Lou Reed: rock and roll is so genial in its conception that some people would be willing to die for it (...). Music gives a pulse that allows you to dream. It’s an entire generation walking to the sound of a Fender bass. It’s necessary that people be willing to die for music, that is all. People die no matter what, so why not music? Die for it. Isn’t it pretty? To want to die for beauty? (McNeil & McCain, 2006: 45).

The 1960’s, from an music aesthetic and expression point of view, were marked by an intense creativity that spread throughout all artistic and cultural mediums. We associate this era with a revolutionary mark, be in cultural, moral or social terms, with the importance of figures such as Rimbaud, north American black blues, rock pioneers, beat generation, Henry Miller, Malraux, Baudelaire, Marcuse, Indian gurus, Marx, Trotsky, Mao Tse Tung… (Paraire, 1992: 75-77). In the USA, rock acquired an institutionalization close to that of the traditional star system, with the role of the English pop movement, in particular that of the Beatles, one of the most remarkable in this respect. It will not, then, be out of place to consider that rock music throughout the
60’s and 70’s established its roots in the everyday life of individuals, leading us to agree with Simon Firth when he states that “rock is the folk music of our times, but not from a sociological point of view. Whereas folk describes the pre-capitalistic modes of production, rock is without shadow of doubt, the echo of mass production, mass consumption, and a product in itself of consumption. The rock-folk argument does not refer to the way in which music is made, but to the way in which it works: rock is used to express or reflect upon a value of life; rock is used by its listeners as folk music – articulating common values, social problems and shared commentary. The argument, in other words, is over subcultures, beyond their music-making; it is about how music represents its listeners” (Firth, 1981: 159).

In the 1960’s, alongside the period of prosperity that followed it, things had started to change. People believed in the equality of rights, independently of race, class or gender. If until the 70s one could not talk of youth cultures, in the United Kingdom, from then on out, young people started to question the morals and values of British society, creating in the process their own ‘little countries’ – and it was then that multiple youth subcultures were born (Biddle, 2008): teddy boys, hippies, mods.

From its beginning that rock culture has been associated with excess (celebrated in the famous statement “sex, drugs and rock’n’roll”). With the birth of rock’n’roll as a core of the youth culture of the 60’s (Kleijer & Tillekens, 2000: 2), the sounds present in ‘beat’ replace the rhythms of jazz and, with it, the lyrics also change, birthing a more emotionally open youth. It is here that excess and hedonism, alongside guilt and shame negation, take its form in phenomenons such as the “Summer of Love” of 1968, which can be seen in Jefferson Airplane’s songs as the shape through which, all over the world, the youth rebellion attacked
traditional values and cultures, using pop music as its manifesto. The ideology of domestic life is of pivotal importance for this pop music revolution: based on a perceived separation between the public and private spheres of life, it associates traditional gender roles to it, assigning mostly feminine roles to the private sphere, and masculine roles to the public domain (Kleijer & Tillekens, 2002: 2). In this context, sexuality is a taboo, reserved to silence. In the 50’s, pop music aims to break that silence with rock’n’roll, giving in to the sexual implications of romance.

It is also in this context that leisure takes an increasingly more relevant role in youth cultures, giving that, being constituted as a rule, it spreads new rules for fields such as politics, work, school and family. Facing these changes, there is a blurring of the frontiers between legitimatized sexuality and taboo, at the same time that notions of indecency and guilt lose their universal meaning, and irony starts making its way to pop music discourse. James Dean is the prototype of this new social functioning, the anti-hero of the beat generation which Elvis figured. The joined expression of feelings such as love and hate is now done in a ‘cool’ manner (Kleijer & Tillekens, 2000: 5). There is the construction of a new romantic love symbolic code, through which physical, emotional and financial values are expressed. This new code of beat music expresses, then, the notion of relationships as moments of exploration of new forms of communication, namely those related to pop music, from its creation, through dance, to the listening of it. Pop music is then a way to question the previous rationality through the expansion of conventions as to what is considered romantic love – as Richard Merton says, taking the case of the Stones (In Kleijer & Tillekens, 2000: 6), mentioning how the band breaks three taboos: sexual exploration, mental illness and the experience of eroticism in itself. As a communicative vessel,
music has in words its stronger element, not only because it conveys meaning, but because they reveal themselves (Kleijer & Tillekens, 2000: 6). Pop music has transformed the main fields of the communicative space, strengthening physical and mental identities through the valuing of the voice. Through this premises, the meaning of clothes is then made much more flexible, noting first and foremost the forbidden sexuality and demonstrating the role of the body as a source of pleasure. In this context of change, pop music established a more open, more direct and simultaneously more complex market of communication.

In terms of musical and artistic production, the time between 1964 and 1969 is noted by Peterson and Berger as being a moment of renewed growth (1975). It is a period which brought innovation and was marked by a transition on all levels - still touched by The Beatles heritage, and by the psychedelia of the time, in 1967, the second generation market of rock innovators was characterized by a plurality of lyrical content. However, and simultaneously, it started to show a tendency for the refocusing of the scope of musical artists, as “despite the number of competing companies in the pop music market having remained high, compared with the time between the 1963 and 1969, the “eight-firm concentration ratio” raised by 14% and the ‘four firm ratio’ by 6%. During that time, the total album sales doubled, reaching the 1.6 billion dollars. For the first time, disc sales surpassed the raw income of all other entertainment forms” (Peterson & Berger, 1975: 163)

Re-concentration is then the market barrier between 1970 and 1973, and the processes and strategies which led it here can be seen through an analysis of the structure of leading companies in 1973. The four major companies, Columbia, Warner Brothers, Capitol and Motown, led the market of singles in its whole, while
different conglomerates, Warner Communications and CBS, led 15% of the market each. Columbia successfully used a dual strategy of acquiring established artists contracts and buying from reputed companies. By that time, concerts and shows such as those of Alice Cooper, with increasingly bizarre displays, seemed to shock its publics and critics than the less extreme displays of rock’n’roll groups (Peterson & Berger, 1975). Events such as Monterey Pop Festival in 1967 or Woodstock Festival in 1969 demonstrated the possibility to organize big and lucrative shows. Starting in the 70s, arena concerts became commonplace, being used to promote new albums, and producing major symbolic and economic income for the industry.

In the second half of the 60s, underground counterculture developed a critical and creative stance facing rock’n’roll as an institutionalized element of pop. From an artistic and stylistic point of view, there was an idea of progress associated with rock, in which musical, lyrical and emotional complexity entwined in order to convey evolution. The basis of progressive rock had been set, setting it apart from simple fun and transforming it into an art of rock (Bono, 2008). Defending progressive rock as a mark of experimentalism, complexity, innovation, eclecticism, its executants considered themselves a true counterculture, capable of proceeding through music experimentation and fighting the established star system. Notably, groups such as Cream, Jimi Hendrix Experience, Pink Floyd and Soft Machine. The remarkable psychedelic experiences brought by the consumption of LSD and its importance in the innovation and stylistic experimentation of these times should be noted: “The bands made their music in concerts through the use of long improvising sessions. Cream is a most pertinent example. Live, they improvisation stood out, thanks to the experimental virtuosity of its members. The core of its live
material was blues, which combined rock and jazz elements. They were initially conceived as blues trio, but as the group developed its music, they took in many different musical styles, reaching truly original ideas (Bono, 2008: 42).

Figure 1: Artwork of Cream, Wheels of Fire, 1968.

Figure 2: Artwork of Tangerine Dream, Electronic Meditation, 1970.
The late 60s in Western Germany were a period of crucial change, where numerous protests throughout the country, mobilizing mostly young people, provided a particular social context. In the music scene, krautrock would forever change the face of western rock, taking it beyond any known limits: "krautrock\(^2\) is related to German experimental rock of the 60s and 70s" (Stubbs, 2009: 4). Investigators tend to associate with the birth of krautrock the presence of American and English soldiers in Germany led to the constant presence of many different sounds, both drawing from Anglo-American rock, pop, soul, jazz and R&B. In truth, “many musicians, such as Edgar Froese from Tangerine Dream, seen as krautrock pioneers, learned their trade while playing covers” (Stubbs, 2009: 6). We can consider the relationship between krautrock and rock as contradictory: if, on one side, Can are the consequence of incursions to American rock, and the song Autobahn by Kraftwek was a direct inspiration of the Beach Boys (Stubbs, 2009: 7), there was, on the other side, a strong refusal and transgression facing American and English conventional rock – “krautrock is a cultural reaction” (Stubbs, 2009: 17). Krautrock took on a wide array of sounds: Stockhausen’s free jazz; Dada and Fluxus; German romantism of Mothers of Invention, as well as others.

Krautrock (also called komische musik) and a vanguard German music style which was born in the end of 60s decade. It was destined to go beyond the USA psychedelic rock, giving focus to electronic and modern instruments and hypnotic manipulation. The krautrock movement is filled with bands such as Popol Vuh,

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\(^2\) Fernando Magalhães explained the arrival of krautrock as follows: “And thus, mixing elements of psychedelic rock of the late 60s and jazz improvisation, as well as electronic experimentation, the krautrock genre was born. In it, groups such as Can, Neul, Faust or Tangerine Dream released their creative freedom and absolute technical discipline. It was in this atmosphere that Kraftwerk were born” (Magalhães, 2003).
Amon Düül, Faust, Neu!, Ash Ra Temple, Agitation Free, Guru Guru, Can, etc. Each region developed its own particular sound, interpreting krautrock differently. The Berlin scene fell under the astral themes, with synthesizers and electronic experimentation (Ash Ra Temple, Agitation Free, Mythos, The Cosmic Jokers, Kluster). In Munich, the scene had a strong oriental influence, drawing from psychedelic rock and folk rock (Popol Vuh, Amon Düül, Gila, Guru Guru, Witthuser & Westrupp). The underground scenes of Cologne and Dusseldorf focused on political rock and electronica (Floh De Cologne, La Dusseldorf, Neu!, Can). The point was to subvert pop music conventions, and we can surely state how they served as an influence for bands such as Cabaret Voltaire, Brian Eno, Nurse With Wound, Pil, DAF, Einstürzende Neubauten, among others.

We can consider bands such as the Stooges, the New York Dolls, the Ramones, Television, Richard Heli & the Voidoids, Johnny Thunders & the Heartbreakers, and the Velvet Underground, to name a few, as the forefathers of American punk. The Stooges were formed on stage in the late 60s. Their energy and counter-conventionalism were thoroughly transmitted by Iggy Pop and the Stooges, making the band a pioneer in artistic, aesthetic and musical transgression. Danny Fields\(^3\) says in this respect: “The Stooges were superb. ‘I wanna be your dog’ became a fetish song for a new generation. (...) the song has an hypnotic riff which is repeated again and again..., and the words are simply brilliant. I think when the Pistols started, all they knew how to play was a bit of this song” (Colegrave & Sullivan, 2002: 45). Legs McNeil\(^4\) also notes how the “history of punk started with Iggy Pop.

\(^3\) Ex-Manager of the Stooges and of the Ramones.
\(^4\) A journalist of Punk Magazine and author of Please Kill Me. Legs McNeil took the role of journalist of the New York underground clubs, such as CBGB. He invented the term “punk” in 1975, calling his review Punk Magazine. McNeil was at the centre of the punk
He was authentic. That is the problem of rock and roll. There aren’t many truly maniac authentic types” (Colegrave & Sullivan, 2002: 49). Lester Bangs is also tantamount in this: “the music of the Stooges is just this. It walks through a colourless chaos to gradually make up a unique and personal style, emerging from north-American tradition” (Bangs, 1996:45). Iggy Pop was the heir of beat composition, showing a bit of reticence as for the American dream as a reality, and noting the freedom inducing energy which music brought, as well as its capacity for personal and social statement. The concerts were surprising and marked by Iggy’s performance on stage, who screamed, twisted his body, got dirty, and through himself to the crowd, as well as cutting his own body with shards of glass.

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movement, interviewing people such as Lou Reed or Iggy Pop. His recognition as narrator of the punk movement came with the edition of Please Kill Me (a collection of oral statements, which he edited alongside Gillian McCain).

5 It is the same Lester Bangs who considers that “to facilitate the liberation of physical mass, it is necessary that we start in the eye of the storm, the centre of all mess and chaos, and Iggy Stooges himself (Bangs, 1996:33). He continues: “Thus, you can now see where I am getting at, trying to show how the Stooges are vital, besides being good musicians (...) It takes a lot of courage to be that mad” (Bangs, 1996:36).
Between psychadelia and artistic transgression: vanguards, proto-punk and musical experimentation

To close my mind
And now I’m ready
To feel your hand
And lose my heart
On the burning sands.
The Stooges, I Wanna Be Your Dog, 1969.

Lester Bangs description of Iggy is crucial in this respect: “More than anyone in that apparently endless parade of professionally alienated rockers, Iggy was truly isolated, and that manifested in extreme despair. He is the most intense performer I have ever seen, and that intensity comes from a sort of murderous impulse. In the past, it also made him one of the most dangerous performers alive: the third row dives, cutting and rolling on glass on stage, verbally and sometimes physically offending the crowd. When Iggy sang “I’m losing all my feelings/ And I’m running out of friends” in ‘I need somebody’, by Raw Power, he was briefly describing, as usual, the problems of alienation and anomy. There is no solution but death, and that is the reason for everything else” (Bangs, 2005: 106). Iggy and the Stooges had no specific qualification in the music area, and took on more of a rock lifestyle than technical skills, which led them to be seen as a sort of a gang, with a self and hetero representation of “four losers against the world” (Kent, 2006: 284).

Andy Warhol’s Factory and Velvet Underground⁶. The Factory was the first artistically conglomerating experience, and common

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⁶ Velvet Underground were an American art rock band marked by a strong do-it-yourself (DIY) strategy and by their experimentalism. The band, formed in 1964, integrated Lou Reed (vocals and guitar player), Sterling Morrison (guitar player), John Cale (bass player and vocalist) and Maureen Tucker (drums). Taken under the wing and subsidized by plastic artist Andy Warhol, who brought Nico into the band, and made the classic banana cover of their debut record, they released The Velvet Underground and Nico in 1966. They explored the somber life of the streets of New York, the poor life of the youth, and were the first to openly explore drugs in lyrical terms. They were submerged in German expressionism, French existentialism, celebrating drug use, sexual choice, and claiming a new way to experience hedonism (Cfr. http://www.dyingdays.net/).
denominator, of a long felt search for multidisciplinarity, by both the audience and the public. According to Lee Childers\textsuperscript{7}, “all who were in Factory became super stars at some point, and some actually were it” (Colegrave & Sullivan, 2002: 21). Candy Darling refers to Andy Warhol as a man who could “turn anyone into a star” (Colegrave & Sullivan, 2002: 26). The band started with the relation between its members and the Syracuse University in the 60s in New York. They were one of the first bands to explore obscure themes in their lyrics, such as drugs (overdoses, not the fun acid trips of the Beatles), prostitution, problems, disease and death. John Cale mentions that “the first time that Lou played me ‘Heroin’ it changed me. The words and the music were too devastatingly sexy. More and more, Lou’s songs corresponded perfectly with my idea of music. His songs had a scent of scandal, a trace of debauchery. He identified thoroughly with the characters he represented. It was in the \textit{Actor in Studio} methodology put into song” (McNeil & McCain, 2006: 17). Their roots in German expressionism and French existentialism, proved to be crucial to a point were Velvet put themselves aside any clear aesthetic of the hippie and beat movements of the time: “The Velvet Underground took on the form of a music convention between Lou Reed, a poet made song lyricist with a deliciously decadent voice, and John Cale, the monotone violist of La Monte Young’s Theatre of Eternal Music” (Ross, 2009: 505).

They inspired multiple bands and were recognized as the core of the punk movement, as the words of Steve Severin\textsuperscript{8} show: “We wanted all of those who heard the Velvet Underground to make a group of their own…I did it” (Colegrave & Sullivan, 2002: 30).

\textsuperscript{7} Ex-manager of the Stooges and the Heartbreakers. Currently a photographer and writer.
\textsuperscript{8} Bass player of Siouxsie and the Banshees.
As they walked through the United States, the Velvet Underground raised a number of bands which drew from their performance, such as MC5 or the Stooges. Later, they took on the role of producers for records such as Modern Lovers, Patti Smith, the Stooges, with John Cale being directly related to punks expansion.

Figure 3: Iggy Pop, 1973.

New York Dolls\(^9\) and the origin of punk. Giving voice to one of the actors of the scene at the time, we can say with Todd

\(^9\) The New York Dolls (1971-1977) are a glam rock and proto punk band formed in 1971 in the city of New York. Its original members were: David Johansen (vocals); Johnny Thunders (guitar); Rick Rivetts (guitar); Arthur "Killer" Kane (bass); Billy Murcia (drums); Brian Delaney (drums); Steve Conti (guitar); Brian Koonin (keyboard). It grew to fame in its first England tour when the band visited Malcom McLaren's shop, garnishing his attention immediately. Despite not having too much recognition during their short existence, over the years the bands has reached a cult-like following, noting their
Rundgren that “most people think that punk was born with the Sex Pistols. They surely defined it in the popular conscience, but they were heavily influenced by the New York Dolls, and were not ashamed to admit it” (Colegrave & Sullivan, 2002: 50), or even, as the famous Legs McNeil put it “the New York Dolls came and went back to three minute songs. That is what punk is about, going back to the song. The song on the radio that is – roughly speaking it was chorus, verse, chorus verse” (Colegrave & Sullivan, 2002:51). The New York Dolls signalled a difference in attitude, appearing in high heels, feminine clothes, exhaling eccentricity, musically inexperienced, harbingers of punk – they had a message that anyone could do what they wanted. That is the reason that Malcom McLaren took an interest in the group the first time he saw them in New York, feeling the punk seed in their sound and attitude. They were the face of the 70s rebellion, incorporating all the excesses of rock and roll. In all aspects, except for the clothes, the New York Dolls gave Malcom McLaren the shape of what would be the Sex Pistols. The Dolls were the first musical project to derogate music industry and its managers, electing live shows as the prime time of celebration and excess. Kent says, to this respect, the following: “in truth, we are talking of an extremely vital music, filled with a magic and essence which the band exhaled, which albums could not capture in the slightest way” (Kent, 2006: 220).

Twenty, twenty, twenty, four hours to go
I wanna be sedated
Nothing to do, nowhere to go, oh
I wanna be sedated
Just get me to the airport, put me on a plane

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importance in the formation of punk rock. In 2004 they resumed their activity, and were in the 2007 edition of Heineken Paredes de Coura festival.
10 Journalist of Punk Magazine and author of Please Kill Me.
Hurry, hurry, hurry before I go insane
I can’t control my fingers, I can’t control my brain
Oh no, oh, oh, oh, oh
Twenty, twenty, twenty, four hours to go
I wanna be sedated
Nothing to do, nowhere to go, oh
I wanna be sedated
Just put me in a wheelchair and get me on a plane
Hurry, hurry, hurry before I go insane
I can’t control my fingers, I can’t control my brain
Oh no, oh, oh, oh, oh
Twenty, twenty, twenty, four hours to go
I wanna be sedated
Nothing to do, nowhere to go, oh
I wanna be sedated
Just put me in a wheelchair, get me to the show
Hurry, hurry, hurry before I go loco
I can’t control my fingers, I can’t control my toes
Oh no, oh, oh, oh, oh/ (4x)
Ba-ba-baba, baba-ba-baba I wanna be sedated.
The Ramones, I wanna be sedated, 1978

Ramones\textsuperscript{11}: Hey! Ho! Let’s Go! Hey! Ho! Let’s Go! Hey! Ho! Let’s Go! Hey! Ho! Let’s Go!... The war cry of the Ramones, present in the famous song from their first album \textit{Blitzkrieg Bop} and copiously played in every concert. It would be wrong to think that punk rock, as visually represented by torn up jeans, was the sole work of the Sex Pistols. Already 1974, a band of teenagers was playing in the famous club CGBG (Country Bluegrass and Blues), coming from Manhattan, and would define in these first few concerts a visual and musical attitude that would come to be known as punk rock. The first record of the band, entitled \textit{Ramones}, released the punk movement in England, which would be made famous by bands such as the Sex Pistols, the Clash, the Damned, etc. They were pioneers of the do it yourself aesthetic.

\textsuperscript{11} The Ramones (1974-1996) arrived in New York, and are seen as pioneers of punk rock. The band was composed of Joey Ramone (vocals), Dee Dee Ramone (bass), Johnny (guitar) e Tommy Ramone (drums). After their birth, the band started playing regular gigs at CBGB, integrating an underground scene composed of bands such as: Blondie, Television, The Cramps, Talking Heads, The Voidoids and The Patti Smith Group.
In the words of Joey Ramone: “We wanted to save rock and roll, keep it fun and interesting and all that. (...) Evils Presley was punk, Jim Morrison was punk. There was a lot of people who were punk and had no weird hairdo or anything like it. It has more to do with being rebellious (McNeil & McCain, 2006: 380). Still in respect to their first album, Joey Ramones direct account is crucial: “We made the album in one week and spent six thousand and four hundred dollars – everyone was amazed. In that time, people didn’t much care for money – there was a lot of it lying around. (...) Money wasn’t short yet – some albums costed about half a million dollars to be made and took some two or three years to be recorded, as was the case with Fleetwood Mac and others. Doing an album in a week and producing it with six thousand and four hundred dollars was an unheard of, let alone an album that would change the world. It kind of started punk and all that scene – and it set us on our career” (McNeil & McCain, 2006: 403).

The Ramones came from a praxis of austerity, lived by a group of teenagers who sought to supplant the boredom and frustration with guitars and hate (Ramone & Koffman, 2002: 8). We can then say that the New York scene gathered cultured and well-informed young people (Richard Hell and Howard Devoto), and youth delinquents (Sid Vicious, Steve Jones, Dee Dee Ramone): “all learned the most important lesson of the movement: not to care for anything. And if ‘do it yourself’ was the punk motto, then Dee Dee Ramone could be its spokesperson (...). But it was exactly that which happened: a man destined to become a failure, ended up being the model of a generation” (Ramone & Kofman, 2004: 8-9). The Ramones changed rock, “without keywords, with no theories, without problems. The main point was never the theory itself. What they wanted was to play fast music, without solos, with lyrics which spoke of everyday life. It was a simple sort of
music, but which told more than any libertarian manifesto. How many bands started after someone listened to ‘Blitzkrieg Bop’? How many teenagers in the 70s did not think: ‘if these guys can record an LP, then so can I!’” (Ramone & Kofman, 2004: 19).

Figure 4: The Cramps, 16 August, Festival Heineken Paredes de Coura, 2006.

CBGB, a stage for punk in New York. In 1975, the scene associated with CBGB in New York, in which bands inspired by MC5, the Velvet Underground, the Stooges or the New York Dolls emerged, marked the urban underground and musical/stylistic creation supported by the Do It Yourself ethics and the simplicity, which opposed hippie rock of the American West Coast. Bands such as Television, the Ramones, The Cramps and The Patti Smith Group started to reside in CBGB and in the proximity of clubs in Max Kansas City. CBGB was a musical club located in the Manhattan neighbourhood of New York. In 1973, Hilly Kristal, the
owner of CBGB opened the place to punk audience, as well as to concerts of emerging bands which played in that style. Colegrave and Sullivan consider this club to be crucial in the statement of punk, noting that “centred on the CBGB club, the scene exploded thanks to groups such as Queen Elizabeth by Wayne County, Television by Richard Hell and Tom Verlaine, Patti Smith, the Dead Boys and the Ramones, all coming from this place. Already living, but not yet baptized, punk was born. The name came soon after, when illustrator John Holmstrom and journalist Legs McNeil launched *Punk Magazine*, a fanzine dedicated to the gender – and the name stuck” (2002: 19).

Figure 5: The Cramps, 16 August, Festival Heineken Paredes de Coura, 2006.

Source: MUSICULT_2005 | 2009

References


