interesting to note in Table 1's index is a dramatic increase of interest for the considered topic during the year 1982, where not only two columns primarily dedicated to new electronic-music artists were introduced but also the most significant number of issues in the thematic context were

published: *Deutsche Tänze* and *Neue Gesichter*[20]. The two columns ceased to exist already during the year 1983, where just a few articles and interviews under the selection criteria have been published until the end of the considered decade.

Approach Categories				
Year	Provocations (Journalist)[1]	Defences (Artist)[2]	Provocations (Artist)[3]	Appreciations (Journalist)[4]
1976	physical relationship with instruments, technical approach to music, creative process automated, conceptless music, too many instruments on stage	consciousness and knowdlege of the instumentation and musical structures, extreme concentration on stage, transparence on stage, intellectual music	knowdlege of the e-instruments functions, cultural knowledge, presence of messages in the music	-----
1977	lack of bands originality, unusual sound	intellectual and structured music	-----	-----
1978	entertainment, live show automated, lack of classical music education, lack of movement on stage, lack of bands originality	many possibilities of e-instrumentation, knowledge of music structures, e-instrumentation not cold	Knowdlege of the e-instruments function, more than simple sound reproduction on stage	new modern kind of cultural expression forms
1979	entertainment, economical retourn due to mainstream art	-----	more than simple sound reproduction on stage	classical music education which makes a good musician create original artworks
1980	lack of bands originality, instrumentation coldness	unconventional instrumentation, possibility of originality, public opinion doesn't accept technical changes, innovation	-----	-----
1981	lack of bands originality, entertainment, too many instruments on stage, conceptless music	originality possible, art not exclusive anymore, entertainment is important, big instrumentation on stage is important, different physical approach than with acustic instruments, e-instrumentation not cold	music is also entertainment not just politics	creativity
1982	amateurism, physical relationship with instruments, coldness, entertainment, lack of political message, lack of virtuosity on stage, lack of bands originality, technical approach to music, mainstream, minimalism	e-music not cold hence made by human beings, not just entertainment, minimalism important, not just amateurs, not just e-musicians, e-music represents the new society, political message is possible	cultural knowledge, not just fun and entertainment, for new cultural expression forms new language elements are needed	-----
1983	-----	e-music can have a concept behind	-----	-----
1984	technical approach to music, creative process automated	long creative process, many possibilities of e-instrumentation	e-instruments are playied just like acustic ones	"king of disco music"

Table 2: Approach Categories

[1]: Topics that journalists use in relation to the artists in order to provoke and/or denigrate their artwork and/or work techniques declassifying them to a lower artistic level.
[2]: Topics that artists use to reply to the journalists provocations with the intent of protect their artwork and/or work tecniques.
[3]: Topics that artists use in relation to the journalists in order to protect and defende their artistic intentions without fall into their provocation-game.
[4]: Topics the journalists use in relation to some artists in order to esteem the artwork.

Table 2 | Approach categories

Table 2 shows the categories developed to describe the editorial approach towards musicians that extended their composition methods to the electronically-programmable-instruments and the evolution of the topics' nature during the investigated decade, as well as the artists' reactions when consulted or provoked in interviews concerning their use of non-acoustic instruments. The most recurring topic that the journalists used in relation to the artists in order to provoke and/or denigrate their work techniques and thereby declassify them to a lower artistic level is the lack of originality. Alongside, it is often stated that that their sound seems similar to that of other artists (and is therefore not *authentic*). Moreover, the accusation of producing mere entertaining music which doesn't carry any political or ideological message is expressed.

As shown in this index, there is a significant amount of provocations by the journalists towards the concerned artists, as well as defenses of the latter, who try to respond to the attacks giving their own arguments to the accusations. These two kinds of discursive practices create a circle pattern around the topic in question. Another interesting (re)action modality musicians use to face the issue without taking part in the provocation-game, is challenging the institutional idea that electronic and dance music as popular genre would not be authentic or subversive due to their intrinsic nature.

In some exceptional cases journalists express real appreciation toward the artists, esteeming their artwork aside from the essence of the played instruments. These seldom cases will be discussed in the next section together with a synopsis on the timely development of the topic's nature in terms of provocations and defenses by both artists and journalists.

Artists in focus	
Most provoked artists	**Most appeciated artists**
Tangerine Dream Kraftwerk Die Krupps Ultravox Vince Clarke Depeche Mode B.E.F. Pere Ubu Eberhard Schoener Yello	Pere Ubu Jean Michel Jarre John Foxx Brian Eno Giorgio Moroder
Most self-defending artists	**Most provoking artists**
Tangerine Dream Kraftwerk Michael Hoenig Klaus Schulze OMD Yello Ultravox Die Krupps B.E.F. John Foxx	Tangerine Dream Eberhard Schoener Classix Nouveaux Depeche Mode Brian Eno

Table 3: Artists in focus

Table 3 | Artists in focus

Table 3 shows which artists have been most provoked or appreciated, and which of them reacted defending themselves or provoking the journalist's position. One can observe that the majority of interactions were following the classical pattern provocation/defense, whereas just a minority of artists was able to provoke the journalists who in turn also very seldom expressed appreciations to the concerned musicians.

Do Synthesizers and Drum Machines make Musicians?

As the analysis' results indicate, *Musikexpress*' editors choose to omit the topic around the growing phenomenon of electronic and dance music genres until year 1976, neglecting its importance in the international musical landscape. After that, the periodical started to release first interviews and articles with electronic musicians, which in most cases were subjected to provocations on different levels.

Nevertheless one can observe a certain kind of evolution of the provocation's subjects within the considered decade: whereby during the first years (until around 1978) journalists focused mostly on the technical issues of electronic-music production (such as the physical relationship with the instruments, both in studio and on stage), around the beginning of the 80's the accusations tended to shift more towards the creative domain of composition. This process escalated until 1982, where the highest number of debut bands were consulted and questioned about their use of drum machines and synthesizers. It decreased during the last two years (1983-1984) and gave space to another kind of debate about the new generation's computer-based instruments, such as software and sequencers.

The topics' domains in which the artists move their defenses, in order to argue for their artwork's authenticity against the journalists' accusations, result parallel with to latter, as being a reaction to those.

Provocations (Journalist)		Defenses (Artist)
No physical relationship with electronic instruments	→	Knowledge of the instruments and musical structures
Presence of too many instruments on stage	→	Transparence on stage
Creative processes are automated through eletronic music instruments	→	Electronic instruments allow more complex structures and many possibilities
Lack of bands originality	→	Electronic music represents the new society
Lack of political message	→	A political message is possible
Electronic musicians are just amateurs	→	It doesn't have to be like this - electronic musicians can also accomplished musicians
Most electronic musicians don't have a classical music education	→	Electronic musicians can often also play other kinds of instruments

Table 4: Provocations/Defenses

Table 4 | Provocations/Defenses

Table 4 shows the most recurring provocation/defense patterns that arose in relation to the discourse about electronic and dance music's authenticity and ideological message. Within the articles, the weight of the journalists' accusative topics and the artists' responses do not seem to be equivalent: in fact, the musician's arguments are ordered into the text in a way in which they appear weak and not convincing, as if they would exhibit feelings of guilt in relation to these issues.

> *MUSIKEXPRESS:* "Hoenig introduces himself as a non-musician:"
> *MICHAEL HOENIG:* "Since the beginning of my career I have always just pressed [synthesizer] keys. Chords, triads and harmonics don't have a significant meaning for me."
> *MUSIKEXPRESS:* "How can this be possible?"
> *MICHAEL HOENIG:* "Well, I have been doing this kind of introduction now for several years. [..] I don't have any classical music education... Nevertheless I am able to build up harmonies and sound   structures..."
>
> Michael Hoenig, "Blubber, blubber, zisch…Der Elektronik Michael hebt ab!", *Musikexpress,* n. 8 (August 1978), pp. 9-10.[Translated by the author]

As the example above shows, the style of depicting the interview legitimizes a natural correspondence between being a "real musician" and having had a classical music education. In this way, it excludes the possibility of becoming a musician by taking another kind of socialization. On his side, the referred artist doesn't seem to defend his own artistic style by claiming it to be something unique, but rather takes up the questions topic through answering that he nevertheless possesses basic skills that allow him to function like a "real musician" (e.g. knowledge of musical harmonies and structures). Thereby his answer also legitimizes the institutional idea that a musical artist needs a classical music education.
Another mode of reaction that musicians use to protect themselves from the attacks is to accuse other artists by using the same institutional arguments:

MUSIKEXPRESS: "[…] And again, like *D.A.F*[21], you use textual imperatives."
DIE KRUPPS: "They [*D.A.F.*] also want to create something new, a kind of differentiated rhythm work, [...] when I was performing together with *D.A.F.*, I simply controlled the tape-recorder on stage."

Die Krupps, (no title), *Musikexpress,* n. 3 (March 1982), pp.26-27. [Translated by the author]

In this case a member of a new band implicitly criticizes his old band for using a tape-recorder on stage, implying a loss of quality of the artistic creation because of its automation, in order to protect themselves from the accusation of not being authentic. This example demonstrates a certain kind of insecurity on the electronic music artists' side, which appears difficult to be dealt with in their essence.

Nevertheless there is another kind of reaction that at least some artists exhibited towards the provocations: the one of remaining outside the debate and being themselves provokers, not accepting the standardized accusations directed towards electronically-programmable-instruments and preserving them from being considered of being non-authentic or pure entertainers.

MUSIKEXPRESS: "What kind of physical relationship do you have with your [electronic] instruments? Is it the same as with guitars?"
TANGERINE DREAM: "It is just an optical difference, [while playing electronic instruments you are] extremely concentrated, you are fully committed and this is also a physical experience, even if no one   down there is able to perceive it. [...] And while you turn the knobs and press the keys you are able to hear the sound you produce instantly! You don't have to wait 5 minutes in order to be able to hear   something!"

Tangerine Dream, "Ein Traum bekommt Flügel", *Musikexpress,* n. 11 (November 1976), pp.8-10. [Translated by the author]

Fig. 2 | Tangerine dream[22]

In the example above the band first explains the feelings they have in relation to their electronic instruments, comparing them, as they were asked for, to the relationship towards acoustic instruments. After referencing the discourse on alleged virtuosity problems itself ("[...]even if no one down there is able

to perceive it."), they make jokes on the journalist's "ignorance" concerning electronic instrumentation. In this case they appear as the ones who "know" what they do and exhibit an authentic and high degree of concentration needed for electronic compositions. Effectively, the journalists' provocation-game doesn't reach its goal of demotivating the readers' interest regarding electronic music. Nonetheless, the amount of musicians who were so self-assured to face this topic with such a degree of sovereignty are very few, compared to the ones who just to avoid the accusations.

Impulse	Reaction	
Provocations (Journalist)	Defenses (Artists)	Provocations (Artists)
Tangerine Dream	Tangerine Dream	Tangerine Dream
Kraftwerk	Kraftwerk	-----
Die Krupps	Die Krupps	-----
Vince Clarke	-----	-----
Depeche Mode	-----	Depeche Mode
B.E.F.	B.E.F.	-----
Pere Ubu	-----	-----
Eberhard Schoener	-----	Eberhard Schoener
Yello	Yello	-----
Ultravox	Ultravox	-----
-----	Michael Hoenig	-----
-----	Klaus Schulze	-----
-----	O.M.D.	-----
-----	John Foxx	-----
-----	-----	Classix Nouveaux
-----	-----	Brian Eno

Table 5: Impulse/Reaction

Table 5 | Impulse/Reaction

Table 5 above shows the artists' (re)actions to the provocative editorial impulses. As mentioned previously, just a small number of musicians which have been provoked because of their electronically-programmable-instrumentation react to the affronts by accusing the journalists themselves of not being prepared to an epochal change of music techniques. Most of those who did, were actually well-known bands of musicians, mostly with a classical music education. Furthermore, one can note the presence of the band Depeche Mode[23] within this group, who have been heavily accused under many point of views and about many different topics within the researched issue. During the second part of an interview with this band, one of the members appears to be so bored about the low consideration dedicated to the band that he just starts to joke ironically about the journalists arguments, thereby overturning the role of the ridiculous and putting the journalists themselves in the position of the accused as shown in the example below:

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*MUSIKEXPRESS: "*On the British Islands, they are all-stars, stars for countless foot pairs on the Post-   Travolta-Dance-Floor. Stars for the make-up-joyous New-Romantic-Crowd, stars for the joy of Pop   music, emerging from the oscillators and filters of the electronic instruments' theme park, which become larger, better and cheaper every day. [...] [The debut Album *Speak and Spell*] is already on top of the charts. A wonderful set of pralines from the tool box. Another album in the New Wave section of your local record store.*"*

"[...] Do you maybe also have something like a message? Do you want to make people happy?"
*DEPECHE MODE: "*There is no message. And furthermore, we are not happy guys, are we? We're just a fun band!*"*

Depeche Mode, (no title), *Musikexpress,* n. 5 (May 1982), p 16. [Translated by the author]

Furthermore one can note, that after 1976, where bands like Tangerine Dream and Kraftwerk were also scrutinized by journalists, the most criticized and provoked bands or musicians that simply react by defending themselves, and therefore adopt the journalists' position, have been Electro-Pop bands debuting exactly during those same years (e.g. Die Krupps, B.E.F., Yello, Ultravox). This could hint to a lack of professional experience in handling these kinds of situations, which would be better treated by enforcing their own artistic standards.

Conclusion: Market is Subversion

By means of a critical discourse analysis, this paper aimed to describe institutional power relationships between the Pop/Rock establishment represented by a mainstream music magazine and new emerging musical artists employing electronic composition and performance techniques in the '70s and '80s. It exemplifies how the predominance of a certain ideology within the society at a whole is defended, and how mass-media channels are used in order to reach a widespread coverage to produce a certain collective opinion about new cultural topics.

From the findings of the present study we may learn that the cultural industry readily demonstrated hegemonic influence on artistic and musical discourse by means of the media institutions (in this specific case, through the magazine *Musikexpress*), still not being able of recognizing the potentialities of the new expressive modalities. At the beginning, the publication organ was in fact reluctant to accept the emerging new expressive modalities of electronic-music, which could not be codified in any recognized and crystallized way by the journalists, since they appeared to be outside the boarders of their own cultural-intellectual socialization-background. In this way, it did not reflect the market parameters as perceived in the cultural industry. As Brian Eno argued:

"About the new musical styles, I would like to suggest that we are experiencing something new and different, and I also think that it would be the right moment to develop an appropriate language to be   able to talk about it."

Brian Eno, (no title), *Musikexpress,* n. 6 (June 1982), pp.36-38. [Translated by the author].

In this quotation, the musician expresses the necessity to develop a new code in order to be able to talk about the emerging musical field's phenomena, a code that would also allow the possibility of considering them under a clearer point of view, and consequently would somehow help to sell the product to a mass-public.

Indeed, until the rise of electronic-music as mass-phenomenon, mass-media (as voice of the institutions) and the Pop/Rock intellectual front seem to have shared something like a tacit agreement concerning the "defense" of existing music styles. It was the time of Psychedelic and Hard-Rock, that had been legitimized by the intellectual avant-garde as subversive and authentic, and that at the same were able to sell a huge amount of records and live performances. Pop and Rock styles therefore constituted an interesting and well-selling topic to be discussed by the cultural industry through its media.

The emergence of electronic-music artists initially strengthened the accordance between Pop/Rock avant-garde and cultural industry, since these were difficult to sell and they were regarded as inauthentic and lacking of an inner message on the intellectual front, too.[24] From the standpoint of the current discourse analysis, this resulted in the tendency of an unwillingness on the journalists' side to acknowledge and explain cultural changes taking place. Instead, they adopted a strategy of trying to deter the audience from the newly emerging styles. This resulted in steady accusations against the artists during the years of the electronically-programmable-instruments' growth, especially towards young debut bands and musicians, which did not have a significant background with composition through acoustic instruments (considered the "right" way to create music) and were not able to effectively challenge their critics' line of argumentation.
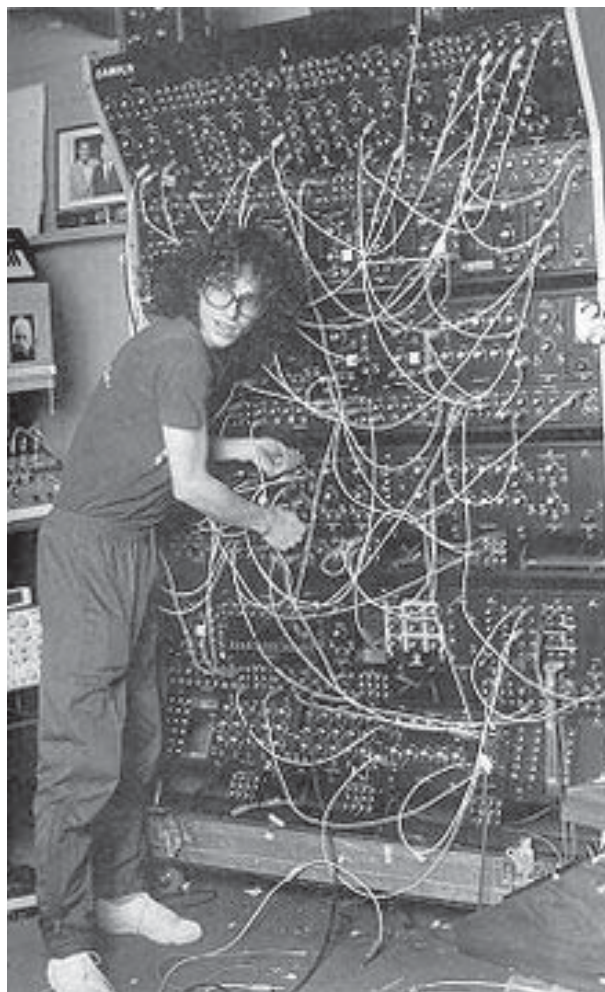

Fig. 3 | Steve Porcaro of "toto" with a modular synthesizerpolyfusion 'damius'

The arguments used against these musicians were very much in line with Adorno's cultural industry's theory, in that the journalists argued – using different discursive procedures – that the new musical techniques would potentially allow people without any knowledge of the musical structures to compose meaningless catchy themes, with the only purpose of distributing pure entertainment to the society. Due to the lack of substance offered by electronic instrumentation, they argued by drawing on Walter Benjamin, a loss of *aura* would also take place. This way of argumentation from the '50s and '60s was simply reiterated without considering the cultural paradigm changes had taken place by that time.

The intellectuals' skepticism concerning the newly emerging electronic music styles is also reflected by the omission of the topic until a certain year (1976). Naturally, a mainstream music magazine like *Musikexpress* that had no explicit restrictions on genre (e.g. Heavy Metal, Rock'n'Roll, Pop) should have reported on these developments earlier, as happened in other specialized publications (e.g. *Spex*).[25] With the growing tendencies of already established musicians to also employ synthesizers and drum machines in the following years the development obviously grew too important to simply ignore it any longer. In order to prepare its target readers for this development, the magazine seems to have decided to introduce the overall topic by explaining the basic principles of electronic-music composition and performance as well as its origins by publishing a special dossier. Nevertheless, the new styles were still not embraced as a simple artistic evolution due to new technological developments, but still treated as a threat for the existing culture, in part because of the ignorance of the journalists about this concern. This editorial tendency changed in the early '80s, where electronic styles became popular within the mass-audience in terms of the "Neue Deutsche Welle" (NDW). It may be safely assumed, that even if the journalists skepticism may have persisted, a magazine owned by an enterprise like Axel-Springer-Verlag, deeply and economically entwined as it was with the German record industry, would not allow endangering this success, as can be concluded from the seemingly very "forced" introduction of the new columns *Neue Gesichter* and *Deutsche Tänze* (see p.5). Accordingly, the NDW protagonists suddenly received a surprising amount of attention by the journalists, until interest peaked in 1982, where the magazine dedicated a specific column to the growing Synth-Pop and electronic-dance-music artists, which disappeared a year later (1983) because of the discourse's obsolescence and also in order to leave space for discussions about next tendencies of the electronic-music's new generation.

The journal editors' ideology seems to be clearly skeptical regarding electronic and dance-music genres. This claim may be justified by the fact that very few musicians received recognition apart from their use of synthesizers, drum machines and tapes from the side of the journalists. These were usually the ones who subscribed to certain educational patterns (music conservatory background) or that had an already prominent career in the field of electronic and dance music (e.g. Brian Eno, Giorgio Moroder, John Foxx, Jean Michel Jarre). These were also allowed to express their judgments about new musical movements and to give guidelines to the "novices" on how to be a "real musician" as shown in the example below:

> *GIORGIO MORODER:* "One has to sit down and work. Every day you have to sit down at the piano and compose. Then you compose ten songs, and maybe just one or two are suitable."

> Giorgio Moroder, "Endstation Schlaraffenland", *Musikexpress,* n. 12 (December 1984), pp. 26-29. [Translated by the author]

In conclusion, mass-media – as voice of the cultural industry – verges on a distinct resistance to accepting new artistic expressions which differ from the institutional methods already approved and

SPECIALE crystallized into dominant culture. This can be interpreted as a reflection of the fear of losing control over the masses ideological choices – choices tantamount to realizing any profit in the cultural industry. In the current scenario, also the intellectual front affiliated to a Pop/Rock philosophy took part in the "game" by rejecting new tendencies that opposed established cultural structures and legitimization strategies, for reasons that can perhaps differ from the cultural industry's ones (e.g. lack of knowledge of the new instruments), but that met this half-way and permitted a sort of coalition between the two.

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Notes

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2. Cfr. Walter Benjamin, *op. cit.,* pp. 26-27.
3. Theodor W. Adorno, "Kulturindustrie. Aufklärung als Massenbetrug" (1944), In: Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente,* Fisher Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1944, pp. 128-176.
4. Cfr. Theodor W. Adorno, *op. cit.*, p. 143.
5. Theodor W. Adorno, "Über den Fetischcharakter in der Musik und die Regression des Hörens" (1938), In: *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, Vol. 7, pp. 235-259.
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7. Luigi Russolo, "The Art of Noises: Futurist Manifesto", in Christoph Cox, Daniel Warner, *Audio Culture*, Bloomsbury Academic, New-York, 2004, pp. 10-14, pp. 13-14.
8. David Dunn, "A History of Electronic Music Pioneers", In Richard Kostelanetz, Joseph Darby, *Classic Essays on 20th Century Music*, Wadsworth Publishing, s.l., 1996, pp. 26-62, p. 25.
9. Cfr. David Dunn, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
10. Cfr. David Dunn, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
11. Cfr. Luis-Manuel Garcia. "Richard Dyer ‚In Defense of Disco' (1979)", in *Geschichte der Gefühle - Einblicke in die Forschung*, s.l., (November 2014), p.1.
12. Luis-Manuel Garcia, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.
13. Michel Foucault, *L'ordre du Discours*, Gallimand, Paris, 1972.
14. Michel Foucault, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.
15. Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power,* Longman Inc., New-York, 1989.
16. James Paul Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis. Theory and Method*, Routledge, London, 1999.
17. The analysis is based on the first published reports about musicians who debuted with electronically-programmable-instruments or who introduced them into their musical concept.
18. Kurt Becker, "Das Problem Axel Springer – Unscharfes Porträt eines deutsches Phänomen" (1968). In: *Zeit Online*. Url: http://www.zeit.de/1968/13/das-problem-axel-springer.
19. "Music from the Plug-Socket" [Translated by the author]. In *Musikexpress*, n. 6-7-8-9 (June – September 1976), pp. 34-36.
20. "German Dances" and „New Faces". [Translated by the author]
21. *Deutsche-Amerikanische-Freundschaft* (German for: „German-American-Friendship), Popular German New Wave Band. [NdA]

22. Image from: image credit: Tangerine Dream 1980something via free images<ahref="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/">(license)
23. Nowadays very famous, but at that time they were an Electro-Pop debut band. [NdA]
24. Luis-Manuel Garcia, *op. cit.*, p.1.
25. The target audience for this magazine is the average-music-consumer. [NdA]

Abstract

By means of a critical analysis of the electronic-popular-music discourse in the German mainstream magazine *Musikexpress* in the decade 1975-1985, this paper traces back the historic development of journalists'assessment standards for virtuosity, authenticity and subversion in the electronic-music-age. Results show how cultural industry applies its hegemonic influence on musical discourses through media institutions and Pop/Rock intellectuals, in order to satisfy market requirements.