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"Journalistic text in a new technological environment:
achievements and problems"

ACTUALIZATION OF MUSICAL JOURNALISM ON THE
INTERNET

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Abstract

In this study, we decided to draw attention to the music author's blog as a successor of traditional music journalism. This work reviews the structure and features of music blogging on the YouTube platform and formulates its fundamental features as a new media-communication and musical-cultural phenomenon of modernity, gradually acquiring an increasing influence on the mass audience. After all, adopting and modifying the content and formal characteristics of traditional music journalism, music blogging becomes its worthy alternative with the use of techniques and forms that are adapted for the modern generation. The study analyzed the pages (channels) of popular Russian-speaking bloggers on the YouTube video hosting. The main conclusions of the study: 1) a large number of works in this area can be called substandard, since many of the videos need careful refinement on the script and camera parts; 2) content analysis of video blog channels allows to distinguish the following genres of music blogging: review, clip, remake, remix, cover version, parody, broadcast and video interview; 3) if we consider music blogging as a new format of modern network media, we can identify a number of its substantive and formal features, which are reflected in more detail in the work itself.

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Keywords: Video blogging, media platform, music journalism, video hosting, YouTube, music blogging.



1. Introduction

1.1. "Author's blog" genre

The end of the twentieth century was marked by the emergence of a unique and extremely promising means of mass communication: the global computer network Internet. The appearance of such an accessible to the masses of people information carrier simply lead to the creation of new types of media on its basis. Cause as researcher Miheeva (2016) notes, along with the development of the Internet, not only a new media segment, but also a new audience has emerged, and it required new forms of interaction.

One of the new genres was the author's blog. It found its place not only in the blogging communities, but also on the pages of media sites, and then he "migrated" to paper and on air. The scientific understanding of the same author blogs, as noted by Maksimova (2017), has began only in the mid-2000s.

By Grigorenko and Ashnokova's (2017) definition, blog (eng. Blog, from web log - Internet event log, online diary) - website, the main content of which is regularly added entries (posts) containing text, images or multimedia. The blogs are characterized by short posts of temporary significance, sorted in reverse chronological order (the last post on top). Blogging also refers to personal websites, which consist mainly of personal blog owner entries and user comments on these posts. The history of blogs began in 1997, when Jorn Barger first used the term "log file". By his definition, a blog is a periodically updated website containing links (sometimes with comments) to articles and various Internet resources (as cited in Balovsyak & Bojcev, 2007).

But how does the information presented in the blog differ from what is shown on TV channels? The author whose material is posted to the global network is free to express his opinion. This is something usual full-time journalist cannot afford. Blogs are more "frank" in this regard, besides their subjects are more interesting to the mass audience, as evidenced by the number of comments and views.

1.2. Author's music blog

People have always spoken about music, because it is one of the most special types of art. The researchers note that the music language is capable of reflecting reality in sound artistic images and actively influencing the human psyche, specifically and convincingly convey the emotional states of people (Nikeeva & Fattahova, 2004). Today, music is an integral part of people's daily lives, but not every connoisseur can communicate directly with performers, composers and other members of musical communication. This is why the musical journalism exist. It is designed to erase the line between the performer and the listener of the work, can tell about the life of musicians, about their work, news from the world of music, etc.

Researcher Orlova (2007) notes the dual nature of music journalism as a synthesis of a journalistic approach and a form of literary and artistic criticism. These two spheres are closely interconnected and often practically indivisible in scientific studies devoted to musical and literature activity.

There was a serious gap between artists and their fans recently, which music journalists (along with PR managers of stars) were supposed to fill. They were the link between the artist and the listener. The journalists communicated with the musicians and told the audience everything they could learn,

listened to new music and tried to somehow comprehend and explain it to the audience. Now this already established system is destroyed. Musicians do not need distributors to convey their works to the audience anymore. It is enough to put new songs on the Internet, and everyone interested will hear it. Journalists are not needed either, since performers can communicate with their fans on the Internet: all popular musicians have personal websites, accounts in major social networks. Of course, not only the musician directly participates in this, but also his PR department, but in any case such communication seems to be much more preferable for the listeners.

But along with this, music blogs have developed a lot as an alternative to the music journalism. As Danchenok (2013) notes, with the help of this genre, the authors express their musical preferences, discuss novelties in the world of music. Such blogs can be devoted to a particular musical direction, or they can highlight various musical genres and styles. They attract the viewer more than the “standard” methods of musical journalism that have been established in Russia in the Soviet era, due to the brevity in the presentation of information. In addition, the transformation of music journalism was due to another feature - a sharp increase in information. Every day tens of thousands of songs appear on the Internet, thousands of clips and hundreds of music albums or mixtapes are laid out. The music became shareware, and this had a serious impact on specialized journalism.

1.3. YouTube video hosting as a popular place to host author’s blogs

Currently, there are countless different video-blogging channels of musical content, but there are not so many sites to place, group and structure them. One of these is YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com>). It is this resource that is now the most popular among video bloggers and probably, is the main place of their “work”.

Thanks to its simplicity, user-friendly interface and intuitive use, YouTube has become one of the most popular video hosting sites. According to statistics, about 5 billion clips were watched here daily in 2018 (Zelenyanskaya, 2018). According to Koch (2017) YouTube is leading in its market by a wide margin, thanks to the network effect, which probably will not be possible to catch up with by anyone. On the site you can find movies, music videos, trailers, news, educational programs, as well as amateur videos, including video blogs, slide shows, humorous videos and more.

A feature of this type of hosting (in addition to ease of use) is that users can upload videos in several common formats: .mpeg and .avi. The program automatically converts them to .mp4 format and makes them available for viewing online. Talking about interactivity, it is important to appreciate the availability of opportunities for users to leave comments, evaluate other people's comments (approve of them with likes or condemn with dislikes), add annotations and captions to videos, and also rate viewed videos if the author himself allows.

A user who has uploaded his video can also prohibit “embedding” of his video on other websites, blogs and forums, thus, the copyright cannot be violated even if strongly wanted - to download or repost a video in this case is impossible. It is also possible to convert downloaded video from 2D format to 3D using special modules.

All these advantages allowed this YouTube video hosting to become a leading platform in the number and variety of author blogs, including music topics. That is why the material for this study was the author's blogs on this platform.

2. Problem Statement

In our opinion, despite the massive popularity and formation, the genre of the music author's video blog and its specific features are not fully understood and formulated in the scientific community. The issue of succession of traditional music journalism and music video blogging in the Russian media sphere has not been studied at all, although it is relevant, including for the further development of this thematic area.

3. Research Questions

- 1) Present the historical context for the development of music journalism and music blogging in modern media;
- 2) Identify the YouTube media platform and analyze the activities of music video bloggers on this platform;
- 3) Identify the main trends that characterize the current state of music video blogging;
- 4) Describe the informative and formal characteristics of music video blogs on YouTube and features of the presentation of the material by the authors.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze music blogging as a new media alternative to "traditional" music journalism.

5. Research Methods

Such general scientific and special research methods as description, analysis, synthesis and observation, content analysis were used to solve these tasks.

6. Findings

6.1. Classification of music blogs

There are countless number of music video blogs on the Internet nowadays. However, they can only be divided and classified into two types: legal and illegal. Illegal get listeners to know illegal content, songs that do not have a corresponding license or are laid out without respecting copyright. Legal blogs can post indie projects entirely, demos of tracks or the whole mix of an album for audience to listen. One way or another, a musician gets some potential listeners from such a blog. Most blogs have their own rules and criteria, stylistic limitations, commercial orientation, publisher level, etc.

6.2. Music blog genres

One of the most popular genres of music video channels is a review, or, as it is also called, a feedback. As a rule, the review is devoted only to one work. In other cases, we can safely talk about subgenres: the fabricated review (when several works are considered) and the monographic review (the works of one author are considered). We can see a compilation of several reviews at once in most music blogs. Together they form a review block, presenting a kind of musical agenda for a certain period of time and, as Kulichkina (2019) says, this is a more or less holistic analysis of the work with an estimated focus, at that the reviewer seeks not only to substantiate his position, but also to draw the attention of the audience to the reviewed work.

The defining feature of this genre is the clarity of the content to the form, available to the recipients of different categories of viewers and listeners. To achieve this effect, the reviewer must thoroughly study the work under review, taking into account the principles and rules that guided the author, be able to use the methods of analysis and be fluent in the language of the work under review. The main difference of the review from other genres of music video blogging is that the subject of the review is reflected reality, that is, reality, which is already reflected in creative (musical) works. The main task of the reviewer is to consider a separate work comprehensively, in aggregate parts and as a whole.

A reviewer may actively involve elements of historical, psychological, sociological analysis when preparing a publication, which will undoubtedly make his video more relevant and significant. A great example of a music review blog is the RAMusic channel (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9_WDYZp3wDUt3Zxws4cieA). On it, the author named Ramin creates reviews and critique of songs, discusses the news of the celebrity world and analyzes the conflicts of musicians. This YouTube channel is very popular with more than 198 thousand subscribers. The average video views on the channel is 125.000.

Another popular destination online is video clip. According to Baron (2016) these are videos, a short film imposed on the music of famous performers in order to popularize. In our opinion, clips are an independent phenomenon of the entertainment industry. They cannot be limited to the framework of the film industry and considered an appendage of the musical process, they stand on their own. At its core, video clips have two functions: advertising the artist (his new song, and sometimes the album) and the creation of a highly artistic work. As a rule, these two points do not contradict each other, but the first one often determines the meaning of these works.

There are countless video clips on modern YouTube. Many bloggers create their own variations of clips for popular tracks and post them on their pages in order to gain a large number of views.” Sometimes such works become massively known, making popular both the creator of the amateur video and the composition itself. But work in this genre is limited by copyright law: most often video hosting simply blocks such videos or leaves them, but first “cuts out” the audio track from there, leaving only the visuals.

The next direction of music blogs is a remake. This is a newer version of a previously recorded song or any musical composition in general. As a rule, the resulting material does not cite the source and is not parodied, but is supplemented by new relevant content, taking into account the style of the original.

The remix is an alternative version of a musical work, recorded later than the original version and, as a rule, with a more modern version of the arrangement. Sometimes a remix is created by rearranging parts of the original composition, adding to its various new sounds, special effects, making changes in tempo, tonality, etc.

There is also such a direction as a cover version. This is an author's musical composition, performed by another musician or musical band. This may include elements of the original composition with the imposition of elements of the new arrangement. The compilation in which only cover versions of songs are collected is called a tribute album. We can say that the cover version is one of the types of remake.

A popular representative of the last three directions is the channel of the Pentatonix cover band. Several young people re-record the hits of famous artists, impose them on a dynamic and original video series and post it on video hosting. It is noteworthy that all the compositions recorded by them are performed without the use of musical instruments, this is acapella. At the moment, the number of subscribers on their official PTXofficial channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/PTXofficial>) is almost 16 million users, and this number is growing daily.

Parody is another type of music video, but it requires more labor than the previous ones. A musical parody can be called all video music works, the purpose of which, as the researchers formulate, is to create a comic effect by copying the characteristic features of the source material (as a rule, widely known) (SHapinskaya & Denisov, 2019). In other words, the parody is a video joke based on an existing musical composition. The duet of the hosts of dance-comic show called “Bonya and Kuzmich” (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCh0015DMPopo2-_1WsrKf9Q) has become successful in this direction. There are not so many subscribers to the channel, only 222,000, but the videos posted on their channel (made by them) still gain over five million views. This is an obvious indicator of the popularity of the creative work of the team.

Another direction of music video that we managed to find is alternative versions of well-known compositions. The authors of these videos take the original track of a famous artist, change the lyrics (without changing the integrity of the sound) and shoot their own alternative version of the same video clip, but in their own interpretation. There are not many works like that in the Russian blogosphere. One of the latest popular works of this genre is a parody of the song “Every Time” by Monetochka. The bloggers from the channel “Room Factory” (<https://www.youtube.com/user/KPuaCaH4uK>) uploaded this video to the site on October 6, 2018, although they do not specialize in creating music videos, but expanded the range of their entertainment content. In less than two months, it collected over three million views.

It is impossible not to note the video genre, which appeared, later than the other ones. This is live broadcasts. It also has a direct relationship to the music video blogging. Modern music radio stations publish radio broadcasts on their official channels on YouTube, which are also in audience's demand. These broadcasts can easily replace traditional radio broadcasts, since the viewer here can not only hear the guests and hosts, but also see them. Such “airs” are often held on the “New Radio” account (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCj5v318FDg-9LYJk2OwV4xQ>).

Some issues of various author talk show with invited famous musicians can also be attributed to the musical direction. According to Shesterkina (2016), such a talk show is a program of a conversational genre devoted to a topical subject, with the participation of the presenter, invited guests and the audience. Important characteristics of this genre are usage of multi-screen technology and the presence of interactive with the audience. In addition to the video recording of the talk show itself, it may include text, infographics, graphics, photos, animation, and sound. This format is especially popular in the Russian segment of YouTube recently. The authors here are both beginners and professional journalists who have worked on television for several years but transferred their work to the Internet. An example of this is Irina Shikhman, who created her YouTube channel called “What about talk?” (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCp2J7GRxQ36QLqW4ReLLt5g>), where 50 video interviews have already been posted, including people from the music world. Videos on the Shikhman's channel are successful and have about a million views.

Thus, we can note the diversity of genres of music video blogging on the hosting being analyzed. In addition, YouTube itself provokes authors to such creativity and constantly updates all of its services, adding new and new functions. So, in June 2018, based on data on the popularity of music video channels, video hosting opens a new service called YouTube Music (<https://music.youtube.com>). By clicking on the link the viewer enters the collection of songs and albums uploaded to YouTube by musicians, labels and regular users. Here you can find all of the genres mentioned above: music videos, albums, singles, remixes, live recordings and cover versions of songs by various artists. There is also the possibility of creating personal playlists, collected by genre and mood.

6.3. Verbal characteristics of music bloggers

The content of each work of music video bloggers is built primarily on verbal means of communication with the audience, language means of expression. Therefore, in our opinion, it is necessary to analyze the lexical characteristics of music video clips. Since there are no clear rules for creating videos for the Internet at this time, the authors often set limits for themselves. As a rule, the following lexical components can be found in YouTube's music videos:

- Professional vocabulary. Depending on the author's immersion in the subject of his material, this indicator varies from minimal (when professional terminology is used very rarely) to maximum amount (the entire video is filled with terminology).
- Emotionally expressive vocabulary. Often, videobloggers create an emotionally expressive tone in their video to attract viewers, adding vocabulary from this category even in the title or description of the video.
- Obscene language. As a rule, it is not often seen in music videos on video hosting, since music still remains a sublime art that should not be defiled by obscene language. However, popular video-bloggers use foul language and create the effect of asociality (informality) of their work in order to attract attention to themselves and their channel.
- Vocabulary with figurative meaning is used very often in music video genres, as the authors, analyzing the works of musicians, often use verbal description of the material being analyzed. Example: “The music flows on the music stave, interrupted by the beats of the accompanying beat.”

- The concrete vocabulary is also present here, because the authors reviewing the musicians in their videos often use some specific examples and comparisons describing the situation and proving certain points of view.
- Abstract vocabulary in music video blogs is used to describe the influence of a work on the listener and his emotional state.

Blog authors often resort to using certain morphological tools in order to give their work certain dynamics. For example, verbs and participles give a video a dynamic mood. This sometimes tires the viewer, and he simply cannot follow the thread of the story. On the other hand, nouns reduce the level of dynamism created by verbs, and dilute the overall picture of the narration.

Syntactic techniques are also present in the works of musical video directionality. As a rule, the authors in their videos resort to appeals (addressing their guest / listener) and simple sentences (which are easily perceived by ear). The complex sentences inherent in analytical genres are almost not present. Cause, as noted by Duskaeva (2011), the specificity of the journalistic word about music is its design for a mass audience and focus on the informative impact of a non-expert, it, of course, tends primarily to accessibility.

Anaphors are also used frequently (especially in the welcoming part of the video), inversions (when the author focuses on some important points), exclamation sentences (author expresses his attitude to the works being analyzed) and rhetorical questions (wondering about what is happening and searching for the answer to some question).

6.4. Audiovisual features of music blogs

Bloggers specializing in the creation of music video pages use various visual ways of presenting information to achieve the highest audience reach.

Usage of zoom. Zoom allows you to smoothly change the width of the plan much easier than using trolleys on rails for moving towards and backwards.

Focus. It is used to draw the viewer's attention to a particular object, to emphasize its importance, or to switch attention to the background.

Depth of field. There is both a small and a large depth of field. It can be used as a creative device to separate an object from the background: the smaller the depth of field is, the stronger the object from the environment is highlighted. If the depth of field is large, then the image contains more objects in the zone of sharpness.

Lighting. Light is one of the most important components of an image. With its help, you can make the picture softer or harder, hide skin defects, emphasize the necessary objects in the frame, make the picture more voluminous and artistic.

Frame composition. There is a so-called rule of thirds. One of the main aspects of this rule is that you should not place an object exactly in the middle, it is better to place it at the intersection of points. Imagine that on the frame we draw two equally spaced lines horizontally and vertically at the intersections of these points and we need to place the object.

Balance in the frame. In order for the frame to look good, it is necessary to clearly chose how and where the objects are located. The use of natural frames in the form of trees, doorways, and other elements helps. This will help to achieve a more interesting and deeper picture and create an atmosphere.

Balance. The balance of large and small objects in the frame.

Perspectives. Different angles of shooting can create a certain mood in the frame. There are classic types of angles:

- neutral angle (the camera is exactly relative to the ground and perpendicular to the main object);
- bottom angle (camera looks from the bottom up);
- top angle (camera looks from top to bottom);
- shooting from a bird's eye view and shooting from a lower point (the most pronounced upper and lower angles);
- 180-degree rule (the classic version of formation of the dialogue in the frame). Plans taken from different points, alternately changing depending on the speaker.

Sound recording. Sound is an important part of any piece of music. And the better it is recorded and processed, the more pleasant it will be for the viewer to listen.

Footage editing. This is the process of conversion or restructuring the original material, resulting in a different target material. Installation can give the program the desired rhythm and atmosphere. There are two types of editing, they called intraframe and interframe. But before the start of this work, you need to write an editing plan. It details the scenes that will go on the air, which will subsequently be removed, etc. In other words, the editing plan is an instruction for creating a video clip. It is very important for it to be detailed and accurately describe all the actions that need to be done during editing. Cause irrespective of the script, there are moments during filming a program that, for various reasons, should not be aired. And sometimes the video, on the contrary, lacks titles or musical accompaniment.

6.5. The reflection of the author's "I" in music blogs

An important part of the work of the music blog is the author's position. Cause, as Lobodenko and Bashtanar (2016) note, the review is the most popular genre of musical journalism, it first of all reflects the author's attitude to the work. It is necessary that the author conveyed to people a competent, logically verified and fact-supported analysis of a musical work through his own experience, knowledge and personal feelings. The author should be able to flexibly and "interestingly" present information for a wide range of viewers, satisfy the individual's need for relevant information of an evaluative nature and thus help him make a choice." Of course, this work examines only a small part of the huge material devoted to the music segment on the Internet and the author's "I" in it, but even this small amount can help in creating editions of high-quality musical analytical materials.

7. Conclusion

Summarizing all the above, we can conclude that the creation of a music video blog is a complex process that requires special skills from the author. Despite the large number of works posted on the YouTube, not all of them are of high quality, and many do need more careful refinement of the script and camera work.

After analyzing the content of music blogs of Russian-speaking bloggers, we made the following conclusions:

- 1) Currently, there are countless different sites for posting video blogs, however, the most popular is the video hosting site YouTube;
- 2) If we consider music blogging as a new format, alternative to “traditional” music journalism, we can identify a number of its content and formal features;
- 3) The genre features of the videos on the video hosting are very diverse. Users can upload any video materials that contain a musical background to this network, but upgrade or rework is welcome in this case;
- 4) Among the main genres of music blogging were review, clip, remake, remix, cover version, parody, broadcast and video interview;
- 5) Verbal and visual ways of presenting information help to diversify the material of video bloggers. Such lexical features as professional vocabulary, emotional and expressive vocabulary, vocabulary with a figurative meaning, abstract and concrete vocabulary are most common. As a rule, the authors in their videos resort to appeals and simple sentences. In the editing process the authors use various techniques in order to give the video some individuality when working with the visual part of the video. However, to create the effect of the integrity of the material, the video requires a premeditated concept.

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