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Review of *Songs from Sweden: Shaping pop culture in a globalized music industry*, by Ola Johansson, Palgrave Macmillan, Palgrave Pivot, 2020, 169 pp., ISBN 978-981-15-2735-7 ISBN 978-981-15-2736-4 (eBook).

This book is an interesting contribution to and update of previous literature that tried to understand the relative success of the Swedish music industry (or the 'Swedish Music Miracle' as Johansson denotes it) from the 1990s and onwards. Johansson takes his point of departure in a partially new social and music-industrial context, stating that the Swedish music industry has transformed from version 1.0 to 2.0 – a transformation characterized by songwriting/music production rather than the production of artists. This is a relevant starting point as it also provides conditions for understanding developments within the global music industry of the 00s and 10s. The purpose of the book, however, is to try to understand how Swedish song writer/producers clustering in Stockholm have developed international reputation and networks. More specifically, the book asks how a commercially successful pop aesthetic, with strong, melodic elements based on a variety of influences, emerged in Stockholm through local/global flows (or circulations).

*Songs from Sweden* is introduced with a summary of the past two decades of research on the Swedish music industry in which Johansson identified a number of theses based on themes positioned within economic and cultural geography. Chapter 2 describes the theoretical framework which is based on the idea of "local music in a global network" that deals with the concepts of circulation, reputation and hybridity. While the first two concepts are used to describe production processes and the last aids the analysis of 'the Swedish sound'. Chapter 3 introduces the methodological work and Johansson addresses the severe difficulties accessing (parts of) the music industry, i.e. few actors allow outsiders in for interviews etc. Consequently, the material on which the book is based on secondary material, mostly feature-length articles from music journals and newspapers. This chapter also makes the idea of circulation concrete by exploring and mapping the actual networks within the industry from both creative and professional/business perspective. In particular, Johansson categorizes the Swedish collaboration style, e.g. the duo partnership model, collective work (e.g. complementarity), and learning through mentorship (e.g. fostering new talent). Chapter 4 identifies "What is distinctly Swedish about Swedish pop music?". The Swedish sound, Johansson claims, is based on a number of ingredients and thus characterized as a hybrid created "between central control of cultural production and the continuous challenge of the status quo from various locations in the global network of culture" (p. 105).

With this book, Johansson joins a new strand of literature that analyzes the music industry in relation to increasingly globalizing societies and economies and which draws attention to e.g. new spatial configurations (Hracs et al., 2011) and complex and hybridized production methods (Nilsson, 2014). In my perspective, this book primarily contributes to an overall insight into the concrete work of songwriters, both inside and outside the studio, in both their creative and professional/business work. Also, the book problematizes a number of protracted myths about (Swedish) music industry and creative work, e.g. the role of 'climate' and 'the divine inspiration'. Another merit of the book is that space is an inherent and essential part of the analysis. For example, in chapter 4, Johansson is emphasizing the circulatory and relational dimensions of pop music/culture and shows how Swedish pop music production is one of many locations in history where genres are mixed (respectfully or not) and transformed into something new.

For someone with an interest in Swedish pop music, this book might only add little new information. Nevertheless, perhaps the main achievement is that Johnson went through a large material to create a coherent narrative around the 'Swedish Music Miracle 2.0'. The question, however, is whether Johansson manages to deepen and nuance our understanding of the music industry and creative work

beyond previous made conclusions. Here I believe that the book would have benefited from involving with a broader set of actors and a more nuanced understanding of structural and institutional contexts (Power & Hallencreutz, 2002). The concepts used could have been more precisely theoretically framed and nuanced through e.g. relational perspectives (Jacobs, 2012) or 'translocality' (Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013). Finally, perhaps this reflects the empirical material on which the book is based, but there is room for more critical reflections in relation to the empirical material and to processes of e.g. inclusion and/or exclusion.

Finally, an important insight from the book is Johansson's attempt to identify what a Swedish pop aesthetic is and how it evolved over time. So far, and to my knowledge, no one has had the ambition to comprehend and summarize this issue in one place and thus the chapter provides an interesting insight into creative work in a unique time and place. Still, "to precisely demarcate a Swedish and non-Swedish style is certainly an overgeneralization" (p. 110). If you are the least interested in creative work in general and Swedish pop music in particular, this is a relevant book to read, and entertaining - the book is packed with illustrative examples and anecdotes.

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