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Transgressive music subcultures in online environments: visibility, exposure and literacy

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Transgressive music subcultures in online environments: visibility, exposure and literacy

Abstract

Music is often taken as a barometer of social relations, usually in somewhat contradictory ways. Across different social and cultural contexts, music is alternately permitted, and not permitted, to not 'mean' what it 'says' - often on the basis of whose sensibilities are offended. In some instances what appear to be its literal meanings will be bracketed, in others, it will be interpreted as 'directly' as possible.

This is particularly concerning with any genre of music that seems to contain or express what might be considered violent speech, of which there are a significant number. A critical aspect of the cycle of moral panic, however is the extent to which music and the meanings it seems to embody are available to wide audiences, in terms of both accessibility, and the cultural literacies which facilitate a grasp of how those meanings might best be understood.

In this context, the increasingly ubiquitous use of digital technologies has significant implications for a wide variety of music subcultures, which have conventionally been relatively 'niche' or 'underground'. While debates about the digitisation of music have generally oriented to the implications of digital distribution for notions of copyright and ownership, this research addresses how the culture of visibility and exposure that is online distribution (via direct download blogs, file-sharing platforms, music recommendation platforms and so on) can render hitherto obscure music subcultures problematic, or generate problems for them. Using case studies of death metal and power electronics, both genres which, in deeply distinct ways, are invested in exploring transgressive representations, this paper explores how digital distribution within these subcultures exposes their music and its accompanying material to interpretations which are sharply discrepant with those of the communities concerned, and which in the current Australian policy framework, render those communities not only difficult to research, but conceivably criminal.

Keywords

music, transgressive, subcultures, literacy, online, environments, visibility, exposure

Disciplines

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<p>Rosemary Tobin</p> <p>Tues 26 Feb Panel 4 A 9.30 – 11.00 Room 108</p>	
<p>Tania Voon</p> <p>Mon 25 Feb Panel 2 A 2.00 – 3.30 Room 108</p>	
<p>Deb Waterhouse-Watson</p> <p>Mon 25 Feb Panel 3 B 4.00 – 5.00 Room 109</p>	
<p>Andrew Whelan</p> <p>Tues 26 Feb Panel 4 B 9.30 – 11.00 Room 109</p>	<p>Music is often taken as a barometer of social relations, usually in somewhat contradictory ways. Across different social and cultural contexts, music is alternately permitted, and not permitted, to not 'mean' what it 'says' – often on the basis of whose sensibilities are offended. In some instances what appear to be its literal meanings will be bracketed, in others, it will be interpreted as 'directly' as possible.</p> <p>This is particularly concerning with any genre of music that seems to contain or express what might be considered violent speech, of which there are a significant number. A critical aspect of the cycle of moral panic, however is the extent to which music and the meanings it seems to embody are available to wide audiences, in terms of both accessibility, and the cultural literacies which facilitate a grasp of how those meanings might best be understood.</p> <p>In this context, the increasingly ubiquitous use of digital technologies has significant implications for a wide</p>

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<p>Yan, Mei Ning</p> <p>Tues 26 Feb Panel 4 A 9.30 – 11.00 Room 108</p>	