

Giuseppe Zevolli

## **Post-Taste Transgressions: Redefining the Mainstream through Autobiography**

At the intersection of subcultural theory and popular music studies, transgressions in music culture have been widely understood as the alternative to or the rejection of the mainstream in the form of chart pop. Digitalisation and the Internet ‘anarchive’ (Reynolds 2011) redistributed the cultural value of music and generated an unprecedented reappraisal of mainstream pop that, for some, coincided with the ‘death of the underground’ (Keenan 2015). Within this context, an increasing number of artists active at the fringes of electronic and club music (Chino Amobi, Elysia Crampton, NGUZUNGUZU, Total Freedom, Kablam amongst others) started to include samples of successful tracks (mostly pop and chart RnB) in their practice, defamiliarising notorious pop music songs and rewriting the idea of the ‘cutting edge’ in the process. What do these transgressions say about contemporary music culture? In my paper I will argue that, far from being mere shock tactics, their practices replace the traditional ‘rupture effect’ of alternative musics (often dictated by anxieties towards ‘corporate pop’ and cultural homogenisation) with a ‘continuity effect’ based on a reflexive take on the artists’ own autobiographies of taste (Wilson 2014). If on the one hand this phenomenon testifies to the relative death of the traditionally exclusivist, snobbish premises of the underground in digital culture, on the other hand it begs questions on the meaningfulness of transgression in practices based on the rather individualistic celebration of one’s eclecticism.

**Keywords:** mainstream pop; digital culture; sampling; taste; post-taste.

### **References:**

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### **Biography:**

Giuseppe Zevolli is a PhD candidate in the department Culture, Media and Creative Industries, King’s College London where he is researching the impact of digitalisation on the cultural value of ‘indie’ music. His research interests are cultural value and distinction, popular music, gender and performance. His writings as a music critic appear on Drowned in Sound and the Italian monthly *Il Mucchio*. His latest academic publication is featured in the collection of essays *Global Glam and Popular Music: Style and Spectacle from the 1970s to the 2000s* published by Routledge in 2016.