

Music, Audiovisual Media, and Affects in the Burnout Society

Juliano de Oliveira

E-mail: j.oliveira.mus@gmail.com

 C.V. Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/9790028632095743>

 Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-6958-3326>

Laura Loguercio Cánepa

Universidade Paulista - UNIP

E-mail: laura.canepa@docente.unip.br

 C.V. Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/8887782644586702>

 Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3248-599X>

Heloisa Duarte Valente

Universidade Paulista - UNIP

E-mail: heloisa.valente@docente.unip.br

 C.V. Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/3718382357661831>

 Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3250-6722>

Introduction

Over the past few decades, the technological, economic, and cultural transformations driven by media digitization have profoundly reshaped the production, circulation, and consumption of music and audiovisual media. As digital platforms have become ubiquitous and algorithmic systems, mobile devices, and social media increasingly intertwined, aesthetic experience has come to be shaped by attention regimes defined by speed, fragmentation, and an ever-intensifying competition for visibility.

It is in this context that Byung-Chul Han's concept of the Burnout Society offers a particularly productive framework for understanding the present. According to the Korean-German philosopher, late modernity has witnessed a shift from the disciplinary society to a performance society, in which individuals are no longer primarily subjected to external forms of coercion but instead become entrepreneurs of themselves. Self-exploitation, hyperactivity, the relentless pursuit of productivity, and the imperative of constant self-exposure become defining features of contemporary social life. Rather than being structured around the opposition between the permitted and the forbidden, as in disciplinary society, today's social order is governed by an imperative of continuous optimization, whose most visible symptoms include burnout, anxiety, attention disorders, and emotional exhaustion.

This transformation has implications for the study of music and audiovisual media. Throughout history, musical practices and media technologies have both responded to and shaped the societies in which they emerged. The twentieth century offers countless examples of the interplay between aesthetics, politics, and technology—from the propaganda apparatus of totalitarian regimes and the rise of the culture industry to the sonic experiments of the artistic avant-gardes and, later, the emergence of digital media. In each of these contexts, music and audiovisual media did more than simply reflect historical change; they played an active role in shaping collective imaginaries and giving symbolic form to social experience.

Contemporary media culture, however, presents a new set of challenges. The logic of digital platforms has reshaped the ways we listen to and engage with, music and audiovisual media, encouraging practices driven by repetition, algorithmic personalization, and the continuous capture of attention. The proliferation of short-form video, the constant circulation of musical snippets, the automation of audiovisual production, and the growing

presence of artificial intelligence have accelerated these changes by creating new forms of mediation among people, images, sounds, and narratives. Yet it would be reductive to view this landscape solely as a mechanism for capturing or modulating affect. The very technologies that intensify these dynamics also create opportunities for resistance, aesthetic experimentation, and new ways of listening.

It is this tension that gives rise to the central question explored in this dossier: to what extent do music, sound, and audiovisual media continue to provide spaces in which experience can be symbolically processed and interpreted, and to what extent are they becoming increasingly embedded in apparatuses designed to manage affect and sustain the dynamics of consumption and engagement?

These questions were first explored at the 21st International Seminar on *Music and Media, The Burnout Society... Music as a Drug?*, in which the guest editors of this dossier took part. The discussions that emerged from the conference made clear the need to extend this debate beyond the event itself, leading to the proposal for the present dossier. Bringing together scholars from a range of theoretical and methodological perspectives, the collection is united by a shared concern with the role of music, sound, and audiovisual media in shaping affect in contemporary culture. Although the contributions address diverse topics (cinema, digital platforms, sonic ecologies, compositional practices, political communication, and experimental audiovisual production) they all explore how sonic experience contributes to the formation of the regimes of sensibility that characterize contemporary society.

Anselmo Guerra's *Sounds that Affect: Dopamine, Ecological Listening, and Sonic Practices of Resistance in the Burnout Society* critically examines contemporary modes of sonic affect, contrasting listening regimes driven by immediate stimulation with the possibilities of an ecological mode of listening grounded in duration, resonance, and relationality. In *Sound as Invader: Class Tensions, Social Horror, and Perceptual Insecurity in Contemporary Brazilian Cinema*, Rodrigo Carreiro explores the role of the soundtrack in two Brazilian films (*Hard Labor*, 2011) and *Neighbouring Sounds* (2012). He demonstrates how noise, sound effects, drones, and sound design strategies create atmospheres of perceptual insecurity that resonate with the class conflicts at the heart of both narratives. Paula Gomes-Ribeiro's *Sound as Infrastructure for Political Circulation: Affect and Video on Digital Platforms* examines the audiovisual ecologies of digital

platforms through the circulation of political content on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. She argues that viral music clips, sound effects, and audiovisual templates function as affective infrastructures that organize attention, facilitate processes of semantic recontextualization, and enhance communication in media environments shaped by algorithmic logics and the accelerated circulation of content.

The dossier also features an interview with the Portuguese filmmaker Edgar Pêra, conducted by the Brazilian researcher Fabiano Pereira. Their conversation explores Pêra's distinctive visual poetics, discussing how his approach to image-making is informed by principles of musical composition and how this aesthetic has shaped his career since the 1980s. The essays section includes Rodolfo Coelho de Souza's *Audiovisual Creation as Alternative Production in the 'Burnout Society': An Analysis of the Virtual Music Cycle*. Drawing on a series of experimental video-music works created by the author, the essay examines alternative aesthetic and production models for contemporary art music within the context of digital platforms, bringing audiovisual theory, computational composition, and artistic experimentation into dialogue with the challenges posed by the Burnout Society.

Bringing together contributions that range from theoretical reflection and audiovisual analysis to empirical research, applied scholarship, and artistic practice, this dossier highlights the potential of music, sound, and audiovisual studies to illuminate some of the defining challenges of our time. We hope these essays will offer fresh perspectives for scholars interested in the intersections of media, culture, and subjectivity, while contributing to the continued development of this interdisciplinary field.

Juliano de Oliveira
Laura Loguercio Cánepa
Heloísa de A. Duarte Valente

Editors

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Juliano de Oliveira holds B.Mus. (2010), M.Mus. (2012), and Ph.D. (2017) degrees in Music from the University of São Paulo (ECA-USP), specializing in Musical Creation Processes. His doctoral dissertation was nominated for both the USP Thesis Award and the CAPES Thesis Award. He is the author of *A Significação na Música de Cinema* (Meaning in Film Music, Paco Editorial, 2019), the instructional method *10 Cantigas Populares para Piano com Acompanhamento de Orquestra em MP3* (e-book, 2022), and the novel *O Engaiolador de Instantes* (2025). A member of the Center for Music and Media Studies (MusiMid) since 2011,

he co-produced the radio program *Clássicos em Pauta* for Rádio USP Ribeirão Preto between 2011 and 2013, together with Marcos Câmara de Castro. He currently contributes to the radio program Sala de Música on CBN Ribeirão Preto. From 2015 to 2023, he served as pianist and music theory instructor for the Ribeirão Preto Symphony Orchestra Choir. He has also taught undergraduate music courses at the Catholic University of Santos (2013–2015) and at the State University of Paraná (2024–2025).

Laura Loguercio Cánepa is a film scholar and journalist, and a faculty member in the Graduate Program in Communication at Universidade Paulista (UNIP). She is also a CNPq Research Productivity Fellow. She holds a Ph.D. in Multimedia from the University of Campinas (UNICAMP), an M.A. in Communication Sciences from the University of São Paulo (ECA-USP), and a B.A. in Journalism from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). She completed postdoctoral research at ECA-USP under the supervision of Rubens Machado Jr. (2014) and was a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Leeds under the supervision of Stephanie Dennison (2019). In 2018, she received the INTERCOM Luiz Beltrão Award for Emerging Leadership in Communication Research. She has published extensively in Brazilian and international journals on Brazilian cinema, horror, and audiovisual culture. She previously served as editor of *INSÓLITA: Brazilian Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies of the Uncanny, Fantasy and the Imaginary* and *REBECA: Brazilian Journal of Film and Audiovisual Studies*.

Heloísa de A. Duarte Valente is Full Professor in the Graduate Program in Communication and Media Culture at Universidade Paulista (UNIP) and collaborates with the Graduate Program in Arts, Culture, and Languages (Music and Sound Studies) at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF). She holds a Ph.D. in Communication and Semiotics from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), completed research training at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS, Paris), and undertook postdoctoral research at the Department of Cinema, Radio and Television of the University of São Paulo (CTR/ECA-USP). Her research explores the intersections of music, culture, and media from the perspectives of communication, cultural semiotics, and music studies. She has edited or co-edited more than a dozen books resulting from the research project *The Song of the Media: Memory and Nomadism*. She founded the Center for Music and Media Studies (MusiMid), where she continues to coordinate research projects and academic events supported by CNPq, FAPESP, and CAPES. She is also the founder and organizer of the annual Music and Media Meetings, established in 2005. Previously, she was a faculty member and researcher in the Graduate Program in Music at the University of São Paulo (2008–2022), taught in the Master's Program in Public Policy at the University of Mogi das Cruzes (2011–2015), and served as a visiting professor at universities in Mexico (2002), Aveiro (2010), and the National University of Uruguay (2014).

LICENCE

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