

Massimiliano Raffa

Rock criticism between Italy and the Anglosphere: Historical, stylistic and semantic perspectives

Presented at

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MUSIC CRITICISM
IULM University
(2021)**

Abstract.

The processes of cultural assimilation of distinctively Anglo-American forms of popular music into geographical and linguistic areas outside the Anglosphere have long been addressed by both popular music and cultural studies scholars. Specifically, popular magazines and music critics have generally been acknowledged as playing a crucial role in establishing the ‘cosmopolitan aesthetics’ of rock music on a planetary scale. Rock criticism, through the articulation of taste-making narratives and the tendency of historicise musical facts often neglected by scholarly research, did perform a two-fold function. On the one hand, it has been an indispensable gatekeeper of the music industry; on the other hand, it has provided cultural legitimisation of popular, grass-roots forms of creative production.

This paper will present the intersections between Italian, British and American rock criticism, focusing both on the manifestations of cultural subordination and on the peculiarities developed within Italian magazines which, over time — while remaining within the Anglo-American sphere of influence — have managed to partially break free from the model of magazines such as ‘Rolling Stone’, ‘Melody Maker’ and ‘Village Voice’, treading towards new stylistic and semantic directions. The second part of the presentation will offer a comparative study on the reception of major historical events and rock classic albums by Italian music critics, attempting to investigate the specific patterns of assimilation, perception and meaning attribution that arose in the Italian cultural context.