

# **The words as magic as the music**

Rock journalist Lillian Roxon's discourses of rock music and rock music culture

Jasmin Vahtera

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Faculty of Humanities

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Abstract

In this thesis, I study the discourses of rock music in the writings of music journalist Lillian Roxon (1932–1973). Roxon was a pioneering journalist, gossip columnist, a chronicler and non-fiction writer. She left Australia, Brisbane for New York at the end of the 1950s. Roxon published *Lillian Roxon's Rock Encyclopedia* in 1969 which was a comprehensive work about rock musicians and bands from the 1950s to 1960s. The encyclopedia made her famous and in its wake, she was asked to become a rock columnist for a major newspaper *New York Sunday News*. In this thesis, I will focus on Roxon's column on rock music *The Top of Pop*, which ran weekly in the *New York Daily News* Sunday edition *New York Sunday News* from 1970 to 1973. The column was one of the first rock columns in a newspaper written by a female rock critic. In *The Top of Pop* Roxon wrote extensively and bravely on various topics related to rock music culture. She often paid attention to aspects that other media had not necessarily paid attention to, amongst others gender in rock music culture. Roxon was an influential critic and journalist of her time but still, she has been left in the shadows of rock music history.

The theoretical background of the study is located to Anglo-American music criticism, rock journalism, cultural study of music and gender in rock journalism. As a method for my study, I have used close reading of the columns and critical discourse analysis (CDA). This way I have formed the categories of different discourses I have analysed from the columns. Even though there are dozens of different themes in the columns certain topics can be differentiated. I have divided my thesis' analysis chapters into four different categories according to the themes. These are age, time and nostalgia, music and sound, gender and rock stars. According to my study, Roxon did maintain and reproduce features that were (and still are) commonplace in rock music culture such as the mystification of rock stars but she also pondered and brought forward less talked about themes such as gendered issues in the rock music scene. In Roxon's own discourses rock was most of all an ideology that divided people into us and them.

Equally, age was seen as an ideology too. In *The Top of Pop* Roxon wanted to create a picture that age does not determine, for example, whether you can participate in rock culture or not. Everyone who was involved in rock music culture could be seen as young. It was a question of choice. In addition, Roxon pondered, for instance, the gender discourses of rock music. She wanted to improve the status of women in rock music culture. Rock stars were the stars of the column and Roxon wrote about them from many different angles. She admired them, poked fun at them, mystified them. According to my study, for Roxon, the most important themes in both rock music and its performers were authenticity, transcendence, seriousness and decadence. *The Top of Pop* created its own world in the rock music scene of the 1970s in New York. Through her *Rock Encyclopedia* and *The Top of Pop* Roxon became an influential authority in rock music.

**Key words:** rock music culture, rock journalism, rock critic, rock stars, gender, nostalgia, feminism, 1970s rock music, 1960s rock music, rock and roll, women in rock, women in rock journalism, discourses.

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# 1 Introduction

Lillian Roxon (1932–1973) was one of the most influential rock critics and chroniclers of her time in the 1960s and 1970s in New York. Her heritage in rock criticism and rock writing echoes to these days. Roxon wrote the world’s first rock encyclopedia, *Lillian Roxon’s Rock Encyclopedia*, which was published in 1969 making Roxon a star and a remarkable rock authority of her time (Milliken 2002: 3, 160). Also, McDonnell and Powers (1995: 111) note that the encyclopedia made Roxon “one of the most influential and widely read rock journalists in America until her death in 1973”. After releasing the encyclopedia, Roxon was offered a job as a rock columnist in *New York Daily News* Sunday edition *New York Sunday News*. In May 1971 she began writing her *The Top of Pop* column (McDonnell & Powers 1995: 114) which was highly influential in the 1970s rock scene in New York. Along with this job, she became the first female rock columnist in a mainstream newspaper (Milliken 2002: 174). The column ran weekly from the beginning of 1970 until Roxon’s death in 1973. Roxon influenced both rock criticism and the rock culture itself. However, she is overshadowed by the larger study of the history of music criticism and therefore, it’s important to study her work.

I have chosen Roxon’s *The Top of Pop* -column for the subject of my study. The main question of this thesis is what kind of discourses of rock music and culture Roxon created through her column during 1970–73. By going through her texts, I study the themes that arise from her writing. In this thesis, I will present four main themes of discourse: age, music and sound, gender and rock star as a concept. These themes are the basic pillars through which Roxon considered the rock scene and culture of the 1960s and the 1970s. Because Roxon was one of the first female rock critics, I consider Roxon’s rock discourses, especially from her female perspective. I will examine the meaning of age and gender roles in rock culture, and how her discourse of music and rock stars was constructed. I will pull all these threads together to create a picture of how Roxon saw the rock culture of her time.

## 1.1 Rock journalism and rock criticism

Rock journalism was born in the 1960s and according to history scholar Laura Sikes (2017: 1), flourished for around a decade in its original form. Rock journalism and criticism is a part of a long tradition of music criticism “although rock critics challenged many of its conventions” (Sikes 2017: 15). “If rock music was supposedly all about rebellion, then rock writing could also be about chaos on the page and off” (Marren 2009). As journalism scholar Joe Marren well describes, rock

journalism created its own rules from the beginning. Rock writing was highly affected by New Journalism<sup>1</sup> which according to Sikes (2017: 4) gave “early critics the tools to convey the vibrancy and dynamism of the counterculture”. Rock writing became the apogee of New Journalism because of its overflowing style of using language and words (Genoni 2013: 126).

The first rock critics fought to change the attitudes towards at the time underestimated popular culture<sup>2</sup>. Rock writers introduced both the artistic and social possibilities of popular music, resulting in a more serious treatment of the music, and changing the whole field of music criticism (Sikes 2017: 2–3). Putting music in its social, cultural and political context “amplified the power of the countercultural content of the music” (ibid.). Rock critics aimed to show that also popular culture can be artistically high-end. They made rock music an artform by approaching the music and its culture in a new way. At first, rock writers were amateurs and non-professionals writing for specialist music magazines (Atton 2009: 53). The emergence of writers who had expertise in music, led to the development of serious music journalism “with the foundation of magazines such as *Crawdaddy* (1966) and *Rolling Stone* (1967)” (Genoni 1994: 125).

According to Sikes (2017: 52) the first rock critics had an important role of explaining the social and cultural meanings of a new phenomenon, the rock culture and music to readers. Rock critics also had a role in making the rock music and culture a valuable part of society (ibid.: 50). This was important because the cultural and social meaning of rock music was remarkable. According to American communication scholar Steve Jones (2002: 9) “popular music was a manifestation of the culture of the young people”. Law, cultural and media studies scholar Mark Fenster (2002: 83–84) has differentiated the tasks of a critic. According to him critics are “autonomous gatekeepers”, “opinion leaders” and “independent judges” with particular status and cultural capital<sup>3</sup>. According to communication studies scholar Kembrew McLeod (2002: 95), one of the most remarkable aspects of rock criticism is to maintain particular discourses. Those discourses help to determine “who feels comfortable enough to participate and socialize with those in music communities” (ibid.). Also, the concept of community is important when it comes to rock journalism. Rock

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<sup>1</sup> According to Laura Sikes (2017: 4), New Journalism is “challenging, innovative, and vital style of writing that emphasized subjectivity and storytelling”. Rock criticism can be seen as an important and underrecognized branch of the New Journalism (ibid.). New Journalism abandoned traditional journalistic practice to bring forward new subjective, creative, and candid style of reportage and commentary. (Johnson 1971 in Genoni 1994: 124) Now a journalist was able to be active observer and participant (Genoni 1994: 124).

<sup>2</sup> “Like jazz, rock and roll came from the lowest ranks of American society, originating in the African American community and becoming infused with influences from the rural South and the urban North”. As a result of its origins, rock music was judged by parents as bestial and subhuman. (Sikes 2017: 34, 36.)

<sup>3</sup> The term cultural capital is originally by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. With the help of the term one’s cultural status can be evaluated. (Ratner 2018: 568, 573.)

journalism constructed a sense of community and maintained a distance from music business (Jones 2002: 11). Rock journalism became a community of its own rules just like the rock music culture. According to Sikes (2017: 3) rock critics “helped explain the vast political changes that characterized the tumultuous period of the long Sixties, which lasted from 1958–1974, to their readers in real time, making sense of events while reinforcing the political context of rock music”.

## 1.2 Roxon’s biographical background

Liliana Ropschitz was born in Alassio, Italy in 1932. She was only six years old, when she had to escape from Italy for the persecution of Jews of the Second World War with her parents and two brothers. (Milliken 2002: 9, 10, 13–15.) At the end of the year 1938 the family left for London to plan their leaving from Europe. The family applied to enter either the United States or Australia. The Ropschitz family was lucky because in July 1939, they got permission to enter Australia. (Milliken 2002: 13–15.) They arrived at Brisbane via Melbourne in 1940 where they were forced to live underground to survive from the terrors of the Second World War. The first step was to change their name. Lillian came up with the new surname, Roxon. (Milliken 2002: 16, 22, 28.)

Despite difficult and unstable world situation, Roxon had a happy childhood. She went to a local school in Brisbane and was sent to a boarding school called St Hilda’s in 1944. She did well in school and wrote her first article to the school magazine at the age of 13. From a young age Lillian had a curious nature. She had always been interested in popular culture and was very keen on new teenage culture which started to emerge at the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s. At the beginning of 1949, at the age of 17, Lillian left Brisbane for Sydney to study at the University of Sydney. During her years in university, she was a part of a local cultural movement, “the Push”, whose members were pioneers of 1960s counterculture. (Milliken 2002: 32, 43, 46.)

In April 1955, Roxon graduated from university. She got a Bachelor of Arts diploma with majors in English and Philosophy. After graduation she worked in advertising. In 1956 she travelled to New York for the first time and spent there eight months. Right after she returned to Sydney, she took a job as a journalist in the tabloid magazine *Weekend*. However, her only plan was to return to America – next time for good. At the beginning of September 1959, she was on her way. (Milliken 2002: 83–84, 87, 98.) During her first years in New York, she wrote remotely a gossip column on the entertainment world for *Weekend* (McDonnell & Powers 1995: 113). Then she got a job in *Sydney Daily Mirror’s* New York bureau but resigned after a year. During that time, she also worked in London for a few weeks for *Sydney Morning Herald’s* Fleet Street bureau. (Milliken 2002: 103, 106, 109, 117.) After spending two months in London, Roxon returned to New York.

After working as a freelance journalist, in 1963, she took a full-time job in *Sydney Morning Herald's* New York bureau. She worked there until her death. She wrote weekly columns for different publications and newspapers, and in addition to *The Top of Pop*, she wrote and hosted a daily rock music radio program *Lillian Roxon's Discotique*.

Roxon settled in New York in 1959 – just when the big cultural changes, the emergence of counterculture, youth culture and rock culture, were about to happen. Working for *Sydney Morning Herald* led her to rock music. In an interview for *Quadrant* magazine in 1971, Roxon told that one of the main reasons why she ever even got into rock music was her late-night shifts in *Sydney Morning Herald* (McDonnell & Powers 1995: 114). In the article she recalled that her shifts from 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. made her “a night owl” (ibid.). This way she ended up finding two clubs, The Scene and Max’s Kansas City which were the hot spots of the rock and roll scene in the late 1960s and in the beginning of the 1970s in New York. Especially Max’s Kansas City became central and crucially remarkable for both her personal and professional life as well as a central source for her research (amongst others for the *Rock Encyclopaedia*). (McDonnell & Powers 1995: 114.) During the late 1960s, Max’s Kansas City became her hangout. There she was a star, and everybody knew her.

During her years writing her *Lillian Roxon's Rock Encyclopedia*, Roxon developed a severe asthma and her condition rapidly deteriorated. She spent her last night at Max’s Kansas City at Steve Lyons’ concert. After the concert she returned to her apartment near Max’s for the last time. She died on 10<sup>th</sup> of August in 1973 at the age of 41 of complications from asthma. A police officer and her closest friends, Lisa Robinson and Danny Goldberg found her from her apartment. (Milliken 2002: 221–222.) According to Milliken (2002: 222) her death was “full of cruel ironies”. At the time when rock stars died of drinking and drugs, Roxon (who didn’t do drugs) died from a natural malady. After Roxon's death, the papers were full of obituaries. Among them, for example *The New York Times* described her as “an authority on rock music and one of the leading chroniclers of its culture and personalities” (Milliken 2002: 224).

### **1.3 Previous research**

My study is about journalism, rock music and rock music culture, gender and cultural history. All these topics are largely academically researched as well as are women in journalism. One of the central sources for my whole topic has been *Pop Music and the Press* (2002) edited by American communication scholar Steve Jones. An article about gender and rock criticism (McLeod 2002), the articles about newspaper coverage of deaths of popular music stars (Mazzarella & Matyjevicz



2002), narratives of popular music criticism (Jones & Featherly 2002), transcendence in popular music discourse (Kruse 2002) and political economy of the music press and the democracy of critical discourse (Fenster 2002) have offered a lot of different angles to interpret the relations of popular music and media.

The book shows that the relationship between music and media is rarely unambiguous. The articles grab, amongst others, the themes of gendered language in music media and a role of a rock journalist in the field. In addition, *Pop Music and the Press* (Jones 2002) creates a comprehensive overview to rock culture and journalism from a cultural historical perspective. American rock criticism from 1966–1978 is studied by Laura Sikes (2017). In her PhD she goes through the early stages of rock criticism and writes about Roxon's contemporaries such as Ellen Willis. She argues that in light of history women's position in the field of journalism has been difficult. The relations between rock criticism and gender are also studied by communication studies scholar Kembrew McLeod (2002) and Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie (2000).

One of the four main themes in my thesis are rock stars. Frith (1983) studied star system and musicians and analysed the reasons why rock stars rise above everyday life. One of his central notions as the reason for musicians' special status among audiences is that their work is everyone else's leisure. This forms a setting that has also produced rock stars. In addition to Frith, stars and stardom is studied by scholars and academics Stephen Loy, Julie Rickwood and Samantha Bennett (2018) in *Popular Music, Stars and Stardom: Definitions, Discourses, Interpretations*. In the book, they, for instance, research and present different ideas and concepts related to stardom and consider the concept from different standpoints. David R. Shumway (2014) has studied the meanings of rock stars and argues that rock music culture wouldn't exist without them. He also ponders the relations between a star, a celebrity and fame.

British critical musicology scholar Derek B. Scott (2000) has reflected on the relationship between art and entertainment and the meanings of musical elements of rock music. Time and nostalgia are one of my four central themes and categories while dealing with Roxon's columns. *The Routledge Companion to Popular Music History and Heritage* (Baker & Strong & Istvandy & Cantillon 2018) presents the approaches to look at these subjects. The articles by media scholar Michael Pickering and media and communication scholar Arno van der Hoeven have been especially useful for my own study. In their articles, they write about popular music and memory and nostalgia in popular music. Australian media scholar Paul Genoni (1994) has published an article about rock

music journalism. In this article, he writes about the phases of rock journalism, the style of New Journalism and presents the ways which, according to him, make a good piece of rock writing.

Even though the themes I will study in this thesis have been studied a lot, there is only a little research on Roxon herself. In *Telling Stories: Australian Life and Literature, 1935–2012* (2013) Per Henningsgaard published an article about Lillian Roxon and her *Rock Encyclopedia*. Also, in 2002 journalist and author Robert Milliken published a comprehensive biographical study Roxon. The book *The Mother of Rock – The Lillian Roxon Story* (2002) has been in a key position for my thesis setting the background for my whole topic. However, apart from this comprehensive biography, Roxon has remained in the shadow of the rock history. Therefore, as I referred above, there is a place for such research.

## 1.4 Research questions, theory, and method

My research questions are:

- What kind of discourses Lillian Roxon constituted from rock music culture?
- How and in which ways she constituted those discourses?

The central question of this thesis is what kind rock discourses Roxon creates of rock culture through her column *The Top of Pop* during 1970–73. The sub question defines more specifically the factors and elements through which Roxon constructs her rock discourses. I have chosen the four theme categories mentioned above (age, time and nostalgia, music and sound, gender and rock stars) to study the central discourses. I concluded that the issues Roxon covers in her columns are mainly related to these four themes. Therefore, the division makes sense for my research.

### 1.4.1 Theoretical framework

The themes of my thesis intertwine with rock music culture, rock music sound, journalism, discourses and cultural-historical research of music. The larger context and background is in Anglo-American music research. At the core of the study, is rock journalism which forms the framework for interpretations of Roxon's writings. Within the theories of rock journalism, I ponder my four categories of themes. By analysing these concepts through and in Roxon's writing I can perceive her work in the context of rock journalism and its conventions. This study examines Roxon especially as a female critic in the field of rock journalism which is why gender is one of the important parts of my theoretical framework. The concept of women in rock is one of the starting

points. Roxon worked in two male-dominated fields at the same time: in rock journalism and in rock music culture. Therefore, an analysis from the perspective of gender is inevitable.

Media and journalism scholars Deborah Chambers, Linda Steiner and Carole Fleming (2004) have written an extensive study about the history of women in journalism. By going through the decades starting from the 1850s to the beginning of the 2000s they conclude that the institution and profession of journalism have been structured by gender both in the United States and Britain. This is an important starting point for my own study because one of my major themes is to consider Roxon's writing from a gender perspective and to place her in a male-dominated field. In their book *Rock She Wrote* (1995), journalists, writers and academics Evelyn McDonnell and Ann Powers studied female rock writers and the history of women in Anglo-American rock culture. They consider how women's role in rock music culture has changed over time. One chapter of the book deals with pioneering rock critics Ellen Willis and Lillian Roxon's life and writings, amongst others, Roxon's *The Top of Pop* columns. McDonnell and Powers draw a picture of women's position in early rock music magazines and open a new perspective on the early music press bringing forward the less talked about issues.

In addition to gender issues, Simon Frith, a pop and rock music specialized sociologist and rock critic with a long career, has studied especially Anglo-American pop and rock culture extensively in his books *The Sociology of Rock* (1978) and *Sound Effects: youth, leisure, and the politics of rock* (1983). These books offered a background for my own research setting the baseline for many of my considerations. Among many other themes, Frith explores themes concerning the rock audience, the creation of a rock star, and notions of rock as leisure. Two of Frith's most important notions are that rock music is a culture of youth, and that rock music forms ideological communities. Also, the concept of ideology is important part of my theoretical framework. According to Frith (1983), the concepts of political stance, sexuality, aggression, the concept of a city and rock music's relation to the underground are in the core of rock music's ideology. In addition, rebellion and its transformations and manifestations are in the core of rock ideology (Sikes 2017).

My considerations of age, time and nostalgia are based on the theories of cultural theorist Svetlana Boym. In her book, *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), she wrote especially about nostalgia. According to her, there are two types of nostalgia: restorative and reflective nostalgia. Restorative nostalgia is often serious, symbolic and reconstructive while reflective nostalgia focuses "on mediation of the history and passage of time" (Boym 2001: 49). Those approaches are restorative and reflective nostalgia which consist of the different stories of the past. Restorative nostalgia

focuses on collective memories and oral culture whereas reflective nostalgia seeks to reach individual narratives. Stardom is studied, amongst others, by scholars and academics Stephen Loy, Julie Rickwood and Samantha Bennett. In their book *Popular Music, Stars and Stardom: Definitions, Discourses, Interpretations* (2018) they present different ideas and concepts related to stardom and consider the concept through different standpoints. First and foremost, they note that the concept of a rock star is above the concept of celebrity. This is a suitable perspective for my research, because the idea of a rock star as something supernatural and divine, forms the basis of my fourth chapter of analysis which deals with the discourses of rock stars.

#### 1.4.2 Research material

As a research material I have 53 *The Top of Pop* -columns that were published in *New York Daily News* Sunday edition, *New York Sunday News* (NYSN) during 1970–73. *New York Daily News*, officially *Daily News*, is an American daily newspaper which was founded in 1919 (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2023). There's no complete collection of Roxon's columns, so I have found the columns for my analysis through different sources. Most of them I have read and downloaded as newspaper pages from the *New York Daily News* archives (U.S. Northeast Collection). Some of the columns I have gathered through a Facebook-group called *Lillian Roxon Tribute Page* maintained by Roxon's contemporary Jimi LaLumia. In the page, he has published photographs of Roxon's columns from his personal newspaper archives. The complete amount of Roxon's *The Top of Pop* columns must be about 115 because the column started to run weekly in May 1971 and continued until Roxon's death in August 1973. The complete amount of the columns I found for my research is 66. Of that amount, I have chosen 53 columns as my material. I chose the columns that most relevantly deal with issues related to rock discourses, such as gender and time. In the references (p. 67) of this thesis, you can find the complete list of columns I have analysed in the thesis.

At first, Roxon shared a column page with fellow entertainment columnist Rex Reed (McDonnell & Powers 1995: 115). However, Roxon's column became fast very successful and popular and based on that an entire page was soon given over to it (ibid.). As McDonnell and Powers (1995: 111) note, *The Top of Pop* discussed many issues that had been given short shrift by most male journalists as well as predicted many future developments in the rock-music business. According to them “ [the column] was a mixture of the new style of rock journalism, which concentrated almost as much on the sociological aspects of the music as the music itself, and classic tabloid-style gossip” (ibid.: 115). Jim DeRogatis (2000: 89) have noted four “camps” of rock writers: academics, historians, gossips and “The Noise Boys”. Roxon's specialties were rock criticism and rock gossip. Roxon's

role as a gossip columnist allowed her to act as an authority of standards and morality among the members of the rock scene. This role made her “considerable influence over the rock community (especially in New York)” possible. (McDonnell & Powers 1995: 111.)

### 1.4.3 Method

In the core of my thesis is the concept of discourse which is a multidimensional concept. Discourse studies scholar John Flowerdew and musicologist John Richardson write that the term discourse can refer to language use and the creation of knowledge and meaning in general. Their view of discourses forms a basis for my own analysis. Their central idea is that discourses can be understood as ways of speaking and sets of beliefs and values that are endorsed by ideologies, and that become meaningful through an analysis of the historical, socio-political and cultural foundations of the discourses (Flowerdew & Richardson 2018: 2–3). In their study, Flowerdew and Richardson (2018) presented critical discourse analysis (CDA). Concerning this, they note that in critical discourse studies (CDS) “the term discourse may also be used to refer to a specific set of meanings expressed through particular forms and uses which give expression to particular institutions or social groups” (ibid.: 2). According to Flowerdew & Richardson (2018, 2) critical discourse studies define the term discourse as following ways:

- essential component in the creation of knowledge and meaning that seeks to relate theories of language to theories of society
- use of language in general
- a way to look at a certain theme through its historical, socio-political and cultural foundations
- as a reference to a specific set of meanings expressed through particular forms and uses which give expression to particular institutions or social groups

One of the central characteristics of CDA is an identity which refers to the ways how individuals and groups see themselves and how they are in relation to others (ibid.: 4). This is an important thought because in chapter three I will consider how rock communities and other social communities divide into *us* and *them* (e.g., McLeod 2002: 95). Flowerdew & Richardson (2018: 3) also note that ideologies affect the discourses we engage. Social structures affect discourse and discourse affects social structure (ibid.). In his article, *Writing about listening: alternative discourses in rock journalism* (2009) media and culture scholar Chris Atton is considering the

concept of discourse in rock journalism. He ponders how rock journalists themselves can be positioned to the field and explains the ways discourses can be, and are constructed in rock writing.

I base my analysis also on John Richardson's (2012: 14) description of close reading. He has defined close reading based on Clifford Geertz "thick description" and Lawrence Kramer's "constructive description. According to Richardson (2012: 14, 16) close reading is a method by which we can analyse the discursive form of a media product in relation to the prevailing culture. As politics and communications scholar Gavriely-Nuri (2018: 123) notes, "no text is independent of its cultural contexts". The purpose of close reading is to find out and understand the meaning of media texts especially in cultural contexts. I have followed this kind of organizing of frames of interpretation while researching the columns.

According to Flowerdew & Richardson (2018: 1) CDA is an interdisciplinary approach to language that seeks to examine how "discourse figures in social processes, social structures and social change. Language analysis scholar Mariana Achugar (2018: 301) has listed what critical discourse analysis is in the historiographical approach. According to her, CDA

- contextualizes representations of the past in social practices
- locates the context of production of historical discourse
- investigates the context of reception of discourse about the past
- explores varying scales and indexical meanings of discourses about the past
- consider claims to legitimacy, valuing and social distribution of discourse about the past.

The thought of these five different categories has been the basis for my analysis since I study historical newspaper columns of rock music.

In addition, according to communications scholar Sean Phelan (2018: 288–289), CDA includes three levels of analysis. The first level highlights the structural conventions of media texts and language. The second focuses on the interdiscursive and intertextual character of media discourses, and the third, on the sociological implications of media discourses. Gavriely-Nuri (2018: 120) have stated that cultural approach to CDA (CCDA) is a tool "that can be used for decoding the cultural "cargo" implied in the discourse". According to her (2018: 121) CCDA, is an interdisciplinary approach that includes cultural memory, cultural narratives, cultural representations and cultural discourse analysis.

## 1.5 The structure of the thesis

In this first chapter of the thesis, I have introduced the subject and the previous research of it, presented the theoretical background and methodology of the study. Next begin the analysis chapters of the thesis (chapters 2–5). In these chapters, I consider Roxon’s rock discourse from four different angles: age, time and nostalgia, music and sound, gender and rock stars. I ponder the rock discourses by bringing up different themes from *The Top of Pop* column and by presenting Roxon’s writings in the light of previous research. Roxon rock discourses are building up chapter by chapter. At the end of every chapter, I make conclusions about the basic themes of a chapter. In the last chapter (chapter 6) I will conclude all the themes presented in the thesis and reflect on the findings by putting them into a larger perspective.

## 2 Rock and roll for all ages – the age and the passage of time

One of the most important concepts regarding rock music culture is time. Amongst others, time includes different styles of music and changes in culture. In this context, time appears as the questions of age and nostalgia, of which I will focus on in this chapter. Age has always been one of the central themes regarding rock music, since the whole rock music culture has been seen as the culture of youth. Especially, from the 1950s to 1970s, age was a defining factor in rock music culture, and rock and roll culture was heavily seen through the lens of the concept of age. Age justified and empowered, limited and prohibited, included and excluded. Likewise, the concept of nostalgia is central regarding popular music writing and history especially when considering the music of the 1950s and 1960s – the decade that is heavily mythologised and felt nostalgic for. In a nostalgic sense, it has been called as the golden age of rock (e.g. van der Hoeven 2018).

The 1960s brought many changes to the rock music culture. One of the most important turns was the revolution of the youth culture. According to Milliken (2002: 32) the word “teenager” first appeared already in 1940s. After the Second World War, popular magazines hit the markets which was the springboard for emergence of youth culture. Frith (1983: 32) points out that before the 1960s “music industry aimed its products at the family audience”. To this standard of activity, 1960s brought a remarkable turn. In the 1960s rock turned as youth music as well as working-class music (Frith 1983: 3). The relationship between popular music and age is prominent. This relationship has an important role in the creation of pop music’s cultural importance (ibid.: 9).

Anglo-American music, the most effective mass medium, is not bound to any specific country or class, educational or cultural background but, however, it is closely connected to age (Frith 1983: 7). According to Frith (1983: 9) this relationship has always been considered self-evident. Maybe, because the concepts of age and youth are in the core of pop and rock music and, in addition, to pop and rock audiences, “pop stars since Elvis Presley have been [...] also young” (ibid.: 9). Therefore, youth and age are – and were especially during the 1970s – inseparable parts of rock music culture. Frith (1983: 83) notes that musicians carry the fact of getting older with them all the time. “Rock is music made to celebrate being young [...] “. Therefore, especially for musicians, the time is decreasing gig by gig. Every performance is a way to stop the passage of time, a possibility to be young through the music. (Frith 1983: 83.)



This chapter is divided into two major themes which consider the aspect of time in rock music culture from the different points of view – age and nostalgia. In the first part I'm aiming to point out how rock music culture is in relation to youth culture (and therefore to age) and how this affects to the discourses derived from rock music and rock culture. Then I consider, how these themes are represented and constructed in Lillian Roxon's *The Top of Pop* -columns. I will consider the meaning of age in rock culture and the ways these meanings are represented. The second part of this chapter is dealing with nostalgia and its manifestations. First, I shortly consider nostalgia as a general concept within popular music and rock music culture. Then I focus on Roxon's representations and discourses of nostalgia of the 1950s and 1960s rock music. In the end, I will make a conclusion about the themes presented in the chapter.

## 2.1 Age as an ideology

For Roxon, age was an ideology which represented different meanings. Counterculture, which started to shape in the United States just when Roxon left Sydney for New York, was perceived strongly as a culture of the young – especially of the people under the age of 30. Already during 1960s and 1970s, the age of 30 had been made a turning point in human's life. Especially when it came to rock culture. Roxon, already well over that age, tended to make observations concerning that magical age. She wrote in a humorous, witty and often sarcastic way about the rock music culture. Roxon was 37 years old when she published her *Lillian Roxon's Rock Encyclopedia* in 1969 which led her to the career of a rock columnist. When she started writing *The Top of Pop* -column for *New York Sunday News* she was 38 years old. From this starting point the arrangement differed from the usual. Many music critics (and fans) of her time were comparably young, while she was nearly 40 – put differently, remarkably older than many of her contemporaries (McDonnell, Powers 1995: 114). In *The Top of Pop*, Roxon interpreted rock culture from her standpoint which is from the point of view of a 40-year-old rock critic and rock fan.

In her writing, Roxon tended to grab the issues of age. In 1972 in a text centering around Paul Anka's performance at the Plaza, Roxon stated that “if you think rock-and-roll is just for the young, you're sadly mistaken. [...] it is selfish and narrow to exclude older people from the fun of rock and roll” (NYSN, Jun 11, 1972). She was speaking to her audience but maybe also a little for herself too. These thoughts support Frith's (1983: 19) idea that in America audience matured together with music industry. Anka had started his career already during the 1950s and in this event Roxon wrote about, his fans from every age group had gathered. In the same text Roxon also considered the fandom, especially fans of Elvis and Tom Jones. She wrote: “Who says older ladies don't rush the

stage like teenagers? [...] Would you deny that particular happiness to people just because they happen to be over 35? I hope not” (NYSN, Jun 11, 1972). Roxon aimed at returning the past decade’s idea that popular music was for all ages and wrote in 1971 that “rock and roll is not just for you and me but for everyone” (NYSN, Jul 25, 1971).

From Roxon’s point of view the idea of “rock for all ages” was the starting point in her construction of the discourse of age. In her opinion, rock and roll was for everyone regardless of age, gender or any other factor for that matter. However, she was contradictory. She tended to praise and idealize youth but at the same time, she demanded age equality. She preferred to emphasize that people of different age were on the same line but still her positioning reflected the American ideology of age in rock music culture. Even though age was undeniably central question around rock music culture, Frith (1983: 10) notes that in the 1970s in America, youth was more of an ideology, rather than just an age category. However, according to him, American audience matured together with music industry, but also, American music press matured along with its audience, whereas in Britain, for instance, music magazines were targeted only for teenagers, and people “stopped buying new records at the age of twenty-five” (Frith 1983: 10).

Despite the demand of age equality, Roxon tended to idealize youth. Often, she wrote about age in a tragicomic way. Often, she also reminded that people are young and innocent only once. In October 1971, the book *Twenty-Minute Fandangos and Forever Changes; A Rock Bazaar* (ed. by Jonathan Eisen) was published. Roxon discussed about the book through the questions of time and ageing and wrote that,

I’m not sure who this book is for. Kids don’t have to read it, they live it. Most adults won’t understand it. I guess you could say it’s for adults not afraid of strange shapes truth sometimes takes and for kids who want to remember what the ‘60s were like before anyone serious tells them different. (NYSN, Oct 31, 1971).

Many times, Roxon wrote about age and “under-30-world” ironically. Obviously, she seemed to be tired and frustrated about the general discussion about age and how people were divided according to an actual age. The theme of criticizing the general norms and understandings is one of the basic things in Roxon’s column. She grabbed the grievances of society concerning age, sexuality, gender and so on. In 1971 she wrote about flower power documentary *Medicine Ball Caravan* (1971) and claimed it to be depressing but still important to see. However, she added that “just keep the over-30s away from it. It confirms their worst fantasies” (NYSN, Aug 22, 1971). The other notion of the documentary is associated with the nostalgia (of which I will consider later in this chapter) since in the text she also asked dejected about the film, “how could the love generation be so hateful?”

(NYSN, Aug 22, 1971). It seems, that Roxon wanted to preserve the image of the 1960s among the older generations and was afraid that their image might change to the wrong direction along with this movie Roxon herself regarded as depressing.

As much as Roxon loved to talk about age and rock and roll as a culture of the youth, she also got a lot of joy out of families consuming rock music together. In 1971 she wrote about the Big Sur Folk Festival: “[...] nothing gladdened my heart more [...] than the sight of whole families digging Joan Baez and the sunshine and the good vibrations” (NYSN, Jul 25, 1971). In 1973 she also wrote that she couldn’t “help having a soft spot” for the kids who couldn’t attend the Sunbury festival on the spot but were able to watch it on television (NYSN, Feb 18, 1973). In addition, that she was happy for the younger ones for that possibility, she also wrote that “it was terrific” for “us older stay-at-homes too” (NYSN, Feb 18, 1973). It is notable that especially in 1973, she started to express her ageing in her writing. In addition to this notion about “stay-at-homes”, she wrote about the emergence of the music television. “For some months now, rock has been spreading over late night TV like chocolate icing but, admit it, although, it’s been great to check up on the action without having to leave the living room” (NYSN, Apr 22, 1973).

Flowerdew and Richardson (2018: 3) note that ideologies can be used to promote the interests of a certain social group and that ideologies may create *us* versus *them* situation. The basic question of the ideology of rock music lies in differentiating young taste versus old taste. Elements of rebellion are always directed against the adult generation. (Frith 1983: 70.) For example, Roxon wrote that Black Sabbath is “definitely not music for parents” (NYSN, Feb 4, 1973). Exclusion, for instance, might have occurred in terms of age. In 1972 Roxon wrote that “Tom Jones is not exactly a rock-and-roll-star anymore [...] young fans [...] have written him off because of his heavy adult following [...]” (NYSN, May 28, 1972). This expresses the strict boundaries within the music culture that segregates the ones regarded as *young* from those regarded as *old* (I italicize the words *young* and *old*, later also the words *us* and *them* every time I want to emphasize their significance as ideological categories). For teenagers and the youth, it was ideologically really important to differentiate themselves from the ones the rock music culture shouldn’t appeal to anyway. As McLeod (2002: 95) indeed points out, one of the most important tasks of rock criticism is to maintain particular discourses which make possible to divide people into *us* and *them* which is important regarding the identity of both groups but especially the young.

Roxon didn’t care about people’s actual age. She emphasized the idea that people can identify themselves regardless of age. At the time, a person who was into rock music culture was considered

*young*. Whereas you were regarded as *old* if you disapproved or didn't understand this new culture around rock music. Rock music culture functioned as a watershed between identities. Roxon herself could be categorized as *young* because she was very into the new youth culture, sometimes even more than many people young at age. Also, her writings radiate her identification to the generation of the *young*. This idea is also supported by Roxon's lifestyle. Roxon lived a kind of a rock star lifestyle spending long nights in clubs listening to rock music and writing about it, hanging out with the biggest rock stars and artists of the time and forgetting her own health when writing the first encyclopedia on rock music (Milliken 2002: 207). I will get back to theme in a chapter about rock stars (chapter 5). After all, age seemed to play very little role in how a person was seen or categorized. It was all about "choosing your side" and identifying with the others on the same side.

Roxon treated young people respectfully. Albeit Roxon stood for age equality she also idealized adolescence and young people. In February in 1973 Roxon was in Australia, Sydney, to see Slade performing in a big outdoor concert. In her report, she portrayed the concert day in a lively way praising the ideal picture of the youth. From Roxon's vibrant description a reader could feel being on the spot oneself. "Sydney, Australia, is a breezy, sunshiny city of some four million souls, and on a hot summer's day like this one, it seems like every one of them is young, suntanned, blond, and out here at Randwick Racecourse" (NYSN, Feb 18, 1973). According to the spirit of the time, Roxon juxtaposed youth with the rock culture, vitality and liveliness. In her report she also mentioned that she was thrilled to see the concert audience, because everyone was "beautiful and smiling".

In 1973 Roxon got interviewed in Gary Hide's popular music television show GTK. There she argued that "the nicest thing about rock and roll is that it isn't a science [...]. A 14-year-old kid is as qualified as I am, and I'm as qualified as he or she is". (Henningsgaard 2013: 288–289.) Roxon didn't judge people based on their age but abilities and considered everyone being on the same line. In 1972 she wrote about Andy Paley's music concerning the theme of age. "[...] listen to their new album, especially the first side, and see if it doesn't make you feel 14 again, in the nicest possible way. (If you are 14 and want to feel 28, that's another story)" (NYSN, May 7, 1972). For Roxon, youth was something lovely and beautiful yet unreachable. However, she thought that a person could reach the mood of youth specifically through rock music. It can also be interpreted that she felt congeniality with everyone who were interested in rock music and culture in a same way than with professionals of the field. This is strongly related to McLeod's (2002: 95) notion of discourses and the division to ideological categories *us* and *them*, which I mentioned above. Roxon maintained and reproduced the idea of the whole rock community as *us*.

## 2.2 Nostalgia

Since popular music can be seen as music made for commercial purposes and for large audiences (which any other style of music is not) it is important to note that record business effects remarkably on the essence of popular music's relationship to time and nostalgia (Frith 1983: 6). Frith (1983: 8) notes that: "The record industry depends on constant consumer turnover and therefore exploits notions of fashion and obsolescence to keep people buying [...]. In a blink of an eye, a record has turned to an "oldie" which only value is in its nostalgic connections" (ibid.). Recorded music is a remarkably important tool for remembering and "bringing back" the past. This is the starting point for this second part of the chapter. Here I will focus on how Roxon considered the past and nostalgia in rock music culture in her texts and what kind of picture of the past she created through her discourses of nostalgia.

In the context of popular music, van der Hoeven (2018: 238) defines nostalgia<sup>4</sup> as "a longing for the past that is evoked through popular music's production and consumption or representations of its history and heritage". Nostalgia is a way to build continuity between the past and present (ibid.). However, the theories of nostalgia have evoked a lot of critical commentary, and nostalgia has been criticised for idealisation of the past (van der Hoeven 2018: 241). van der Hoeven's (2018) idea of nostalgia as a bridge between the past and the present, is present in Roxon's writing. *The Top of Pop* -column was written in the early 1970s but still it didn't focus on new music of the time exclusively. The past was present all the time and in some texts nostalgia has been given an important role. Put differently, though Roxon hold intently onto the present and was up to date when it came to music scene of the time, she tended to draw continuous references to the past and emphasized the significance of it. However, also the thought of embellished past is present here because in her writing Roxon tended to idealize especially the 1960s. Along with the descriptions of the present she created a strong, vivid and delicately palpable picture of the rock music culture of the past.

In Roxon's column *The Top of Pop*, nostalgia was a set of personal and collective memories. For her, the past decades were something she admired and wanted to bring forward occasionally. She felt something was lost when the 1970s came. Roxon was keen to compare her experiences of 1970s rock music life to her memories of the 1950s and 1960s music culture. It can be interpreted

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<sup>4</sup> The concept of nostalgia is derived originally from the seventeenth century, and it was coined by Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer. He used the term "to describe the feelings of homesickness that, for example, soldiers felt when they were fighting abroad (Boym 2001 in van der Hoeven 2018: 239).

from Roxon's writings that for her, 1960s rock scene were the dearest. She tended to see and appraise everything through the lens of a 1960s rock fan. For her, the 1960s music was the starting point, the idea of the real rock music, the golden age. This view is understandable considering Scott's (2000: 2) notion of the concept of cultural fall. This term refers to the viewpoint according to which people commonly see the culture deteriorating within their own lifetime. This again refers to the common thought of memories growing sweeter with time. Roxon's knowledge of rock culture and her personal experiences within the culture gave her a good basis for writing – and for immersion in nostalgic memories.

In 1972 Roxon noted that “you should remember [...] the ‘50s weren’t just motorbikes and grease. There was a whole folk thing going on then to which almost every group that emerged in the ‘60s owes an enormous debt” (NYSN, Feb 27, 1972). At the time she predicted that 1950s revival is knocking on the door. She stated that there were three things that confirmed that 50’s revival was gathering momentum. Those things were the “joyous reception of Sha Na Na”, “joyous reception of Jerry Lee Lewis” and an “enormous success of a ‘50s revival group Flash Cadillac” (NYSN, Feb 27, 1972). When Jackie Curtis's *Vain Victory* musical was released, Roxon thought it would have been the beginning of “a substantial revival of the ‘50s” (NYSN, Aug 29, 1971). Roxon predicted many upcoming changes in rock culture in advance and loved to prove herself right.

There isn't a thing in the store, not the records in the jukebox, not the stacks of old fun magazines, not the rows of pointy-toed shoes, that doesn't glorify the '50s [...] and cost plenty to boot. The '50s revival, as I predicted some months ago, is well and truly among us. (NYSN, Aug 29, 1971).

As I mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, Svetlana Boym (2001) has theorized nostalgia as a relationship between two approaches, restorative and reflective nostalgia, that consider the past from different angles. Boym (2001, 41) describes the difference of the terms in a following way:

Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past, while reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time.

Boym is interested in the interrelations “between individual and collective remembrance”. These two categories offer different shapes and meanings to longing and talking about the past. (ibid.: 41.) According to Boym (ibid.: 49) restorative nostalgia aims to reconstruct a “perfect snapshot” of the past while reflective nostalgia seeks to create individual narratives that can be humorous or ironic but still also longing. In her writing, Roxon combined both these elements of nostalgia: restorative but also reflective. In many of her texts she missed the past decades, especially 1960s. However,

she often did it in an ironic way. In other words, when writing about nostalgia Roxon always had a twinkle in her eye. An example of how she combined restorative and reflective view to nostalgia can be seen in a previous sentence. According to Roxon, the 1950s were “abominable, awful, execrable beyond description and belief” (NYSN, Aug 29, 1971). In the same column she wrote: “What this country needs is less of those depressingly repetitive peace-and-love festival films and more genuinely nostalgic ‘50s rock musicals with plenty of denim [...]. In many ways the time is ripe.”

However, roughly speaking, Roxon’s view over the 1950s and 1960s is divisible regarding Boym’s (2001) notions of nostalgia. It can be interpreted that for Roxon 1950s were more a decade of a restorative nostalgia whereas 1960s were a decade of reflective nostalgia. Her interpretations of the 1960s were usually full of longing and individual memories while her perceptions of the 1950s were more symbolic and rebuilding the culture. In *The Top of Pop*, Roxon often discussed about both decades, 1950s and 1960s as a source of longing, nostalgia and happy memories. However, Roxon approached those decades from different perspectives. For Roxon, 1960s was always “that marvellous, dreadful decade” (NYSN, Oct 15, 1972). The 1950s she approached more objectively. Consequently, her view of the 1950s were more restorative nostalgia. She didn’t mythologize the decade but wrote down plain music historical questions and things connected to those. About the 1960s, she wrote in a reflective way. Roxon didn’t focus on facts but feelings, memories, atmospheres, sounds and music. She had a personal and subjective relationship to the 1960s music whereas, concerning the 1950s music culture she was more of a spectator.

The music of the 1960s has always been heavily mythologized. Also Roxon’s depictions of the 1960s sustain the discourse of the mythologized decade by admiring its gracefulness. However, as van der Hoeven (2018: 243) notes, nostalgic remembering is not always about holding on to the past and the ways things were back then. He suggests that nostalgia can simply be about celebrating the music of the past and its “longevity as a living culture”. This interpretation well depicts Roxon’s approach to nostalgia. To her, every decade was beautiful in its own way and she indeed created an impression that her main goal, when it came to nostalgia, was to celebrate the music from the past and to tell others how incredible it was.

Roxon was constructing a discourse of the 1960s as a decade of love, innocence, freedom and joy; the concepts that are also generally often related to the decade. Her impression and depiction of the hippie movement and people who were involved with it was really idealistic, yet a bit ironic. In 1972 she reminisced the audiences of Donovan in mid-sixties being “sweet-faced, gentle kids with

expressions so idealistic they seemed to be floating” (NYSN, Oct 29, 1972). This supported her impression of the decade as light and happy. Regarding Donovan Roxon wrote that: “ [...] I consider his [Donovan’s] songs not only among the loveliest of the ‘60s but also the truest snapshots of that romantic time” (NYSN, Nov 21, 1971). However, at the same time when she reminisced the 1960s she, occasionally, stated that people should still move on. According to Roxon, there was a boom of biographies about the artists of the 1960s during the first years of 1970s. Referring to this she asked if “all the ‘70s going to be spent reliving the ‘60s?” (NYSN, Oct 15, 1972).

Media scholar Michael Pickering (2018: 191) notes that popular music is “a potent component of processes of remembering”. A piece of music or a song can be moving because it can carry a lot of memories of the past making us think about a person or place (ibid.). For Roxon, one of the most powerful features of rock music itself was in its nostalgic values and possibilities. She often referred to past music and events that still made her shiver. As an example of this, Roxon suggests the Simon & Garfunkel’s “The 59<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Song ” to be the ultimate 1960s song. According to her, it brought “back the mood of innocent middle ‘60s music more than anything I can think of” (NYSN, Jun 25, 1972). The lyrics of the song indeed reflect and even summarize Roxon’s view of the 1960s:

Slow down, you move too fast  
 You got to make the morning last  
 Just kicking down the cobblestones  
 Looking for fun and feeling groovy  
 Ba da-da da-da da-da, feeling groovy

Hello lamppost, what'cha knowing  
 I've come to watch your flowers growin'  
 Ain't you got no rhymes for me?  
 Doo-ait-n-doo-doo, feeling groovy  
 Ba da-da da-da da-da, feeling groovy

I got no deeds to do, no promises to keep  
 I'm dappled and drowsy and ready to sleep  
 Let the morningtime drop all its petals on me  
 Life, I love you, all is groovy  
 (Simon & Garfunkel: The 59<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Song).

The lyrics described Roxon’s interpretations of the 1960s very well. The song creates a light, smooth, innocent, carefree, happy and sunny feeling. The same impression can be found from Roxon’s writings. In addition that this song summarized Roxon’s own impressions of the 1960s rock music and rock music culture, it summarized the discourses she created of the 1960s. In



addition, Roxon brought up the compilation album of the 1960s music. This *Nuggets: Original Artefacts from the First Psychedelic Era*, compiled American rock music from 1965–68. Roxon praised the album to be “the most nostalgic” and described it to be “almost more than I could bear”. She stated that for middle-60s fans, like herself, that decade brought back a lot of memories. (NYSN, Oct 15, 1972.) In the same column she was also remembering longingly the 1960s rock culture and events. Roxon’s impression of the 1960s was sometimes so idealistic that it’s sympathetic. Sometimes she just shamelessly dived into the endless pool of memories.

Do you remember? When boys first started growing their hair long? The first time you heard the Airplane on AM radio? The first time you saw Janis live? Your reaction when you heard “Sergeant Pepper”? The Animals at the Paramount? [...] (NYSN, Oct 15, 1972).

In a sense of nostalgia, The Rolling Stones were an important band for Roxon. The band, and especially Mick Jagger, was mentioned often in her texts. In 1972 on 14<sup>th</sup> of May Roxon wrote about a photobook of the Rolling Stones. In the text she again divided people into *us* and *them*. *Us* referred to all who lived and loved 1960s music including Roxon herself. *Us* were “the Stones generation”, as she put it (NYSN, May 14, 1972). The youth of the 1970s was *them*. However, when it came to division into *us* and *them* also outfit mattered. In 1972 Roxon poked fun at another reporter in Leon Russell's concert. “The reviewer from the New York Times may occasionally wear a tie, because he has a wry sense of humor [...] but everyone else who writes about music, including me, wears what everyone wears at concerts, T-shirts, blue jeans, and sneakers. And why not?” (NYSN, Oct 1, 1972).

With that phrase, Roxon took a strong stand on the matter of who was a “real” rock critic and who wasn’t, who understood the rock culture and who didn’t, who was *us* and who was *them*. In the same year Roxon considered whether “Alice Cooper generation” was going to dismiss the whole thing [the Rolling Stones photobook] “as just another piece of pathetically dated ‘60s nostalgia” (NYSN, May 14, 1972). However, she assumed that there would have been teenagers who were just getting into the Stones and stated that “for them, the book will be like a painless trip back in the Time Machine” (NYSN, May 14, 1972). Roxon continued by comparing her own thoughts of the book which again expressed her longing.

For me, it’s [the book] just a reminder, and not always painless, of how much the Rolling Stones were [...] a part of our lives and growth. Remember the first time you heard “Lady Jane” ? and “Satisfaction” ? and “Back Street Girl” ? and “Paint it Black” ? I can. (NYSN, May 14, 1972).

In Roxon's rock discourses also the Rolling Stone's lyrics were central for understanding the spirit of the 1960s. Her opinion of the lyrics is exhaustive. According to her, Rolling Stones' "lyrics alone tell all you'll ever need to know about rock and roll and the Stones and what happened in the middle '60s" (NYSN, May 14, 1972). In her depiction, Roxon juxtaposed the whole middle 1960s rock music culture with the Rolling Stones giving the band a lot of significance. In 1973 she pondered over rock's nostalgic value in the future.

The time has come for a rock and roll museum. Not that rock is dead or anything, but that it already has more memories and nostalgia than it can easily contain." [...] I mean, won't that all be a scream in 10 years time when short hair and big bands are back? So, listen, if you have any mementoes of the rock era, your first fringed suede jacket, a photo you took of Jimi Hendrix at Woodstock, a tape of an Alex Bennet show, Murray the K's autograph, anything, just hold on to it. When we start the rock museum, it'll be valuable history. (NYSN, Apr 15, 1973).

### 2.3 Always under negotiation

Rock music's cultural importance is bound to its meaning as youth culture. During the first decades of rock history from the 1950s to 1970s, rock and roll culture was especially the culture of youth. The general idea was that rock is a chance to be *young* and to stay young. The age of 30 was seen as a borderline which divided people into *young* and *old*. For Roxon age was, most of all, an ideological category. From her perspective, a person was young if she/he listened to rock music and was in the rock music scene. In general, a rock community was *us*. Roxon divided people into ideological categories *us* and *them* regarding a person's relationship to rock culture. A term *us* referred to people in rock scene and *them* to all others. For Roxon, rock culture was all about choosing your side.

However, Roxon also praised youth. Even if she often stated that rock is for all ages and everyone and tried to make age equality visible, she still wrote how younger ones were innocent, authentic and pure. Roxon started *The Top of Pop* -column when she was 38 years old. Therefore, she was older than many others in the rock music scene let alone rock writers who tended to be young at age. Roxon's age put her automatically in a position where she had to recognize her own position compared to rock culture at the time. At the same time, she lived like a young person and led her own rock star lifestyle with late nights in the club and hanging out with other stars. However, sometimes Roxon also emphasized her real age. She emphasized the fact that she had experience from other decades of rock music (than only the 1970s) which gave her authority in the scene.

For Roxon, the 1960s was the golden age, the mythical decade of rock music. To her it presented something light, happy, cheerful and lively. Roxon approached the 1970s music culture from the perspective of a 1960s rock fan which affected her impressions of 1970s music. For her, the 1970s music appeared as darker and more serious. According to Roxon, the 1950s was a decade to which the 1960s and 1970s owed a lot. Therefore, nostalgia is present in *The Top of Pop*. Roxon approached the 1950s rather objectively while the 1960s very subjectively. From *The Top of Pop*, it can be analysed that Roxon liked to immerse herself in nostalgia. For her it was a safe and beautiful chest of memories and endless longing.

### 3 Music

“You must know, by now, my thoughts about rock-and-roll. If it moves you, it’s valid”, wrote Roxon in 1972 (NYSN, May 28, 1972). Australian media scholar Paul Genoni (1994: 125) wrote that good rock writing captures the essence of music. According to him, this happens through many different techniques, “such as using a broad general knowledge of the history and styles of the genre”. Genoni (1994: 126) also notes that in rock critic it’s important that the writer can describe not only how music sounds like “but what it *feels* like”. Roxon started to write her *The Top of Pop* - column just after the turn of the decade in 1970. Her writings reflected her controversial thoughts about the new decade. She was not sure how she felt about that new, different and modern decade. Her overall interpretation of the 1970s rock music culture was that everything got serious back then which she didn’t like. The golden decade of peace and love, the 1960s, was behind and rock music and culture started to get new forms and shapes.

For Roxon, the seriousness was the sin of the 1970s rock music. Her impression was that joy and happiness were lost from music after 1960s. “I’d like to see a lot more funny music” she wrote on 24<sup>th</sup> of December 1972. She illustrated her feelings about 1970s music and rock culture in one of the columns where she compressed her impressions over the 1970s culture.

Almost every word written about rock music these days, including those I write right now, is too serious for its own good. If we’re not careful, rock will choke to death on its own feelings of self-importance. Worse, it will go respectable and bore itself, and us, into oblivion. (NYSN, Oct 31, 1971).

However, at the same time, Roxon took a strong stand on a contemporary music’s stylistic phenomenon and analysed the 1970s rock culture. “I mean, seriously, if you don’t wear make-up and dye your hair and make people sit up and look twice, you don’t belong in 1972 rock and that’s that” (NYSN, Oct 8, 1972). The valuation of rock was influenced by many other things than just the music itself.

In this chapter I will examine Roxon’s rock music discourse in her column *The Top of Pop*. I will focus on how she described rock music and sound and wrote about it. I study the ways she examined and experienced the rock culture at the time and the ways in which she valued music. I also examine what meanings rock music carried for her. In this chapter, overall, I am trying to constitute the rock music discourse by Lillian Roxon. The chapter is divided into three main parts. First, I deal with rock as an ideology. Then, I will look at rock music in terms of low and high culture. In the last part of the chapter, I consider rock music as sound both on record and live.

### 3.1 Rock as an ideology

Simon Frith (1983: 10–11) defines rock as an American music that is “produced commercially for simultaneous consumption by a mass youth market”. According to Powers and McDonnell (1995: 20), rock music became the most profitable music genre in 1968. Right around that time when *Lillian Roxon’s Rock Encyclopedia* (1969) was published. Before this transformation, the characteristics of rock had changed. Frith (1983: 72) suggests that the commercial success of Bob Dylan and folk music in general shaped the rock ideology during the mid-sixties. One of the most important characteristics was that, at that time, rock started to become middle-class. In the 1950s rock was mostly music for and by working-class teenagers. During the 1960s rock became middle-class: musicians were more educated than before such as were the listeners. (Frith 1983: 64.) Along with these transformations, rock music began to become defined as self-expression and social commentary which was a clear turning point in the whole culture (Frith 1983: 72). All these changes can be seen as a beginning of a slow transformation towards rock music as art and as a serious form of music. The factors that made rock music valued were also ideologically important. These factors were music’s political stance, aggression, sexuality and relationship to underground. (Frith 1983: 168.)

According to Frith (1983: 88), rock audience itself is an ideological construction. Like every other group, this group of people creates themselves their own way to be in the world. Based on this, for instance, *us* and *them* categories (of which I talked about in chapter 2) are formed. The concept of rebellion and its transformations are important part of rock music ideology. According to Sikes (2017: 44), in the 1950s rock and roll inspired rebellion was mostly symbolic<sup>5</sup> and that not until during the 1960s music began to be tied to widespread social and political change. According to Frith (1983: 12; see also Atton 2009: 65) rock writers are not interested in rock as music but as a cultural phenomenon. Frith (1983: 14) therefore suggests that this forms a paradox because “rock’s cultural significance is as a form of music, while rock’s ideology is not articulated in musical terms.”

Therefore, because writers and journalists are more interested in rock as a social phenomenon, rock’s critical terms are impressionistic and descriptive (Frith 1983: 14). Sikes (2017: 3) notes that at the time during the 1960s and 1970s rock criticism was an important political factor because it served rebellion for the youth. It constituted an ideology around the music. The music was a

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<sup>5</sup> By symbolic rebellion Sikes (2017: 39) means that most of the 1950s rock fans didn’t behave differently than previous generations (even though there were “parental outrage about juvenile delinquency”).

political instrument by which people were able to transmit ideologies and ideas. In this context, critics worked as intermediates between musicians and audience. Somewhere in that middle ground, the ideology of rock took shape. The concept of myth is important. Myth refers to a traditional story which can, for instance, explain a cultural belief or practice of a group of people. Here myth refers to produced, maintained and repeated rock conventions, or “rock myths” which are conventional ways of understanding the different features. (Cambridge Dictionary 2023.)

### 3.1.1 The concept of a city

If you want good, solid stuff, you’ve always had to go to the Midwest ... But I think that’s what’s nice about New York, it is that it’s bizarre and it gives you a little glimpse into the future. You always know what’s going to happen from watching there. It’s fringe today but mainstream tomorrow. (Roxon 1973 in Henningsgaard 2013: 288).

This is a quote from Australian music television show GTK where Roxon was interviewed in 1973. She was asked about New York’s music life. This quote described the idea that the *city* (I italicize the term when emphasizing its ideological aspect) acts as a trendsetter. Regarding rock music culture the division and tension between a city and a countryside is one of the central themes. According to Frith (1983: 27) “the country symbolizes the past, the family and the community, stability and a sense of place”<sup>6</sup>. City culture in turn, is commercial culture; therefore the ‘country’ stands for authenticity (ibid.). According to a critical musicology scholar Derek B. Scott (2002: 11), rock as a term can add a special intention and effect to the music. For instance, country-rock is a term to which country adds a special meaning of authenticity.

However, the concept of a *city* is central regarding rock music and culture – rock music is the sound of a city. Therefore, the word *city* is both, a concrete but also an ideological concept. Frith (1983: 88) describes the importance of a *city* to music ideology:

Rock means commercial city leisure, the clubs and bars where bohemians mingle with the lumpenproletariat, where the bourgeoisie is robbed rather than shocked, where inner city fun is systematically detached from suburban respectability. Music here is not a comment on life but an escape from it [...].”

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<sup>6</sup> Therefore, country rock is a nostalgic form of music, “an attempt by musicians to draw on long-gone roots” (Frith 2018: 27).

In this quote, Frith demonstrates the way rock music assimilates with leisure and urban culture which makes it so tied with the *city* environment. The city is seen as a central stage of happenings.

For Roxon a big city, here New York, represented the hotspot and the future of the rock music. According to Jones and Featherly (2002: 22) the inner city is an important concept when it comes to popular music in general. They suggest that “popular music incorporates elements of urban life (and vice versa)”. Roxon’s one of the most descriptive depictions of 1970s music is full of nostalgia mixed with the idea of adolescence and the inner city. On 5 of August in 1973, in her last column before her instant death, she described very lively and carefully the spirit of New York rock sound of the 1970s. As usual, Roxon created and maintained a myth of New York as a city romanticizing it and its rock scene. For her, New York was the queen of the cities, and often her impressions of the city were full of the spirit of the time, nostalgia, youth and the life in the city.

The New York Dolls are the best, and their album “The New York Dolls”, is the definitively New York sound album. It gets you up and dancing and feeling 16 again. It’s what being young and in New York is all about. (NYSN, Aug 5, 1973).

### **3.2 From low to high – from pop to rock**

Regarding music and culture, the negotiation about low and high culture is one of the key questions. This is one of the aspects that affect how people identify themselves with certain music culture and how the different styles of music are valued. Through time, the fundamental division in music has been a division to pop music and classical music. Classical music has been regarded as high culture whereas pop and rock music have commonly been regarded as low because popular culture in general often includes the aspect of entertainment. In rock music, there has always been “an attempt to distinguish between serious rock and brash, commercial pop” (Scott 2002: 2). Put differently, inside popular music scene that general is seen as low in, rock music is regarded as “high”. In a general discourse, rock carries “noncommercial concerns”, such as intimations of sincerity, authenticity and art – all of which contrast with “low” pop (Frith 1983: 11). Commercialism is at the center of rock negotiations. “The belief in a continuing struggle between music and commerce is the core of rock ideology” (Frith 1983: 41). Also, according to Scott (2002: 11) the division between art and entertainment is in the core of mass culture theory<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Mass culture theory refers to cultural products that are both mass-produced and for mass audiences such as magazines and popular music (Oxford Reference 2023).

Balancing between artfulness and commercialism has always been one of rock music's biggest disputed questions. Rock was seen as self-expression that couldn't be "subordinated to any market" (Scott 2002: 34). However, this anti-commercial ideology of rock contradicts with the fact that rock music was supposed to please the audience, especially the youth (ibid.). The other comparison were the lyrics. "In rock, words mattered; in pop, it seemed, they did not" (Scott 2002: 34). Rock lyrics were seen as poetry, whereas pop lyrics appeared as nothing but empty rhymes and blank language. The fact that rock music often becomes meaningful through its lyrics, is related to singer-songwriters who are seen as artistic geniuses. Therefore, rock lyrics are easy to regard as artistic, deep and serious. I will return to this theme of artistic genius in the next chapters about gender and rock stars.

In terms of high and low culture and music, seriousness is an important aspect when valuing and categorizing music. For example, glitter rock was generally regarded as controversial. Concerning the genre, Roxon wrote Iggy Pop to be "into something a little bit more substantial than glitter rock" (NYSN, Apr 8, 1973). Just a few days before her instant death, Roxon pondered the meaning and the emergence of glitter rock referring to the letters she had gotten from her readers.

Some of you, those of you who write me long letters painstakingly explaining why it's been wrong of me to encourage glitter rock, should understand it's not a question of what I, or you, like, but merely the exploration of what is about to become a New York phenomenon. Even as Alice Cooper becomes so successful, he's now part of the Establishment, even as David Bowie announces he's through with those flashy live appearances, even as Ray Davies talks wildly of retiring, something is happening in New York that would astonish them all. New glitter groups are popping up like mushrooms, and though some of them look terrible and sound worse, every one of them seems to have found its own growing core of fanatic followers. (NYSN, Aug 5, 1973).

In the late 1960s, rock began to be seen as an art form (Frith 1983: 14). Furthermore, at the same time, rock as art was distinguished from rock as entertainment (Frith 1983: 73). It was due to, among other things, the proliferation of rock criticism and rock writing as I have stated in the previous chapters. First rock critics were the first ones to take rock seriously. They showed that rock can be regarded as an artform, as something that is interesting to analyse and write about. During the 1970s rock was assessed as best music especially from artistic perspective. Artistic values of rock music had become the most valuable. Therefore, new questions had to be answered. For the



emergence of analysing rock as art, critics had to “establish their own version of auteur theory<sup>8</sup>”. (Frith 1983: 52.)

According to McLeod (2002: 101), many critics value “a sense of rebellion or, at least, excitement” in rock music. Also, Roxon was constantly searching for “wild excitement” as she put it in 1971 (NYSN, Oct 24, 1971). McLeod (2002: 106) points out that usually “experimentation, inventiveness, and musical rule breaking are traits associated with critically favoured artists”. Music is a way to construct one’s identity and therefore there are many factors that are essential when it comes to valuing music. McLeod (2002: 101) wrote that from many music critics’ point of view, slick “overproduction dilutes the “rawness” and “intensity” of rock’n’roll and all that it implies”. The seriousness of favoured music is contrasted with vapidness of the musical content (McLeod 2002: 104). To be regarded as “high” rock was supposed to be raw, intensive, dangerous, serious, deep and experimental.

As McLeod (2002: 102) notes, rock critics are used to describe favored artists as honest, sincere, and “speaking from the heart” whereas *the others* use clichés in their music. McLeod (2002: 96–97) has listed dimensions of describing the music. According to him, the favorable words to describe music are aggressive intensity, violence, rawness, simplicity, personal expression, seriousness, tradition, authenticity and originality whereas, words and concepts to dismiss an artist are softness, sweet sentimentalism, blandness, slickness, formulaic unoriginality and commercialism. In 1971 Roxon wrote that “the trouble with jazz is that it’s not punky enough for the Rock Generation”. She continued by stating that “sure, it sneaks into the top-50 charts via Chase, Chicago and BST, but it always has to try harder because, let’s face it, it’s not No. 1”. (NYSN, Aug 22, 1971.) In rock music, its relevance is always under negotiation.

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<sup>8</sup> Auteur theory is known from film studies. In the theory, in the theory, a director becomes an auteur not by making a single film but by developing an identifiable style, such as Hitchcock. Therefore, in the rock music culture, for instance, a singer-songwriter, such as Jim Morrison from the Doors, can be called an auteur since he created his own distinctive style of performing, attitude and looks. (Graham 1949: 124).

### 3.3 On the waves of rock sound

You can dance to it and fall in love to it, and you will certainly buy it for someone you are crazy about. So what Lou Reed has done if you want to know, is to make being 14 beautiful again, even for 27-year-olds. Is that a crime? (NYSN, Feb 13, 1972).

This is how Roxon described Lou Reed's Velvet Underground in 1972. For her, the band was "one of the most advanced bands of our time" (NYSN, Feb 13, 1972). Roxon reacted to rock music with a passionate attitude and approached it through feelings and atmosphere. In her texts, Roxon used descriptive adjectives, focused on describing her experience and told how music *felt* for her. For her rock music was a manifesto of love, happiness, talent and transcendental experiences.

Consequently, with the term sound I'm here referring to the soundscape and atmosphere of the music Roxon was observing and describing in her writing. My focus is on how rock music sounds and feels in Roxon's texts.

In her reflections about music, Roxon was vivid, discerning and descriptive. For instance, on 4<sup>th</sup> of February in 1973 she described Black Sabbath song *Iron Man* as "Frankenstein in sound" and, nevertheless, foresaw it to become one of the great classics. The drummer of Black Sabbath she described to sound like "he's hammering nails into a coffin" (NYSN, Jul 25, 1971). Roxon wrote that Black Sabbath's sound "was straight out of Bride Dracula" and mentioned that "it was a hoot" (NYSN, Feb 4, 1973). In the same column she also wrote that the sound of Ozzie (Ozzy Osbourne from the Black Sabbath) was "as diabolic as ever and the sound so loud that those of us who were lying on the floor felt like we were on vibrating beds" and that when the Black Sabbath was finally announced to the stage, "the chorus of stomps, whistles and yells" were deafening. Black Sabbath presented a new style of music in the beginning of the 1970s, heavy metal. Roxon's impression of both the band and the genre wasn't that flattering at first.

A word about Black Sabbath. I have never thought they were one of the musically great bands of our time, and I have never believed noise was a satisfactory substitute for musical ability. Nevertheless, I have always had a sneaking fondness for bands so loud they shut out everything else, and Sabbath's creature from the Black Lagoons spookiness is both entertaining and unique [...]. (NYSN, Feb 4, 1973).

According to Frith (1983: 36) "our response to songs is determined in part by our assumptions about their performers, and one function of lyrics, is to meet these assumptions". From the quote above can be read how these two functions combine. Because Roxon was so fond of extreme elements in music and sound, she quickly fell in love with those new heavy metal bands for their extremity. Black Sabbath started a whole new style of music in the 1970s. Probably, because of that, Roxon was somewhat enthusiastic to analyse especially Black Sabbath and its sound. It was

something totally different from what she had used to listen to. Roxon was at first skeptical of the bands of this new genre, mostly because she thought they played for too long at concerts.

In 1973 she wrote about Black Sabbath concert:

Nevertheless, they are very sensitive band, and they are constantly hurt by a suggestion they are not to be taken seriously. That's why, I suspect, in the middle of "Wicked World", we got a guitar solo that began well enough, but went on so long we were soon ready to shriek as loudly as the music. (NYSN, Feb 4, 1973).

However, Roxon found band's sound interesting. In the same text she wrote that "Sabbath does that whole *grisly* thing to perfection – and their melodies, though just a little repetitive, are masterly in their moods" (NYSN, Feb 4, 1973). She was in the core of the element of what the band later has been thanked for. Also, another hard/heavy rock band Mountain evoked reaction.

Extremely heavy music has not usually been my speed, especially that of Mountain, a three-man band which, though widely admired, invariably gave me the horrors and set me off into great yawns of exasperation. This week I have been forced to revise that opinion. [...] I arrived with a dreadful headache and the worst possible misgivings. The one thing I didn't need to hear was a lot of music that was too loud and Leslie West in those no doubt highly skilled but still essentially vulgar and ugly guitar solos. [...] In fact, the louder and coarser it got, the better it sounded. My headache went away in dismay. The sound was thick and furry and reassuring. To an outsider, it might have sounded violent but to the people in there, it was as warmly enveloping and luxurious as a mink blanket. If anything, it neutralized violence. [...] Eventually, we were all smiling so hard our faces hurt. [...] Sure, some of the solos went on too long and had some bad moments, even Jack's [Bruce], but that merely underlined, for me anyway, what magic took place when the three of them played together. [...] They're much noisier than Cream ever was [...] and remember how loud Cream seemed in those days [...] but then these are noisy times. (NYSN, Apr 30, 1972).

This quote embodies Roxon's way of describing and writing about music. The text moves like a wave when it goes from scepticism to enthusiasm and back and from accurate description to conclusions. This snatch where she rethought her relationship to heavy music through both bodily and listening experiences is an example of how Roxon exploited the techniques that can be seen as the core techniques of New Journalism, subjectivity and storytelling, of which I mentioned in the introduction (Sikes 2017: 4).

At that time heavy music wasn't an established genre or term which made it extreme. In 1972 Roxon wrote about the band called Sacrifice and stated that: "Get ready for Dracula rock. An element of simulated horror will creep into concert presentations making acts like Alice Cooper look very tame" (NYSN, Dec 31, 1972). Audiences of the 1960s music had used to light and happy sound. Therefore, even Roxon wasn't that sure how to react. In 1972, Roxon wrote about Edgar

Winter's new album. In the context, the term heavy music came up again. By that time the concept had started to establish itself. "I suppose it's [Edgar Winter's new album] what some of the critics would call "heavy rock", but I've always found that a limiting kind of phrase. I thought it was a very visual album, filled with strange pictures [...] (NYSN, Oct 22, 1972).

In the 1970s, the general focus of rock criticism began to shift to musicians' individual skills, experience and technical expertise of the musicians (Frith 1983: 21). Media and cultural studies scholar Chris Atton (2009: 59) who has researched rock writers, mentions that the writers he has studied, have adopted effective approaches to writing "using metaphor that might be interpreted not only as personally contingent, but also as an experience that is universalizable to other listeners"<sup>9</sup>. Also, it seems to be common for writers to use their own experiences for contextualizing the musical experience (Atton 2009: 59). Roxon used these kinds of techniques when describing music and artists as well. In 1972 Roxon wrote about Kinks:

To those of you who love the Kinks already, there is not too much I can say. To see them and to hear them once is to be hooked for life. – But I know a lot of you reading this don't know from the Kinks, so this is to tell you you're missing a lot. This week anyway, I feel this is the best group in the world and "Muswell Hillbillies" the best album of the year. I envy anyone who's just discovering them now. (NYSN, Mar 12, 1972).

From her perspective also Kinks' following album was the best of the year. She stated that the album *Everyone's in Showbiz* "is one of the best LPs ever, and says more about music in the last 10 years than any I can think of" (NYSN, Apr 8, 1973).

In her writing Roxon was also a humorist. Witty and sarcastic way of writing was an important part of her style in *The Top of Pop*. In 1972, she announced "The Roxon awards for 1972" after she had got fed up with the Grammy awards. "You have the Grammy awards and how they never have anything to do with what's good or bad in music? I thought [...] I would announce some long-overdue awards of my own" (NYSN, Dec 24, 1972). In addition to the best song of the year, the best new band of the year and the best concert of the year she distributed the awards such as following: blind optimism award for Paul & Linda McCartney, a sense of humor for John [Lennon] and Yoko [Ono], best interviews of the year award for Michael Jackson, good news of the year award for Bob Dylan because he was making a movie, bad news of the year award for Danny Osmond's as his voice dropped an octave, woman of the year award for "the divine Bette Midler"

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<sup>9</sup> According to Atton (2009: 59) "they explode even more brain cells than they normally do" and "excavating holes in your brain" are an examples of such descriptions affective approach writers may use.

and fathers of the year award for Neil Young and Jeff Wald. (NYSN, Dec 24, 1972.) After that, in the beginning of 1973 she announced the start of the new year. “The evening ends when a man in a red feather evening cloak rushes to the stage to give her [Bette Midler] flowers. 1973 is *definitely* here” (NYSN, Jan 7, 1973).

### 3.3.1 Live and alive!

[...] at Shea Stadium the sound had a gorgeous texture that swirled all around you like a good cold surf. Grand Funk is not interested in anything but taking you over completely, filling all your cell spaces, giving you no time to think or feel, but just to experience. (NYSN, Jul 18, 1971).

In 1971 Roxon participated Grand Funk Railroad’s gig at Shea Stadium and described her experience lively. The quote perfectly describes the way Roxon experienced music. Roxon tried to bring music, musical experience, musicians and feeling as close to the reader as she could. For her, music was a holistic experience. She wrote how audiences went wild during concerts, what strange things sometimes occurred during the shows, described the sound and how she felt about it. In 1972 she went to see Leon Russell show and wrote: “[...] I’m in love. I was in love by the first song and in tears by the third. At the end of the set, I couldn’t speak” (NYSN, Oct 1, 1972). For Roxon, music often offered divine experiences. Roxon’s descriptions of concerts and festival were vivid as this description from Schaefer Music festival from 1971.

[...] the other night [...] I was down in Central Park to hear the band play at the Schaefer Music Festival. [...] Smiles of a summer night on every beach, under every tree. No trouble, just the crunchy-granola-organic-apple-juice crowd getting a commendably spiritual high on all that cosmic organ and piano music. [...] Well-behaved delirium. The thousands who couldn’t get tickets spread their blankets out on the grass and breathed in the music like scene. (NYSN, Jul 11, 1971).

With this kind of description, Roxon created a certain kind of rock discourse. In that discourse, she created a picture of the rock crowd as hippie people who were aiming at "a spiritual high". She described music as a distributor of those divine experiences and created a picture that music wasn’t just music but something more. One of the most important myths in rock music is the myth of transcendence. From Roxon’s Schaefer Music Festival quote above is visible what she appreciated in live music – music experiences that went beyond reason and everyday life and that offered transcendental experiences. According to Kruse (2002: 140) most pop and rock criticism depends on that distinct myth. Kruse (2002: 137) notes that “a transcendental rock aesthetic is a timeless standard of “good rock”” and suggests that a rock song regarded as good must have something that can be even life changing, something which a listener can feel personal. This myth appealed to

Roxon as well. For Roxon, music and especially live music was, most of all, a way to transcendental experiences. However, Kruse (2002: 140) reminds that music itself is not transcendent but the different aspects related to it make it transcendental.

When it comes to concerts at the time, one of the major elements was screaming and jumping. In 1973, Roxon wrote: “What a waste to show Slade on television last week without showing how they get audiences jumping out of their seats” (NYSN, Jun 3, 1973). From Roxon’s point of view, when it came to concerts, the atmosphere of the concerts and the madness of the audience were some of the most important things. For her, audience wasn’t only an observer but an active attendee. Without an audience the show wasn’t complete. She also described the importance of the audience for the performer saying that “to those on stage, the audience is a big black mass of pure love” (NYSN, Oct 1, 1972).

In 1973, she pondered that “screaming is pretty much out of favor in rock circles” and that “screaming to catch the star’s eye [...] is considered teenybopper stuff” (NYSN, Jun 17, 1973). In her opinion, this was a pity because, according to her, performers loved it. Roxon felt that something was now lost from a concert experience because she had, in her own words, “a soft spot” for screamers (NYSN, Jun 17, 1973). She added that “if you were to go to a Jackson Five concert to hear nothing but screaming, I wouldn’t blame you”. In the same column she mentioned that, in her opinion, screaming in a concert “gives the evening texture – and it certainly helps to make a live album sound live”. For Roxon an audience and its reactions were always a part of the show.

Slade, as you know if you’ve heard the record, is the live band to end all live bands. The audience is its life. Singer Noddy Holder and guitarist Dave Hill conduct the entire room as if it were the Boston Symphony Orchestra [...]. There is not one person sitting. Not one. There is not one person without his or her arms above his or her head clapping, and his or her feet down on the ground stamping. (NYSN, Dec 10, 1972).

Live album recordings or not, Roxon couldn’t stand an audience too passive. “Remaining seated during a Slade performance is like Sleeping Beauty not waking to the Prince’s kiss. You don’t stay quiet either” (NYSN, Dec 10, 1972). Roxon paid a lot of attention to screaming in concerts, to the phenomenon of that time which started along with the Beatles and Beatlemania<sup>10</sup>. For Roxon, the screamers were the indicator of a good concert. When Roxon didn’t find some music, album, or

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<sup>10</sup> “A word that was invented to describe the wild enthusiasm of the Beatles' fans in the 1960s, at the time, when the band was really popular” (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary).

concert good enough she often tried to turn her opinion to her favour in a witty way. In 1972, she wrote about Stephen Stills concert which had left her “totally untouched”.

If everyone around you is jumping up and down with happiness, you feel even worse. Maybe they know something you don't know. Maybe, on the other hand, you're the only person in the room who does know. (NYSN, Jan 21, 1972).

Roxon also analysed music with carefully examining the reactions of the audience. About Paul McCartney's television concert where he performed the hit song “Yesterday”, she noted that “if you watched the live audience very carefully you noticed a lot of stone faces, a lot of yawns and restlessness and none of the mad excitement that goes with a true event like, say, the live telecast of “All You Need Is Love” back in 1968” (NYSN, Apr 22, 1973). As I have already mentioned, many of Roxon's writings of the 1970s give a feeling that she felt that something fundamental was lost from the rock music of the 1970s. She missed fun. Just days before her death, Roxon wrote an insight of the current rock music scene and its possible future.

Rock and roll dead? Hardly. Not when one group alone has nearly two hundred thousand grand stolen from its hotel safe deposit box, and, listen, for Led Zeppelin that represented only a couple of nights from a long tour that covered something like 30 American cities. [...] Rock and roll dead? At Max's, the night Zeppelin departed, you couldn't get near the place for the huge crowds that were out on the pavement trying to get in to see the first New York appearances in more than two years of Iggy Pop and the Stooges. [...] Trends come and go, but I don't need to tell you what it takes to survive. Which doesn't mean trends aren't worth watching or that New York rock isn't the coming trend. Rock and roll dead? Are you kidding? The Fun City sound is only just beginning to happen. (NYSN, Aug 5, 1973).

In a column that was presumably her last column Roxon was full of spirit and enthusiasm as the “rumours” about the presumed death of rock were taking over. Throughout the history of rock and roll music, the thought “rock is dead” has been brought up and it has provoked reactions. Nowadays, you hear talk that rock is dead when today's scenes are compared to the 1960s. Decades change, but the same topic remains.

### **3.4 From ideological communities to transcendental sounds**

During the 1960s rock and roll became an apparatus for self-expression. This also marked a shift towards a new way of seeing rock music as a serious art. That time rock music intertwined as a part of society which made it more relevant than ever. That time popular music started to divide heavily into two different categories: art and entertainment. The former was seen as culturally high and the latter as low. According to the spirit of time, also Roxon categorized music and genres. Even though she recognized the meaning and value of glitter rock she still despised it every now and then

as well as jazz. New genres, musicians, styles and songs were constantly under negotiation in Roxon's writing. The division into high and low music was central. Music regarded as high was usually raw, intensive, dangerous, serious, deep and experimental. Excitement and rebellion were often valued especially by critics. Within popular music, rock music was regarded as high culture, whereas commercial and often light pop music as low culture.

Roxon lived in the center of cultural revolution, music, art, counterculture, and culture in general, in New York City. Therefore, she had a strong relationship to the city both as a concrete city but also as an ideological concept. For her, *a city* was the hot spot and the future of music. In general, the concept of city carries many meanings. A city represents commercial culture whereas a country stands for authenticity, sense of place, stability, past and community. Roxon painted a mystical picture of the city which had been her own future after she left Brisbane for New York in 1959. Rock was a sound of a *city* and city again offered everything rock needed. For Roxon, New York was the ruler of the cities. Rock music was driven by the following ideological aggregates: political stance, sexuality, aggression and its relation to underground. All these themes intertwined with the themes and concepts Roxon wrote about. In Roxon's discourses of rock music, it was all about *the feeling*. In her writing, she celebrated rock music and rock culture and all its manifestations. She appreciated music that offered transcendental and out-of-this-world -experiences. *The Top of Pop* offered witty, humorous, sarcastic, gossipy but also very sharp analysis about rock music culture and the rock sound itself.



## 4 Gender

Lillian Roxon was a rock music critic at the time when not so many women were into rock music culture in general. Roxon had strong feminist values, she spoke out for women and was in many ways ahead of her time. Roxon paid attention, especially to women's position and roles in rock culture and as musicians. Also, regarding the themes of Roxon's writing and her position in the rock music field, gender is an important theme. Gender did act an important role in her *The Top of Pop* - column. Not as a central theme, but it popped out every now and then. Also, Roxon positioned herself in the fields of rock music and rock music journalism as a woman. Roxon's statements, her writing and her lifestyle were exceptional during the time when women and rock and roll just didn't seem to fit together. Roxon lived strongly on her own terms and achieved a strong authority position in rock music scene of the 1960s and early 1970s.

All these factors presented above work as a starting point for this chapter. Roxon's own position on the field is significant concerning the theme of gender. Here, in the third analysis chapter of the thesis, I explore what kind of gender discourse Roxon created in *The Top of Pop*. I have divided the chapter into three parts. First, I will look at the relationship between rock culture and gender in general in the 1960s and 1970s. In this chapter, I will also do a brief overview of gender in rock journalism. In the second part of this chapter, I will focus on women in rock – women as performers and musicians in the rock scene during the 1960s and 1970s. The third part of this chapter will deal with gender and fandom. In this last part of the chapter, I will look at how gender have affected fandom and what kind of ideas were related to women and men as fans.

### 4.1 The ideas of gender in rock culture of the 1960s and 1970s

From the beginning, rock and roll and counterculture in general, have been cultures of men (McLeod 2002: 109). For instance, Kruse (2002 136: 138) states that rock aesthetic is assumed to be male and that rock is a male form of expression and pleasure. Altogether, rock has been seen equal to male expression and understanding. From this starting point the idea of women in rock was (and is) challenging per se. Roxon knew this and, from time to time, brought the theme up in her texts. She, for instance, wrote a column titled "A New Role for Women in Rock?" (NYSN, Nov 5, 1972). At the time *she* in rock was somehow different, other, an outsider. Therefore, for example, the idea of a rock star is also, first and foremost, related to men. Rock star is seen as desirable and transcendent male figure. In addition to all of this, male sexuality is in the core of rock and roll; the whole rock and roll culture is often related to an explicit, crude and aggressive expression of it

(Frith & McRobbie 2000: 65). Examples of this kind of discourse are canonized rock stars such as Elvis, Mick Jagger from the Rolling Stones, and Robert Plant from Led Zeppelin.

Therefore, the term of artistic genius or artistic mastermind has always been associated with men. The ideology and idea of an autonomous artist, an artistic genius is stemming from the era of Romanticism, and it developed throughout the nineteenth century. It “contributed to the establishment of the male artist as ‘genius’ and as the sole and privileged originator of the artistic work” (Reitsamer 2018: 26). The status of a great artist was associated to male performers and rock groups of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Rosa Reitsamer (2018: 26) states that from the beginning rock history has celebrated certain albums as masterpieces and certain artists as “great artists”. According to her (Reitsamer 2018: 26) “this practice of history-making is informed by the ‘ideology of the autonomous artist’ and it became the dominant standard by which other popular musical forms and musicians were evaluated”. In the next analysis chapter about rock stars (chapter 5), which will deal with rock stars, I will take a closer look to this theme from another perspective.

The rock and roll canon is a manifestation of male-generated rock culture and of these historical practices to which, for instance, Reitsamer (2018) was referring to. Other ways of categorizing rock music, the ways that differ from generally acknowledged rock music canon, have usually been and are still regarded as alternative histories. Women have been excluded from the rock canon (Reitsamer 2018: 26). According to Reitsamer (2018: 29), one way of doing this is to group female performers under the label “women in rock”. From this angle, the thought and discourse “women in rock”, is itself problematic. It maintains the idea of women in rock as others, as something abnormal from the commonly known rock music canon. Listing women in rock is like writing another history, an alternative narrative.

#### 4.1.1 Rock journalism and gender

[...] popular rock and pop criticism has traditionally presented its subject matter in a way that assumes writer and reader coexist in a phallogentric world in which women are peripheral (Kruse 2002, 138).

Here Kruse summarizes the core issue of rock journalism of the 1960s and 1970s. Like the whole rock music culture, also the profession of rock criticism has always been dominated by men (McLeod 2002: 94). “Women have been writing about music almost since the birth of rock criticism in the 1960s. [...] Yet, disregarded by many of the makers of the rock criticism canon, their history is largely hidden” (McDonald 2016: 39–40). In their comprehensive study of women in rock journalism, Evelyn McDonnell and Ann Powers (1995: 6) explicate that even though, there have

been remarkable female rock writers, they have been left aside from the history of rock writing. Even if rock and roll has been predominantly produced by men, it has always been consumed by both genders (Powers & McDonnell 1995: 8).

In the 1950s and 1970s, it was difficult for women to find employment as journalists and to be taken seriously as journalists. Technically the only opportunity were newspapers and magazines women's pages. According to media scholar Willa McDonald (2016: 40) women's pages news was seen as "soft news" and, therefore suitable to be edited by women. In the beginning of her career, Roxon, for instance, was bylined as "a special correspondent", Kay Warner or Gillian Yorke, before she was allowed to use her own name (Hogan & Bielharz 2012: 107). Even though, during the Second World War, women's position in news media production momentarily improved, when they replaced men who had to go to the war. However, after the peace was declared, women were forced to "surrender their jobs to the men they had replaced". If you were a woman and you were interested in rock culture and rock music, "it assumed you were a groupie". To escape that stereotype many wanted to become critics. (McDonald 2016: 18, 39–40.) Rock history was and is mostly formulated by white male music critics and historians (Reitsamer 2018: 26). Maybe therefore, the music magazines of the time were openly sexist and misogynist. For instance, *Rolling Stone* -magazine, no matter how groundbreaking it was, was openly sexist (Powers & McDonnell 1995: xii).

McLeod (2002: 108) makes an interesting notion of how not the certain words themselves, but the use of those words has been gendered in rock criticism. In the previous chapter (chapter 3) I wrote about favourable words (McLeod 2002). Gender is related to these words centrally. When describing music or an artist, favourable words can be, amongst others, aggressive intensity and rawness, the words that are often easily associated with masculinity whereas, words to dismiss an artist and often considered as feminine were, amongst others, softness and sweet sentimentalism. Reitsamer (2018: 26) notes that writers talked about women "in ways that would be unthinkable for speaking of male artists and fans". One aspect of these ways of speaking are those favourable words mentioned above that could have created gendered images. One example of the use of gendered words can be found from Roxon's column when she had heard Yoko Ono for the first time.

The girl's voice was strange but endearing. [...] I almost went crazy trying to work out who she was. I was haunted with the idea that I'd never find who this remarkably appealing girl singer was, though I couldn't imagine she'd go undiscovered for long. (NYSN, May 6, 1973).

McLeod (2022: 107) states that for instance, sentimentalism, is a word that rock critics use of products that are aimed at or produced by women. Therefore, in rock criticism, the choices of words and the use of certain adjectives have an important role. Even individual words play an important role in creating equality between the sexes.

## 4.2 Women in rock as musicians and performers

If rock music itself was associated with men during the 1960s and 1970s, so was musicianship. According to Frith (1983: 85) women in rock music were at the time mostly singers. He also notes that according to the general assumption, women weren't musical (ibid.). Frith's notion speaks its bleak language of the history of gender in rock music. In November 1972 Roxon wrote about women in rock. She had attended to a *Star Spangled Women for McGovern* -concert at Madison Square Garden in New York, which had started with Helen Reddy singing "I Am Woman" and ended with Gloria Steinem, Rose Kennedy, Mary Travers and Tina Turner singing "America the Beautiful". In the column Roxon reflected her thoughts after the concert.

You didn't have to be political to enjoy that [...] concert [...] but you sure got a different slant on it if you happened to be female. I am writing about it this week because it was that aspect of it which affected me deeply. If so many talented women can get together for a political candidate, why can't they get together for other important reasons? Like, for instance, to show what women can do in rock? [...] since then I have been asking myself a question [...] how come there are no female rock promoters? Why should that thought seem so outrageous? (NYSN, Nov 5, 1972).

In this quote Roxon was grabbing the most essential questions of gender in rock music scene of the 1970s. The concert at the Garden had made her pensive in many ways and she added. Roxon brought up an important topic when she started the discussion about the discourse of women in rock which was, at the time, very narrow. Roxon tried to open and bring forward the problems the general discourse contained.

Roxon attended in the rock music culture as a woman. Therefore, she highly valued women musicians and performers and wanted to give them visibility and bring them forward. In November 1972, she pondered the rock scene in general regarding gender. "True, groups like Fanny have managed to come up from under and make it, but how many women do you know at this moment actually playing instruments and getting together in groups? Not too many, right?" (NYSN, Nov 5, 1972). The concert at the Garden clearly made her think about the norms and unwritten rules of the rock music culture even more. She hoped that women would have taken over the industry.

McDonnell and Powers (1995: 109) note that at that time both male and female writers had to write according to the general judgment. “Before the advent of second wave feminism<sup>11</sup> both male and female writers really didn't have much choice but to write about women musicians in the manner in which they had always been written about: as anomalies or in a sexist or stereotypical way” (Powers and McDonnell 1995: 109). This kind of approach was visible, for instance, when Roxon wrote about Bette Midler's looks.

I can't remember when I last saw a performer work so hard and give off and get so much love. I personally happen to think she's very beautiful, but actually her [Bette Midler] face is both ugly and beautiful, with one fading into to other so you can never quite make up your mind. I watch her hands to see who she really is – they are very slim and graceful and nervously sensitive. (NYSN, Jan 7, 1973).

Female writers had to walk a tightrope between the culture of the time and their own opinions. However, Roxon also directed criticism to male performers. In 1972, she, for instance, stated being “so tired of ugly groups” (NYSN, May 7, 1972). According to the spirit of the time, looks was an important theme in rock music scene. Hence musicianship was related to men in the early days of rock and roll, it was really difficult for women to be taken seriously as musicians. They were systematically excluded from the rock culture. Still, according to Roxon, women did not fight against this cultural system. In 1972 Roxon pondered that despite the situation and the facts of the music business of the time women had always permitted men to dominate the rock scene. Roxon saw that women accommodated their position in the culture without questioning it.

In the early days of rock, it was common that groups and artists, especially female ones, to have special outfits for performing. When women performers started to give up on special performing outfits and performed as themselves, the rock audience was, according to Roxon, confused. In the text, she wrote about the band called Labelle and showed the position of women musicians in the rock music scene. “[...] they gave up the rhinestones and the matching dresses and the big bouffant wigs and today they are the first female group to come on as individuals. For some people, it's been a little unnerving” (NYSN, Jul 2, 1972). The outfit of women performers was under the magnifying glass. Roxon herself concentrated a lot on how performers looked regardless of their gender. However, she knew that in rock music culture of the time, women performers' looks mattered – and not always in a good way. Roxon pointed out how women musicians' and performers' art was criticized based on their appearance and how that took attention from the important aspects. In

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<sup>11</sup> Second wave feminism emerged in the US and elsewhere in the 1960s. It was politically active form of feminism with a goal to achieve equality of the sexes (Britannica 2023).

1972, she wrote about Christine Frka, who was known as a performance artist and a groupie. “People had always treated her as nothing but a beautiful ornament [...] and she had finally come to believe it. [...] I found she had lost heart” (NYSN, Nov 26, 1972). By writing about Frka and Helen Reddy<sup>12</sup>, Roxon tried to make visible the problems concerning female musicians. What is worth noticing is that she recognized sexist thinking in herself as well and admitted it. In the next quote, Roxon analysed her own approach to gender in a revolutionary way.

I’m ashamed to say I sort of took it for granted Christine’s group wouldn’t make it (they were girls, weren’t they?) and I watched as people in the music business responded to Christine’s beauty and feathered wardrobe [...], but never to her talent. [...] The best thing that happened to Helen was a brief fall in her career during which she started going to college. Strange, but she discovered something Christine never did find out about herself, that she was intelligent and that she didn’t have to be a Barbie doll to be a success. (NYSN, Nov 26, 1972).

In this quote, Roxon reflected on a common problem that she herself occasionally stumbled upon. Sexist assumptions were not always made by just men. Because women were seen as anomalies in the rock music culture these kinds of assumptions also made by women were logical consequence of the prevailing culture. What was important and central, was that Roxon made the phenomenon visible through her own assumptions.

Roxon functioned as “middle woman” between female artists and female audience. After the release of Helen Reddy’s “I Am Woman”, she wrote about women in Midwest who had been rapturous about the song. “I spoke to a girl from the Midwest the other day, and she said, “tell Helen that song means a lot to us out here [...]. It keeps us going” (NYSN, Nov 26, 1972). For women, Roxon’s columns may have been, concerning the spirit of the time, as their own community and platform to get appreciated in a new way. A possibility to get their voices heard. Sometimes Roxon addressed her writing straight to women like on 30th of April in 1972:

Hey there, liberated woman! The funniest (and truest) album on this subject is “Try it, you’ll like it” by a very liberated female comedy duo from California called Harrison and Tyler. I really enjoyed it and even male chauvinist pigs like it (NYSN, Apr 30, 1972).

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<sup>12</sup> Helen Reddy was an important friend of Roxon’s. Reddy’s song “I Am Woman”, was inspired by and based on Roxon (Milliken 2002: 196–197).

This quote is strong because in it, Roxon contrasted the sexes very sharply. Such comments were not the most common at the time, especially in the mainstream media.

Critics tend to value honesty, sincerity and speaking from the heart (McLeod 2002: 102). Also Roxon grabbed this theme, but for her it was also a question of gender. In 1972 she wrote that “[...] a real lack of hearts [...] mood of mournfulness and self-pity that runs through the work of so many of the new women singers and song writers [...]“ (NYSN, Nov 5, 1973). From this sentence, it can be analyzed that women musicians had to earn their place in the rock music scene in a way men musicians never did. Their work was getting analyzed more precisely and in detail. However, Roxon also stated that “I’m not putting down that sadness (though it is often boring musically), but I’d finally like to see something more positive and life-affirming come through” (NYSN, Nov 5, 1972).

Sometimes Roxon’s descriptions were full of contradictions. In November 1972 she, for example, wrote that “I wish more of the women [...] would finally put behind them the whining and complaining and come out with a message as strong and positive [as Helen Reddy]” (NYSN, Nov 26, 1972). Also this quote expressed Roxon's contradictory relationship with female musicians. The culture of the time was getting reflected again. However, Roxon emphasized skills of the women in the field and tried to treat them in a same way than their male counterparts. She tried and was hoping to make a change. In 1972 she was excited about Patti Labelle of the Labelle. “If you thought the late Janis Joplin was powerful, wait till you see what Patti Labelle in her knicker suits and her two accomplices [...] do” (NYSN, Jul 2, 1972). Describing a female performer as an *accomplice* is central here. Committing crimes was more easily associated with men, so mentioning the word accomplice in connection with a female performer can be thought to emphasize the equality of women performers in relation to their male counterparts.

### 4.3 Gender and fandom

In many of her columns, Roxon described the ways girls and women behaved and were seen as fans. She sometimes reproduced the common thought at the time that the stars themselves were the only thing that mattered for women listeners. Even though she was a progressive feminist of her time, she still in a way maintained the idea that the reason why women were interested in rock music would have been the performers, not the music itself. Roxon herself also focused on many other aspects than the music itself, especially the appearance of the performers (as I have presented above in this chapter). She often wrote about how women admirers were after the stars and talked

about groupie culture, however, she was also aware of the dark side of it. Women were quickly seen as groupies and often received very questionable behavior from men.

In 1972 Roxon pondered her attitude towards groupies.

That fine dividing line between fan and groupie is often razor thin and rather shaky. [...] I used to admire groupies because they at least broke down the barrier between audience and performer in a way no mere fan ever dared. (NYSN, Apr 23, 1972).

From this quote, it can be stated that, at first, Roxon saw groupies as revolutionary since they moved between the mystical stars and the adoring public. They were something the culture had never seen before. Again, on October in 1972 she wrote about groupie culture.

Treating groupies cruelly has become the latest sport for even the nicest groups. Shocking, I know, but unfortunately true. [...] If you knew what was going on behind the closed hotel doors of a most popular rock group, you'd die. (NYSN, Oct 8, 1972).

It is somehow curious that Roxon did not take a stronger stand on the matter although she was well aware of the problems. Concerning groupies, getting involved in the matter was not easy at that time, because groupies belonged to the early decades of rock culture, as if built-in, and the matter was not properly criticized until decades later.

Women's position in contrast with men was visible also in the way how rock stars at the time talked about their female fans. According to Roxon, Tom Jones, for instance, told her about the ways female fans kiss him. However, according to Roxon, this happened also contrariwise. In March 1972, Roxon wrote about Joni Mitchell's concert where Mitchell got a lot of attention from her male admirers. "She was in wonderful voice, and she got more cries of "Joni, you're beautiful" than ever before, not to mention longstemmed roses and impetuous kisses from male admirers who crowded the space near the stage" (NYSN, Mar 5, 1972). About Velvet Underground's singer-guitarist Lou Reed she wrote that "he teases little girls worse than Donny Osmond and Mick Jagger [...]" (NYSN, Feb 13, 1972). Both in real life at that time but also in Roxon's texts the relationship between sexes was hierarchical – from a modern point of view very doubtful.

Musically, rock and roll crystallized to one thing, electric guitar, the source of noise and loud voice. Through that it all comes back to the gender questions. Frith and McRobbie (2000: 65–66) write about cock rock<sup>13</sup> performances. Concerning these performances, they state that "mikes and guitars are phallic symbols; the music is loud, rhythmically insistent, built round techniques of arousal and

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<sup>13</sup> Cock rock is a slang word referring to an aggressive style of rock music performed by male bands (Collins English Dictionary 2023).



climax; the lyrics are assertive and arrogant, though the exact words are less significant than the vocal styles involved, the shouting and screaming” (Frith & McRobbie 2000: 65–66). McLeod (2002: 100) notes that especially critics associate guitar-generated music with certain gendered images. A good example of this approach is a text where Roxon is talking about guitarists and their erotic appeal. “This might be disturbing if the guitarist weren’t exactly the kind of person just about everyone in the audience is dying to make erotic advances at in the first place. So it works” (NYSN, Oct 8, 1972). According to Roxon, screaming in concerts of which I wrote above reflected “pure biological female response” to music (NYSN, Jun 17, 1973). In her discourse screaming was especially female way to express feelings of excitement.

In her writing, as my analysis shows, Roxon often focused on male and female reactions to the music. Concerning Slade’s performance in Monterey Festival in Sydney she wrote about women admirers. “In the sort of Monterey Festival mood of the afternoon, beautiful girls crowded around the front of the stage like butterflies. The eye contact between them and members of the band was positively electric” (NYSN, Feb 18, 1973). Here Roxon juxtaposed “beautiful girls” with butterflies which created a certain discourse of girls and women. In that discourse, they were light and airy creatures what again put them in a certain position compared to the discourses associated with men. Although, Roxon usually wrote about how *girls* rushed the stage or about the female response of the rock and roll shows, she also observed men’s reactions. She explored them, observed them. She concentrated on getting a picture of how it was to be a male or a female musician, and a male or a female fan at the time. In the light of different sources and according to Roxon’s writings it can be stated that rock and roll was at the time pretty much about sex appeal. Ever since those times, there has been a discourse about the electric guitar as a phallic symbol and the ways musicians reached their audiences. Often these ways were (and are) centered around themes of attraction between sexes.

#### **4.4 In a men’s world**

During the 1960s and 1970s gender and sex roles were undergoing a tremendous change. Representations of female musicians in the press, for instance, was just one example of all the ferment and renegotiation the society was going through. At the time, male sexuality was in the core of rock music culture and a status of a great artist was (usually) given to men of which the rock music canon is a good example. Equally, at the time it was also hard for women to be journalists. The area that was seen as suitable for women editors was woman’s pages which were seen as soft news. Lillian Roxon was, along with her full-time job in *Sydney Morning Herald’s* New York

bureau, a rock columnist which was even more special and rare for a woman at the time. She became “a middle woman” between female artists and female audience and achieved a strong authority position in the rock music scene.

Lillian Roxon tried to boost women’s role in rock music culture. She spoke out for women and boldly pondered the questions related to the theme. Through her work and uncompromising attitude Roxon held an authority position in rock music culture. Therefore, she achieved a position where she was not, perhaps, subjected to sexism in the same kind of way that many women were. Rather, she was distinguished and respected character of the rock scene. Roxon was bold and saucy and knew her stand. She was spokeswoman and a mediator of women’s feelings. However, she was in a difficult position. She had to act in a cultural environment where women in rock culture were seen as anomalies which affected her own writing as well.

Roxon approached to the theme *women in rock* was fresh, witty and discerning. Overall, Roxon presented women in an empowering way. Even though Roxon sometimes wrote about women in rock somewhat gendered way, she still remembered every now and then to pour full-on feminist and empowering energy into her writing. She tried to encourage women to find their paths in rock music culture as performers, artists, musicians, producers and so on. Roxon presented issues and themes related to the rock music culture of the time such as a question of groupies and a theme of misogyny. Along with these, she noticed that rock music culture at the time was so sexist and masculine that it sometimes made women think like men. In other words, she discovered the internalized misogyny in herself as well and brought it up, which was important and progressive at the time.

## 5 Constructing a rock star

Rock stars are the fundamental features and sources of mysticism in the rock music culture. As scholars and academics Stephen Loy, Julie Rickwood and Samantha Bennett (2018: 9) note “the musical icons, the stars, cultural myths and the stardom are inherent in popular music and vital to its existence”. In a way, the whole rock culture is intertwined with rock stars; they are the embodiment of rock and roll. Unreachable, beyond *normal* life, worshipped and respected. Rock stars function as objects filled with expectations, myths and admiration. American culture and cultural theory scholar David R. Shumway (2007: 530) has argued that rock and roll was born together with rock stars. He suggests that the significance of artists such as Elvis and Chuck Berry signified the emergence of a rock stardom. From the beginning, rock music media has represented especially male rock stars as the embodiment of rock and roll. In the first analysis chapter (chapter 2) I wrote about the concept of a city. In a creation of rock star this concept can be expanded. In addition to it, the concept of a *road* is a central regarding the creation of a rock star (Frith 1983: 86).

The original role of the popular musician was one of a traveler, an observer, moving from place to place to give pleasure, but also to give perspective, to hint at the possibilities beyond the county boundaries. [...] The resulting sense of abundance, space, and freedom has a B-side [...] “no roots, no home, no family, loneliness”; and in the 1960s this mythology was fused with that of the great American artist, the literary bohemian, rootless, detached. (Frith 1983: 86–87).

Frith (1983: 135) considers stardom as a relationship between a performer and an audience. However, Frith (1983: 69) notes that rock musicians believe that they “express the values of youth in general” and are, therefore, less contemptuous of their audience. Apart from musicians segregating themselves from audiences, Frith (1983: 69) suggests that rock stars also developed their own language and lifestyle that differentiated them from common listeners. This thought is based on Howard Becker’s idea of the ideology of the 1940s and 1950s dance musicians (ibid.: 68–69). According to Becker, those musicians saw themselves “as creative artists who should be free from outside control”, who are different and better from the outsiders and who has their own way of speaking and living. Rock stardom is like an institution completely separated from what we call *normal life*, and that’s where lies its charm.

Rock stars were the stars of *The Top of Pop*. In Roxon’s opinion, the virtues of a rock star were amongst others beauty, gracefulness and originality. Stars were someone who balanced themselves between the affections of fragility and power. She, for instance described Ray Davies being “incapable of any gesture that is not wholly graceful” (NYSN, Mar 12, 1972) and stated that the

singer of Led Zeppelin, Robert Plant being the band's "official beauty and energy" (NYSN, May 13, 1973). Roxon actively maintained the picture of rock star as something different from everyday life and normal people. Rock and roll lifestyle can be seen as a way of life which includes hotel night snacks, staying up late and living and breathing music (Frith 1983: 77).

Concerning the rock stardom and construction of a rock star it is important to notice Roxon's own position in the field. She was a rock star herself and lived like one. Countdown to her stardom started with *Lillian Roxon's Rock Encyclopedia* (1969) and ended with a breakthrough when the book got published (e.g. Milliken 2002: 3, 160). She lived like a rock star who was living and breathing rock and roll music and culture, hanging regularly at rock stars' hangout Max's Kansas City, staying up late and forgetting her own health when writing the encyclopedia. She had a witty attitude, and she was seen as a convincing authority like rock stars as well. On the top of it all, she knew her position. In 1971 she wrote about a rock cruise on Hudson River and wrote that there were "almost everyone who counted in New York's rock establishment [including herself]" (NYSN, May 30, 1971). Also, when she was in Carnegie Hall witnessing David Bowie's debut there, she wrote that "no one who was anyone [...] was about to miss that" (NYSN, Oct 8, 1972).

Roxon knew her authority in the scene and wasn't afraid of her readers opinions. Sometimes she wrote about letters her readers actively sent her. Roxon replied to those letters in a witty way and didn't leave speechless.

I'd like to send out special Christmas wished to those of you who have taken time to write and tell me what records you've liked and disliked, what you've thought of concerts you've gone to and of your many adventures chasing (and catching) the stars. Just one thing, those of you who like to write hate letters shouldn't be afraid to put in a return address. I enjoy answering those most of all. Happy holidays. (NYSN, Dec 24, 1972).

However, Roxon wasn't safe from critique herself and evoked feelings for and against (as befits the life of a rock star). The feedback she received from her readers was diverse. Some people admired her knowledge and her role as a pioneer and valued her as an authority. However, she also got a lot of hate letters. She pondered the matter in 1973.

What kind of people write hate letters? Strangely enough, just regular citizens like you and me. As a matter of fact, if you're an anyone fan, write and tell me. It's always interesting to know who all of you out there like or hate – even if that someone is sometimes me. (NYSN, May 6, 1973).

In this chapter I will present how and what kind of discourse Roxon created of rock stars of her time. All the themes of constructing a rock star overlap with each other heavily. Still, based on close reading of Roxon's texts, I have divided the chapter into three different categories that examine rock stars and rock stardom. These three categories are: authenticity, transcendence and divinity, the aesthetics of decadence and madness and rock stars as normal human beings. These are the major themes that can be differentiated from Roxon's rock star discourse. By looking at these themes I aim to construct a rock star as Roxon wrote it. At the end of the chapter, I will summarize all my perceptions.

### 5.1 Authenticity, transcendence and divinity

[...] some of rock's best guitar performers have also been its best exhibitionists [...]. What's important is not to let the exhibition snow you into accepting it as more than that, and to learn to distinguish what's covering up a long parade of glib and soulless clichés and what's a spectacular accompaniment to the genuine feeling and emotion that is what music has been all about from time immemorial. (NYSN, Oct 10, 1971).

In this quote Roxon very well described the meaning of authenticity and the importance to recognize it. According to Loy, Rickwood and Bennett (2018: 12) "perceptions of musicality and originality have been central to the attribution of auteur status to popular musicians [...]" This happened right after the consolidation of rock stardom (ibid.). There is a paradox between the commercial success and artists: over the years artistic integrity has become "the basis for commercial success". Concerning this, the notion of the star system is central. The basic idea of that system is that when some acts become stars because people like their records, "the commercial object is to get people to buy their records because they are stars". Still, commercialism is often seen as the opposite for authenticity and originality. (Frith 1983: 69, 134.)

When Roxon was writing about Australia's version of the theatre piece *Jesus Christ Superstar*, she made the same kind of comparison. "My personal theory is that it's easier for rock stars to learn to act than an actor to learn to project whatever it is that makes rock stars the idols of millions" (NYSN, Mar 25, 1973). Again, she placed rock stars above the "normal life" and "normal artists," and represented them as something divine; something that cannot be imitated by anyone else but themselves. For Roxon rock stars had saintliness in them despite their "temptations" and "ego-trips", as she wrote on October 24<sup>th</sup> in 1971. This kind of representation created a picture of rock stars as unreachable; as someone who knew something anyone else didn't. The authenticity of a rock star seemed to be so central and important that even a professional actor/actress could not achieve it. This representation supports the thought of a rock star as something enigmatic.

In the context of rock music culture and transcendence, the concept of bohemianism is important. Transcendence is one way to escape the everyday, normal life full of rules and norms. Since the 1960s rock ideology has been a “mixture of literary bohemianism and popular music-making” (Frith 1983: 87). According to Frith (1983: 77) “bohemianism is musician’s natural ideology”. The traditional, mythologised musicianship and ideology behind it, values leisure, hedonism, style and elevates “above the conventions and routines of “normal society” [...]” (ibid.). Musician is above of everyday life which makes him/her a transcendental figure. When a musician becomes a rock star, he/she is something that many others can’t be. A rock star has something that very few can ever have that makes her/him admired, loved and respected.

Redmont and Holmes (2007: 8) note that the concept of a star, especially a rock star, is something more than just a celebrity. A star is positioned above the celebrity concept. What makes a star as a concept more eminent, is the secrecy and alleged authenticity. Authenticity, again, is a part of the creation of transcendence. Certain kinds of values are invested in individual musicians so they would “create and maintain the notion of star through the fanatic ritual of adoration and transcendence” (Loy, Rickwood & Bennett 2018: 8). Authenticity is one of those values. Transcendence, which is one of the most important aspects when it comes to rock stars and rock music, is achieved through the concepts such as authenticity that are seen as markers of good quality.

[...] average rock fan not only doesn’t know a good musician from a bad one, but doesn’t want to. That’s how it is with lead guitarists. They’re the heroes of rock and roll and everyone loves them, but they’re also its shrewdest confidence men, cynically playing their audiences basest needs [...] and getting away with it. Why else the bare chests? The rivers of sweat? Those dramatically upraised arms and anguished expressions? To make it look difficult, that’s why. Even when it’s not. So how do you tell the fakes? (NYSN, Oct 10, 1971).

Roxon was very particular about what was real in rock and what wasn't. For her, authenticity and seriousness were values through which genuine rock credibility was born. The quote above summarizes Roxon’s thoughts about this theme. Even if Roxon talked about lead guitarists as the heroes of rock and roll (according to the common way of speaking) she also critically analysed them and their actions.

“Every time he [Ray Davies] and the Kinks come to town, I forget everyone else. Not that the live performances are so great [...] but in that very sloppiness lies their charm” (NYSN, Mar 12, 1972). For Roxon, rock stars were the subjects of admiration and divine experiences. Roxon wrote caricatural statements about how important rock stars were. When some of them was in town

nothing else mattered. The biggest star of the time, one of the key characters of the 1960s and 1970s rock scene, who was covered in many of Roxon's texts was the singer of the Rolling Stones, Mick Jagger. Roxon for example wrote that "an afternoon with the divine Mick Jagger is still worth a few sacrifices" (NYSN, Mar 18, 1973). For Roxon, rock stars were a combination of skills, art, emotions, mystic and divinity beyond description.

Simon Frith (1983: 77) suggests musicians rise above the everyday life because

[...] musicians are themselves the symbols of leisure and escape; their jobs [...] are about putting on a show; their style supports the audience's use of them as fantasy and briefly held dreams. What for them is routine, one night like another, is for their fans a special event, bedecked with the trappings of stardom. (Frith 1983: 77).

This kind of positioning makes rock musicians to be seen as stars, mythical creatures whose life and who also themselves are somewhere over the everyday reality. Most of all, rock stars are seen as figures, not as persons or humans. Also Roxon represented rock stars as something inexplicable, beautiful, fragile and graceful. In March 1972, Roxon described rock stars as if they were having divine qualities:

There are performers in rock music who can make your head spin, not just because they are on television every week, but because they are beautiful and graceful and original and their music can change your head in a way you never knew was possible. (NYSN, Mar 12, 1972).

Regarding these thoughts she also wrote in 1971 that "a band needs love, just like a person" (NYSN, Aug 8, 1971). She created a picture of a rock star both as an object or a figure and a person, as delicate, beautiful and graceful.

From time to time, Roxon exploited religious imagery in her writing. For example, on May 27<sup>th</sup> in 1973 she named Bob Dylan as the prophet of their generation. Every now and then, Roxon made references to the Bible. When she was writing about the cast of the rock musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* in 1971 she speculated that what if "a real rock idol had been cast as Jesus. [...] someone whose every appearance drew weeping ecstatic crowds as Jesus did in Jerusalem" (NYSN, Oct 24, 1971). In the next quote we can see how Roxon juxtaposed rock stars and religious characters (although she was writing about the musical focusing on rock stars and Jesus).

I remember that when the Beatles were big, part of their appeal was that there was a Beatle for every age group, and every kind of fan. Then the whole concept of fandom became uncool, or, rather, it became instrumentally based. Guitarists were okay, lead singers a little suspect. Very subtle people got into bass players. Singer-songwriters had not fans but disciples. (NYSN, Jun 17, 1973).

In that quote above Roxon was considering the concept of fandom and juxtaposed rock stars, here singer-songwriters, with religious figures. Such comparison elevates the stars to a different level from other people and other celebrities which supports the theory of secrecy and alleged authenticity (e.g., Redmont & Holmes 2007).

At the same time, Roxon constructed a hierarchy between the members of a rock and roll band. With the phrase “singer-songwriters had not fans but disciples” she juxtaposed Jesus of the Bible with singer-songwriters. She is creating a discourse where singer-songwriter is the crown of the whole rock and roll culture. They are from another world, the ones others will follow. This kind of view also reproduced and deepened the representation of musicians, especially singer-songwriters, during that era. The fact that Roxon wrote about singer-songwriters’ fans as disciples is closely related to the idea of artistic genius; the theme I pondered in the previous chapter (chapter 4). From the start rock criticism “valorized authenticity and originality and developed a mythologized account of rock musicians that considered their work as art” (Atton 2009: 53). Therefore, the media had (and has) an enormous role in creating the idea of a rock star and mythologising it. “When do you see a rock star smile? Not too often!”, asked Roxon (NYSN, Jan 7, 1973). Mythology continues.

## **5.2 The aesthetics of decadence and madness**

The aesthetics of madness and decadence are central elements regarding rock stars especially in Lillian Roxon’s view. Madness, destruction and outrageousness can be seen as factors of decadence. These concepts are also closely related to the idea of a rock star. “Thank heaven a little heart warming decadence is back on the scene” (NYSN, Aug 8, 1971). Roxon stated this after visiting Alice Cooper’s coming out party where the crowd had dressed boldly. When it comes to artistry, the aesthetics of decadence and madness have been central through the centuries. Rock music culture have possessed this aesthetics of decadence and madness by making them vital in a discussion of rock stardom.

Rock stars are the embodiment of delicate and mystical, mythical beauty, combined with the romanticization of destruction, madness and decadence. This idea is closely related to the theme of romantic genius of which I talked about above (in chapter 4). For centuries, madness and genius have been seen intertwined and, for example, out-of-control stars have always been idealized rather than bemoaned or moralized. That was one of the themes that intrigued Roxon too. In January 1972 she stated that: “Cooling out and getting [...] head together. Isn’t it usually the main reason people in the rock scene disappear?” (NYSN, Jan 21, 1972). This quote expresses how getting out of



control and then cooling out can be seen as a normal part of life for rock stars and other people within the rock culture. This kind of quote speaks a lot of rock culture and its values at the time. “Cooling out” wasn’t something unusual, exceptional or something to be ashamed of but a normal part of the rock and roll lifestyle. “[...] there is something about the Jackson Five that reminds me of the way pop was in its early days [...] personal, obsessive, almost out of control” (NYSN, Jun 17, 1973). The idea of getting out of control was valued in both the music itself and in artists as well.

In the next quote, Roxon summarized the rise and fall of a rock star. She showed that even when a rock star's flirtation with madness and destruction became an unpleasant reality, it could still be mythologized. In July 1971 Roxon reflected the Doors vocalist Jim Morrison in a tragicomic way. In her in-depth analysis, Roxon discerningly depicted Morrison’s last moments:

It wasn’t as if it had happened in the days of his greatest glory when he saturated his music with images of love, death, and destruction. He took himself very seriously then, but as he matured, he developed a quality that is the end for a true sex symbol. A sense of humor. And soon he was secretly laughing at the leather Frankenstein he had created. (NYSN, Jul 18, 1971).

Here Roxon presented the less talked downside of being a stereotypical rock star. She undressed the image of rock star as something transcendental and unreal and showed it under a raw light of reality. However, a touch of mystique was still there; the depiction maintains the picture of the mythic, mad genius, a delicate creature, on the doorstep of its doom. Even though this description maybe aimed at reaching something from the reality it still supports the ways the stars are seen. This kind of depiction kept mystifying its subject and made the reader ponder the character of a mythic Jim Morrison. At the same time, Roxon stated that because Morrison in the end developed a new quality, a sense of humor, he lost his position as a true sex symbol. As mentioned above (e.g., in chapter 2 about age and nostalgia) seriousness was, according to Roxon, one of the most important features for *the true rock star*. Therefore, a sense of humor didn’t seem to fit to the picture. When the seriousness was gone, so was the credibility.

In one of the most incisive quotes of Roxon’s writing she juxtaposed rock stars with plants. She reflected that in the moment of (plant’s or a rock star’s) brightest glory the impending end was already in the horizon. In the text about Jim Morrison, she wrote:

You have to understand that rock stars are like avocados. When that moment of supreme and perfect ripeness comes, it is almost by definition doomed. Anything that delicate and exquisite is not destined to last. Jim Morrison saw that and opted for Paris and the quiet life of a writer while it was still possible. (NYSN, Jul 18, 1971).

The quote above echoes the idea of a rock star as something exceptional and ephemeral. Like a flower. Something that won't last. This kind of thinking is at the heart of rock and roll decadence. The general picture of a rock star was, at the time, that he or she lived fast and to the fullest. The more chaos and scandal, the more “rock” a person was.

According to Frith (1983: 10, 65; see also Atton 2009: 62) American rock writers are indeed mythologists who, with the whole show and entertainment business, have “fed musicians with the clichés they feed the public”. The media reproduces the picture of a musicians – here, rock stars – as “Romantic individuals, capable of extraordinary creative acts (Atton 2009: 62). This way the media is maintaining the idea of a creative genius by producing and maintaining certain kinds of images of musicians, music, rock stars and the whole entertainment business. In April 1973, Roxon wrote about Focus guitarist Jan Akkerman and stated that “[...] suddenly, you have an idea of the kind of music Bach would have written if he'd been 19 in 1973” (NYSN, Apr 1, 1973). Comparing a rock star to the canonized classical composer Johann Sebastian Bach puts a rock star on the same line as a composer considered a creative genius which again is representing the idea of “a true rock star”.

As I stated in chapter three about music, Roxon grew up with the music of the 1950s and early 1960s which constituted the base for her musical understanding. When it came to rock culture and rock music, Roxon valued the most the feeling of decadence, disruption and feeling to be “out of this place”. In Roxon’s opinion music should have always been beyond description. For her rock music was all about great experiences, high energy and pure madness. In 1972 she wrote: “The Flaming Groovies appeared here [in London] with a lead singer with his front teeth missing. And you think Alice Cooper is decadent????” (NYSN, Jul 23, 1972). Roxon was eager to see performers to go to extreme and was always enthusiastic to experience something wild and crazy.

Roxon loved decadence in music and artists and appreciated arrogance and outrageousness. She, for instance, wrote that the Rolling Stones’ party in Sydney was “deadly dull” because there were “no groupies, no tearful scenes at the door, and a dinky little birthday cake [...]” (NYSN, Feb 25, 1973). Equally, according to her, there were “total lack of scandal” on Rolling Stones’ tour in Australia (NYSN, Mar 11, 1973). Roxon needed something unexpected and outrageous to happen to have a good party. Her background as a gossip columnist could be seen in these kinds of comments. Roxon's description of Iggy Pop's performance in New York was a good reflection of her views on musicians and live performances.

He [Iggy Pop] did not spit at the audience, as is his custom but he did throw a very heavy microphone stand into it, and he also threatened to kill a fuzzy-haired person from an out-of-town fanzine. I thought he was in good form, aggressive, pugnacious, throwing the songs from his new album at his audience as if he were throwing punches. Because he's little and saucy and well-muscled, he can carry that off. (NYSN, Aug 5, 1973).

In Roxon's own discourse, the qualities of decadence, outrageousness, aggressiveness and madness led the road to the top of the rock music business. In April 1973, Roxon was happy with what she had witnessed in Iggy's and Ray Davies' concert.

In Detroit, and he's [Iggy Pop] been out of the business for a while now, though it was a stunning performance ecstatically received, he was surly after the show and arrogant, pushing admirers away with the contempt and irritation. Actually, I dug it. It was more honest. I think it's the honesty that make Iggy and Davies aristocrats. (NYSN, Apr 8, 1973).

For Roxon, decadent and arrogant rock star was a rock star as its finest. For her, these qualities meant honesty what was, from her perspective, one of the greatest virtues for a rock star. Even though Roxon sometimes wanted to shed light on the ugly side of rock stardom she, most of all, wanted to maintain and reproduce the established image of the stars and rock and roll culture. For her rock stars were as magical as for her readers'. They were, in the end, unreachable, delicate, graceful, beautiful and something above everyday life.

### **5.3 Back from the stars**

In addition to portraying rock stars as divine beings that were above all else, Roxon wanted to remind us that they were, after all, only humans. With this representation, she also modified her own position regarding rock stars of which many were her friends or, at least, acquaintances. At the same time, she created and maintained the image of rock stars as divine creatures but with whom she casually hung out and whom she still also admired like other fans. By telling her readers so she achieved a special position among them because, for many other fans the stars like Mick Jagger weren't, however, normal people.

Maybe that is why Roxon sometimes saw the need to remind people like she did in July 1972 when she wrote that "[...] I hate to tell you, Mick Jagger is just one of the fellas" (NYSN, Jul 2, 1972) or in March 1973 when she stated that "after all, star or not, he's [Mick Jagger] only human, right?" (NYSN, Mar 18, 1973). The slight hint of uncertainty in her voice was a reminder of her own admiration. The same theme went on when she was accompanying the Rolling Stones in their tour in Australia.

[...] he's [Mick Jagger] having such a good time here just being a person. I know they say he's a jobbo back in London and Altamont, but, he looks so mellow and rested and private here. He's not a man you'd want to make life hard for just at this moment" (NYSN, Feb 25, 1973).

By making this kind of notions about rock stars Roxon put herself in a different position compared to her readers. By reminding that, after all, rock stars were just normal people, although she herself often confessed being a fan, she showed her readers that she was able to critically analyse rock stars and her own relationship with them while other fans just got crazy. This kind of stance can also be seen as a part of creation of her authority position. She had to be "above" other fans to achieve an authority position in relation to other fans. Sometimes her way of expressing her relationship with rock stars was even amusingly transparent. When she was writing about the Rolling Stones photobook, she mentioned that "the pictures of Brian (he was always my favourite Stone, the only one I could ever really talk to) are heart-rendering, all that pain and beauty" (NYSN, May 14, 1972). She is creating an already well-known discourse of rock stars but at the same time, she is positioning herself into the picture saying that Brian belongs to her close circle of friends. One can only imagine how this sounded to Roxon's readers who were the Rolling Stones' fans.

According to Roxon, the rock music culture started to get new forms in the beginning of the 1970s. She often wrote how she missed light and happy music of the 1960s. Therefore in the 1970s, for example, Paul McCartney who rose to fame with the Beatles during the 1960s had, according to Roxon, lost something that made him and his music valid.

Musically, the show [McCartney's] was deadly dull. You couldn't exactly call Paul an example of high energy rock (though, heaven knows, at the end he *tried*). For a while, it even seemed as if he were singing the same song over and over again."<sup>14</sup> [...] A lot of the show was spent with Paul trying awfully hard to be Ringo because Ringo is now the only Beatle who still gets away with being cute. [...] Paul McCartney has, to put it mildly, arrived at a period of transition in his professional life and that he can't quite make it on charm or raving it up like he used to (none of us can). (NYSN, April 22, 1973).

Here Roxon juxtaposed Paul McCartney with "normal people". In addition to that, she got him to sound like a dull, old rock star whose "due date" had already passed. Roxon created a picture of a former rock star who, according to her, had lost everything that made him a star.

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<sup>14</sup> However, there is suspicion that the impressions of Paul McCartney related things were not as objective as they could have been. McCartney married Linda Eastman in 1969. After the marriage, Eastman's long friendship with her best friend, Lillian Roxon, was broken and they never saw each other again (Milliken 2002: 136).

In October 1972, Roxon wrote about singer-songwriter Leon Russell. “His songs are about quarrels and drinking and rock and roll stars who sit in motel rooms with clean white sheets, suffering from loneliness and despair just like you and me” (NYSN, Oct 1, 1972). Roxon lived very close to the rock stars of the time. Therefore, she was able to closely consider the life of a rock star. For instance, she often talked about the alleged loneliness of the stars. In 1973 she continued with the same theme. “I mean, they’re [the Faces band] millionaires and all that, and one of the top groups in the world, they can tell you and me to drop dead, but what comes through, in the end, is their eagerness to please and their loneliness” (NYSN, May 20, 1973). Roxon adored the stars, but she also often poked fun at them, albeit kindly. When Blood, Sweat and Tears started to become more popular band, Roxon stated in 1971 that: “Could it be, and not a minute too soon, that music’s big names have finally decided to face a few human responsibilities?” (NYSN, Aug 8, 1971).

#### **5.4 Creatures from the heavens?**

Rock stars are the basic figures and the basis of rock music culture. They are the embodiment of the whole rock culture; everything that belongs to the rock discourses of the 1960s and 1970s is summed up in them. A rock star as a concept is positioned over the concept of a celebrity. A rock star is an object and a symbol of leisure and escape, an institution separated from “normal life”. Stardom can be described as a relationship between an audience and a performer. Stardom emerged along with the first rock stars such as Elvis and Chuck Berry. During the 1960s rock music, and especially rock stars, became to express the values of the youth and created its own culture, lifestyle and language.

Rock stars were vital for *The Top of Pop*. Roxon analyzed them, gossiped about them, poked fun at them and adored them. In Roxon’s opinion, the ideal rock star was an amazing musician (preferably nearly virtuoso) who has a good sense of style and taste. The ideal rock star was sufficiently mad, arrogant and decadent but also sufficiently graceful, sensitive, and honest. A rock star had to be someone who makes your head spin and serves the audience’s life-changing experiences. In other words, an ideal rock star must serve something that is beyond normal life, beyond everyday experiences. Roxon didn’t appreciate the seriousness in music or in performers. She loved chaos, decadence, madness, craziness, outrageousness, and the delicacy around the stars. Roxon herself was (at least from the reader’s perspective) like a secret agent between the real, normal world and the secret and hidden world of rock stars.

In the first part of this chapter, I dealt with authenticity, transcendence and divinity. These concepts were central to Roxon's writing about rock stars. She valued honesty and authenticity above all regarding rock stars (and rock music itself). Authenticity enabled, among other things, transcendental experiences in music. In addition, Roxon often juxtaposed rock stars with divine characters and compared them to biblical figures. In the second part of the chapter, I discussed about the aesthetics of decadence. This theme is very important regarding Roxon's view of the rock stars. In addition to authenticity and its manifestations, Roxon valued decadence and its transformations such as madness, destruction and arrogance in rock music and rock stars and reproduced and maintained the idea of a relationship of genius and madness.

## 6 Conclusions

In this thesis I studied rock journalist Lillian Roxon's rock discourses in her column *The Top of Pop* which was published in *New York Sunday News* (NYSN) from May 1971 to August 1973. The aim of this study was to examine what kind of discourse Roxon created about the rock and roll culture in the 1970s. The other goal was to analyze what kind of world the texts and the discourses in the texts form inside the text. Using close-reading and the critical discourse analysis CDA as my methods I was able to examine the rock discourses especially in relation to the prevailing culture and culture of the time in general. Concerning methods, another starting point for this thesis was CDA and the thought that social structures affect discourses and vice versa. This kind of approach suited my thesis well, because along with examining the columns, it was important to consider the social and cultural context of the time. In addition to the column *The Top of Pop* I briefly examined the history of rock journalism and criticism, and the gender in rock journalism because these themes created an important context for my topic.

I analysed Lillian Roxon's rock discourses through four different themes which intertwined with each other in many ways. In the first analysis chapter (chapter 2), I examined the discourses of age and time in Roxon's writing in *The Top of Pop*. The treatment of the themes of age and time showed, among other things, that Roxon saw these themes mainly as ideological categories. She wasn't interested in the age of a person but what side she or he had chosen. Put differently, was he or she a part of the rock and roll community or not. This kind of thinking led to a constitution of another ideological category; a division into *us* and *them*. The rock community was *us* and others were *them*. This division formed one of the starting points for Roxon's writing. Regardless of her age, she was *us*. A New York Times reporter who came to make a review of a rock concert wearing a suit and tie was *them*.

*The Top of Pop* was, in a way, an ideological category by itself. It served certain kinds of values and created a certain kind of picture of the world. In that world of rock and roll culture, in addition to ideological features, rock music was a source of pleasure and transcendental experiences, late nights were the norm, rock stars and the youth was adored and praised for being innocent and pure and the age of 30 was a magical turning point in a person's life (ideologically). In addition, I discussed nostalgia in this chapter. This theme was an important part of Roxon's writing. For her, especially the 1960s, the light and happy decade as she described it, was a source of warm memories and nostalgia. Although Roxon was prone to nostalgia, she also wanted to stick to the present day. In

*The Top of Pop* nostalgia played an important role since it created an atmosphere of warm and happy memories.

The second analysis chapter (chapter 3) dealt with music. In rock music, the most important thing for Roxon was *feeling*. She valued surprise, excitement, rebelliousness and aggressiveness in music. Most of all, she appreciated out-of-this-world- and transcendental experiences through music, especially live music. In this chapter, I also talked about rock as an ideology. In the 1960s and 1970s, rock music began to be seen as art. This was thanks to rock journalists who were the first to start taking rock seriously. From the beginning rock included the idea of youth, freedom and breaking the rules. Themes from which its ideology also emerged. Concerning Roxon and her writings, the concept of a city was central, as she moved to New York in 1959 and considered the city to be the center of the (future) music. For her, New York City was the hot spot of the rock music and culture. In addition, I discussed the division into high and low culture. In popular music, rock music was seen as high culture and pop music as low culture. Roxon sometimes reproduced this kind of thinking. She for example rated glitter rock as something not that substantial. However, when her readers criticized her writing (for instance, about glitter rock) she replied that what she wrote about had nothing to do with good and bad music since she explored musical phenomena.

In the third analysis chapter (chapter 4) I examined the manifestations of gender in *The Top of Pop*. Roxon was a strong female character of the 1970s rock culture which put her in a special position. Her position differed from that of a woman in rock at that time. She gained authority and credibility on the scene with her knowledge, witty attitude and pioneering work with the encyclopedia and *The Top of Pop*. In the first part of the chapter, I considered the ideas of gender in rock music culture of the 1960s and the 1970s. The central notion was that at the time, rock and roll was a culture of men, and that rock was considered as a male form of expression. Equally, the term artistic genius was associated with, above all, men. Therefore, intrinsically the idea of women in rock was problematic. In the last two parts of the chapter, I discussed about women in rock as musicians and performers and considered gender and fandom. Roxon constantly tried to encourage women to the field of rock music and worked as a middle woman between female audience and female performers. She was a progressive woman at the time who spoke for women and aimed for gender equality. Sometimes Roxon found herself writing according to the norms of the time, such as underestimating the female musicians. The most important thing was that she made also this kind of thinking visible.



In the last analysis chapter (chapter 5) I discussed rock stars. Rock stars were vital to the existence of rock and roll, and they stood for leisure and freedom. They were the objects of desire, mystique and admiration. The central notion about rock stars in general was that they are the core of rock and roll, an institution, that is separated from normal life. Rock stars were also the stars of Roxon's column. For Roxon, rock stars were on the top of the rock and roll culture and scene. Roxon loved rock music for its decadence and madness. Therefore, she appreciated those things in musicians, and rock stars, as well. She appreciated chaos, arrogance, craziness, madness, out-of-control - attitude and decadence and created a picture of rock stars as such. However, she often wrote that, in addition to those above-mentioned features, in her view, rock stars were also the most delicate, sensitive, graceful and beautiful creatures in all their mystique. For Roxon, a rock star was a combination of insolent attitude and sensitivity. In her discourse, she aptly compared rock stars to plants by stating that they were delicate and fragile, like flowers. They were meant to flourish and then disappear.

Roxon's own position was important through all the analysis chapters. Firstly, the authority position which she gained in the rock music field, was of special character. In a culture where women were always looked down upon, it was not obvious that a woman could rise to a such position. This authority position was gained through the encyclopedia and *The Top of Pop*. The second factor was Roxon's lifestyle. She lived the same kind of life as those she wrote about – rock star life. In her writing, Roxon created a picture of concerts and live performances as events where people were able to achieve experiences above normal life. She mostly hung out with the rock stars of the time in Max's Kansas City, which became the centre of counterculture in New York of the late 1960s and early 1970s. All this shaped her way of life and took it further away from what we call *normal life*. Roxon herself became a rock star. I claim that she became a legendary and distinguished figure in the rock and roll circles of New York not only through her work but also through her lifestyle. In addition, Roxon was nearly 40 years old when she wrote *The Top of Pop* which put her inevitably in a different position compared to many of her colleagues, other rock writers, who were usually much younger. Also, her age also brought her authority and, maybe this is also why she, especially afterward, got the nickname "The Mother of Rock".

The third factor which affected Roxon's own position was that she actively participated in the rock music culture which also gave her authority and power in the scene. Roxon always emphasized that as a music listener she was like everyone else. At the same time, she indicated being a critic who was able to observe and critically analyse what was served. The division into *us* and *them* became central here. Roxon was a part of the rock community, she was *us*. The importance of this aspect

can be seen, for example, in the fact that Roxon showed that he knew the rules and norms of the rock culture and laughed at, for example, reporters who came to a rock concert dressed in a tie and a suit. Roxon, on the other hand, thought it was important to dress like the rest of the audience, that is, to blend in with the rock crowd. Roxon immersed herself in rock culture and the world of rock stardom which she reflected in her writings.

The sub theme of this thesis was rock journalism and gender in rock journalism. The importance of rock journalism to rock music is central because rock journalists were the first ones to take rock music seriously as art. Early rock journalists such as Ellen Willis, Lisa Robinson, Robert Christgau and Lillian Roxon made rock a valid culture by writing about it. During the 1950s and 1970s, journalism was, just like rock music culture, mainly men's world. Women faced sexism and misogyny in the field, and it was difficult for them to be taken seriously as journalists. However, Roxon succeeded in the field. Even before moving to New York, she worked in Australia for *Weekend-* and *The Observer* magazines. After she moved to New York she got a permanent vacancy in *Sydney Morning Herald* -newspapers' New York bureau.

Roxon talked about music and rock stars vividly and created her own world of rock and roll in her *The Top of Pop* -column. She got a sense of style and a visionary sense of what was coming next. Often, she, for instance, wondered in a bit proud sense how record companies had sometimes gotten interested in a band or artist after it had been mentioned on *The Top of Pop*. Roxon was quick to recognise what was going on in music. In the early 1970s glitter rock was a genre that was about to emerge. Roxon was known as a journalist who was passionate about her work and rock music and wasn't afraid to speak up. All these features could very probably have had an effect to the formation of her status in rock music world and in counterculture.

This study looked at Lillian Roxon through the discourses of her *The Top of Pop* -columns. Consequently, there would be much more to explore on the topic. As I wrote in the first chapter of the thesis, there is only a little research about Roxon and her work. Thus, further research would be needed since Roxon was one of the prominent figures of her time. In Australia, in New South Wales State Library has a large archive on Lillian Roxon. In the archive they have, for instance, Roxon's diaries, articles, drafts of an untitled novel and photographs. This archive would certainly offer a lot of material for further research. It would be interesting to examine Roxon's novel drafts or to examine discourses in her writings on a larger scale. It would also be important that subjects related to this theme would be researched more because the historical study of music criticism can help us better understand today's music media and the world of rock journalism.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Summary in Finnish

Sanat samaa taikaa kuin musiikki – rockjournalisti Lillian Roxonin rockmusiikki- ja rockmusiikkikulttuuridiskursseja tutkimassa

#### Työn tausta, lähtökohdat ja tavoite

Tässä pro gradu -tutkielmassa tutkin rockjournalisti ja -kriitikko Lillian Roxonin diskurssia rockmusiikista ja rockmusiikkikulttuurista 1970-luvulla. Roxon oli yksi oman aikansa tunnetuimpia ja vaikutusvaltaisimpia rockkriitikoita New Yorkissa. Hän kirjoitti ensimmäisen rocktietokirjan *Lillian Roxon's Rock Encyclopedia* (1969). Tietokirja teki hänestä tunnetun hahmon erityisesti New Yorkin rockmusiikkikentässä. Kirjan suosion vanavedessä Roxonille tarjottiin työtä rockkolumnistina *New York Sunday News* -lehdessä. Toukokuussa 1971 Roxon alkoi kirjoittaa *The Top of Pop* -nimistä rockmusiikkiin keskittyvää kolumnia, joka on graduni tarkastelun keskiössä. Kolumni ilmestyi lehdessä viikoittain Roxonin kuolemaan, elokuuhun 1973 asti. *The Top of Popista* tuli nopeasti suosittu ja vaikutusvaltainen rockmusiikkiin ja rockkulttuuriin pureutunut kolumni, mikä vaikutti aikansa rockmusiikkijournalismiin ja rockkulttuuriin itsessään. Kaikesta tästä huolimatta Roxon on jäänyt musiikkijournalismin tutkimuksen varjoon, minkä takia olen valinnut hänen ja hänen tekstinsä tutkimukseni aiheeksi.

Liliana Ropschitz syntyi 1932 Italian Alassiossa. Perhe oli alun perin puolalainen, ja vuonna 1938 tuolloin 6-vuotias Liliana joutui pakenemaan yhdessä vanhempiensa ja kahden veljensä kanssa toisen maailman sodan juutalaisvainoja. Perhe matkusti Lontooseen suunnittelemaan pakoaan Euroopasta. Ropschitzin perhe oli onnekas, sillä heinäkuussa 1939 he saivat luvan muuttaa Australiaan. Australiassa perhe asettui Brisbaneen, mutta maailman sodan kynnyksellä he olivat edelleen vaarassa juutalaisuutensa takia. Heidän oli elettävä maanalla ja vaihdettava nimensä. Nuori Liliana keksi perheelle uuden sukunimen, Roxon. Roxon kävi koulunsa Brisbanessa ja menestyi koulunkäynnissä hyvin. 17-vuotiaana hän aloitti opiskelut Sydneyn yliopistossa ja alkoi viettää aikaa varhaisessa vastakulttuuriliikkeessä nimeltään ”the Push”. Valmistuttuaan Roxon työskenteli mainonnan ja journalismin parissa. Vuonna 1956 hän matkusti ensimmäisen kerran New Yorkiin ja vietti kaupungissa kahdeksan kuukautta tietäen haluavansa palata. Vuonna 1959 Roxon muutti New Yorkiin pysyvästi. Roxon työskenteli hetkellisesti vapaana toimittajana, kunnes sai vakituisen viran *Sydney Morning Herald* -sanomalehden New Yorkin toimistolta. Roxon kuoli vaikean astman aiheuttamiin komplikaatioihin ja astmakohtaukseen elokuun 10. päivä vuonna 1973.

Tärkeä teema ja viitekehys tutkielmalleni on (rock)journalismin tutkimus, mikä kulkee mukana tarkastelussa koko tutkielman ajan. Rockjournalismi on peräisin 1960-luvulta (Sikes 2017) ja se on alusta asti poikennut muusta journalismista, sillä se hyödynsi muun muassa uuden journalismin (New Journalism) tekniikoita, kuten subjektiivisuutta ja luovaa kielen ja sanojen käyttöä. Rock musiikin arvostus liittyy suurilta osin siihen, että kriitikot alkoivat kirjoittaa rockmusiikista. Kun populaarimusiikki alettiin ottaa vakavasti, sen arvostus nousi myös kuulijoiden keskuudessa. Kriitikoiden rockmusiikille antama tunnustus teki musiikinlajista taidetta. Rockjournalismin merkitys oli keskeinen varsinkin 1950–60-lukujen taitteessa, kun kulttuurinen vallankumous teki tuloaan ja uusille ilmiöille, kuten vastakulttuurille tarvittiin selittäjiä. Rockkriitikoiden ja journalistien merkitys kulttuurisen ja sosiaalisen muutoksen selittäjinä oli keskeinen. Rockjournalismi oli 1960–1970-luvuilla miehinen ala, kuten journalismi yleensäkin tuohon aikaan ja naisten oli vaikea löytää töitä toimittajina. Naisia otettiin tekemään lähinnä naisille suunnattuja sivuja (women's pages), sillä niiden ajateltiin olevan ”pehmeää journalismia”, joka sopisi naisten tehtäväksi.

### **Aineisto, teorettinen viitekehys ja metodit**

Tutkielman tutkimuskysymykset ovat seuraavat:

- Millaisen diskurssin Roxon muodosti rockmusiikkikulttuurista?
- Millä tavoilla hän muodosti näitä diskursseja?

Tutkielmani aineistona on 53 *The Top of Pop* -kolumnia, jotka olen haalinut itselleni sekä *New York Daily Newsin* arkistoista että Roxonin aikalaiselta Facebookin kautta. Tutkielmani kietoutuu rockmusiikkikulttuuriin, journalismin tutkimukseen ja musiikin kulttuurihistorialliseen tutkimukseen. Tutkielman keskeisenä teoreettisena lähtökohtana rockjournalismin tutkimus ja erityisesti aiheeseen liittyvä sukupuolinäkökulma. Tämä on tärkeä lähtökohta, sillä Roxon työskenteli samanaikaisesti kahdella miesvaltaisella alalla, rockmusiikin kentällä ja journalistina. Metodeina tutkielmassani käytän lähilukua ja kriittistä diskurssianalyysiä (CDA). Kriittinen diskurssianalyysi huomioi erityisesti tarkasteltavan kohteen kulttuurisen ja sosiaalisen kontekstin, minkä takia tällainen tarkastelukulma sopii tutkielmaani hyvin. Näiden kahden yhdistelmä on mahdollistanut aineiston kriittisen, kontekstoidun ja syväluotaavan tarkastelun. Diskurssien tutkimista varten olen jakanut aineiston neljään pääteemaan, jotka ovat ikä ja ajankulku, musiikki, sukupuoli ja rocktähdet.

## Keskeiset tulokset

Tutkielman ensimmäisessä osassa tarkastellaan iän ja ajankulun sekä nostalgian diskursseja Roxonin kirjoituksissa. Rockmusiikki ja rockkulttuuri on kautta aikojen mielletty nuorten kulttuuriksi. Erityisesti 30 vuoden ikä on koettu rajapyykiksi, mikä jakaa ihmiset nuoriin ja ei-nuoriin. Iän käsittelyn suhteen keskeistä on se, että Roxon oli 38-vuotias, kun hän aloitti *The Top of Popin* kirjoittamisen. Hänen oma ikänsä asetti hänet väistämättä erityiseen asemaan. Hän oli vanhempi kuin monet muut rockista kirjoittavat henkilöt ja saikin ehkä juuri siksi nimen ”The Mother of Rock” (rockin äiti). Rockmusiikkiin liittyen nämä kolme teemaa ovat keskeisiä. Iän ja ajankulun sekä nostalgian diskurssit ovat keskeisiä myös *The Top of Pop* -kolumnissa. Roxonille ikä oli lähinnä ideologinen käsite, johon liittyi vahvasti *me* ja *he* -ajattelu. Kaikki, jotka kuuluivat rockyhteisöön, olivat *meitä* ja kaikki muut taas *heitä*. Vaikka Roxon ihannoikin nuoruutta monissa kolumneissaan, hän myös yritti välttää ikäsyrjintää ja totesi usein rockmusiikin olevan kaikkia ja kaikenikäisiä varten. Tällaisen diskurssin muodostamisen täytyi liittyä Roxonin omaan ikään, sillä hän oli itse jo reilusti yli 30-vuotias, mutta silti vahvasti mukana rockkulttuurissa. Hänen täytyi ikään kuin kirjoittaa itsensä sisään nuorten omana pidettyyn kulttuuriin.

Nostalgia oli keskeinen teema *The Top of Popissa*. Roxon eli nuoruutensa 1950– ja 60-lukujen aikana. Siksi on luontevaa, että hän nostalgisoi erityisesti 1960-lukua. Hänen ajatuksissaan 1960-luku oli vuosikymmenistä kaunein, rakkaudentäyteisin, ihanan, kevyin ja iloisin. Hänelle nykyaika, eli 1970-luku näyttäytyi siirtymänä vakavampaan kulttuuriin. Tuolloin ilo ja keveys oli hänen mukaansa musiikista monesti kateissa. Tämä liittyy kulttuurisen aleneman käsitteeseen (cultural fall) (Scott 2000). Tämän ajattelun mukaan ihminen yleensä ajattelee kulttuurin huonontuvan omana elinaikanaan. Keskeinen huomio on myös se, että koska Roxon asettui New Yorkiin vuonna 1959, juuri kulttuurisen vallankumouksen ovella, 1960-luvun rockmusiikista muodostui hänelle läheisin musiikkiaikakausi. Näin ollen voidaan havainnoida, että 1950-lukuun Roxon suhtautui hyvin objektiivisesti kuvaillen ja 1950-luvun musiikillista perintöä pohtien, kun taas 1960-lukua hän analysoi hyvin subjektiivisesti. 1970-lukuun hän suhtautui ”katselijana”, aikakauden musiikillisten ilmiöiden tutkijana, koska se oli hänelle nykypäivää.

Tutkielmani toinen luku keskittyy musiikkiin. Kappaleen ensimmäisessä osassa tutkin rockmusiikkia ideologiana. Sanana rock voidaan nähdä vahvasti ideologisena, joka sisältää muun muassa ajatuksen vapaudesta. Rockin ideologiseen näkökulmaan liittyen kaupungin käsite on keskeinen. Rockmusiikki nähdään usein urbaanina kaupunkikulttuurina. Myös Roxon piti kaupunkia, hänen tapauksessaan New Yorkia, rockmusiikin kotina ja tulevaisuutena. Rockmusiikin

kentällä keskeistä on myös kaupungin ja maaseudun vastakkainasettelu. Maaseutu (country) sisältää ajatuksen yhteisöllisyydestä, menneisyydestä ja vakaudesta, kun taas kaupunki viittaa lähinnä kaupallisen kulttuurin keskukseen. Teksteissään Roxon ihanoi New Yorkia ja muodosti kaupungista myyttisen kuvan. Ideologiseen kehykseen liittyy myös jako korkeaan ja matalaan kulttuuriin. Tällainen jaottelu on ollut musiikissa keskeinen kautta aikojen. Perinteinen jako liittyy klassiseen musiikkiin ja populaarimusiikkiin, joista jälkimmäistä on pidetty matalana kulttuurina, koska siihen kietoutuu vahvasti ajatus viihteestä. Populaarimusiikin sisällä rock on aina nähty korkeakulttuurina syvällisine sanoituksineen verrattuna popmusiikkiin, mikä taas on edustanut matalaa kulttuuria. Myös Roxon teki korkea-matala -jaotteluja. Erimerkiksi ”glitter rockin” (nykyään tästä puhutaan glamrockina) hän toisinaan arvotti matalammaksi kulttuuriksi kuin ”tavallisen” rockin ja jazz taas oli ”nörttien musiikkia”.

Roxonille musiikissa oli tärkeintä se, millaisia tunteita se hänessä herätti. Sillä, millaisia tunteita olivat, ei niinkään ollut väliä, vaan sillä, että ne olivat voimakkaita. Roxon haki musiikista jumalallisia, ylimaallisia ja transsendentaalisia kokemuksia. Erityisesti livemusiikki herätti Roxonissa voimakkaita tunteita. Esimerkiksi aina kun yksi hänen suosikkiyhtyeistään, The Kinks, saapui kaupunkiin Roxon kuvaili unohtavansa samalla hetkellä kaiken muun. Hän suhtautui musiikkiin, erityisesti livemusiikkiin suurella intohimolla ja palolla. Hänelle yleisön merkitys konsertissa oli merkittävä. Hänestä konsertti oli sitä parempi, mitä hurmoksellisempi yleisö oli. Itse musiikissa Roxon arvosti raakuutta, aggressiivisuutta, kapinallisuutta, vaarallisuutta ja kokeellisuutta. Tärkeä arvo musiikissa hänelle oli muun muassa autenttisuus, jonka olemassaoloa ja olemattomuutta Roxon tutki ja vartioi tiukasti ja hylkäsi kaiken, mikä tuntui hänestä epäaidolta tai teeskennellyltä.

Kolmannessa analyysiluvussa tarkastelin sukupuolta. Tämä teema on aiheen kannalta keskeinen, sillä Roxon oli naisena mukana tuolloin hyvin miehisissä maailmoissa, eli journalismissa ja rockmusiikkikulttuurissa. Roxon ei joutunut kuitenkaan kokemaan samanlaista kohtelua kuin moni nainen tuolla alalla ja tuon kulttuurin parissa, sillä hän saavutti työllään ja asenteellaan auktoriteettiaseman erityisesti rockmusiikkikulttuurissa. Tämä kappaleen toisessa osassa tarkastelin naisia muusikkoina ja esiintyjinä. *The Top of Popissa* Roxon kannusti naisia usein mukaan rockkulttuuriin ja pohdiskeli naisten asemaa kyseisessä kulttuurissa. Häntä harmitti esimerkiksi se, että naiset tuntuivat ottaneen asemansa rockkulttuurissa annettuna, eivätkä taistelleet miehiä rakenteita vastaan. Kolumneista myös ilmenee, että ajanhengen mukaisesti myös Roxon suhtautui mies- ja naisesiintyjiin eri tavoilla. Naiset esimerkiksi saivat häneltä enemmän kritiikkiä ja joutuivat miehiä tarkempaan syyniin.

Keskeistä on se, että Roxon huomioi eräissä tekstissään jo tuolloin kulttuuria vaivanneen sisäistetyn naisvihan todetessaan huomanneensa itsekin suhtautuneensa naisiin toisinaan heidän sukupuolensa takia vähättelevästi. Pääosin Roxon kuitenkin kirjoitti hyvin feministisellä otteella ja kannusti naisia ottamaan oman paikkansa. Sukupuolta tarkastelevan luvun viimeisessä osassa tarkastelen sukupuolta ja fanitusta. Alussa pohdin Roxonin suhtautumista bändärikulttuuriin (groupie culture), jota Roxon avasi lukijoilleen kriittiseen, vaikkakin hyvin kevyeen sävyyn. Alun perin Roxon piti bändäreitä arvossaan, sillä he olivat ensimmäisiä, jotka hämärsivät rajan esiintyjän ja yleisön välillä. Aikana, jolloin suuret musiikkilehdet, kuten *Rolling Stone* olivat avoimen seksistisiä, Roxonin sukupuoleen liittyvät lausunnot olivat toisinaan jopa urauurtavia ja tärkeitä kulttuurissa, jossa naisia katsottiin järjestelmällisesti alaspäin.

Tutkielmani neljännessä ja viimeisessä analyysiluvussa käsittelen rocktähteyttä. Rocktähdet ovat rockkulttuurin keskeisimpiä hahmoja, joihin liittyy paljon mystiikkaa ja romantisoitua. Rockkulttuuria ei olisi ilman rocktähtiä, sillä he ovat ikään kuin rockin ruumiillistuma (Loy & Rickwood & Bennett 2018). Tähteyttä taas voidaan kuvata esiintyjän ja yleisön suhteeksi. Rocktähdet olivat myös Roxonin *The Top of Popin* tähtiä. Kappaleen ensimmäisessä osassa keskityn teemoihin aitous, transsendenttisuus ja jumalallisuus. Nämä teemat ovat sellaisia, jotka Roxon usein liitti rocktähtiin. Hänelle tärkeintä ja kaiken pohja oli nimenomaan aitous. Roxonin mukaan parhaimmilla rocktähdillä oli esiintymisessään ja olemuksessaan jumalallisia ja transsendenttisiä ominaisuuksia. Hän kuvaili esimerkiksi laulaja-lauluntekijöiden faneja *opetuslapsiksi*.

Uskonnollisten termien hyödyntäminen rocktähtien kuvailussa nosti rocktähdet myyttiseen asemaan. Viimeisen analyysilukuni toisessa osassa tarkastelen dekadenssin ja hulluuden estetiikkaa. Nämä teemat olivat Roxonille erityisen tärkeitä rocktähtiin liittyen. Hän arvosti rocktähdissä luovaa hulluutta, aggressiivisuutta, rappiota ja röyhkeyttä. Luvun kolmas osa pureutuu rocktähtiin tavallisina ihmisinä. Nostamalla esiin ajatuksen rocktähdistä tavallisina ihmisinä Roxon korosti asemaansa rockkulttuurin auktoriteettihahmona. Vaikka hän kertoi usein ihailevansa tähtiä aivan kuten hänen lukijansakin hän halusi myös korostaa, että hän pystyi kuitenkin näkemään rocktähdet myös tavallisina, normaaleina ihmisinä. Tällä hän erotti itsensä tavallisesta, rocktähtiä fanittavasta lukijastaan.

## **Johtopäätökset**

Roxon muodosti kolumnissaan oman maailmansa, jossa ikä oli lähinnä ideologinen konstruktio, nostalgia tarjosi pohjan loputtomalle kaipaukselle ja havainnoille nykypäivästä, naiset

voimaantuivat aktiivisiksi rockkulttuurin toimijoiksi ja jossa rocktähtiä ihannoitiin ja palvottiin, mutta myös tarvittaessa kritisoitiin. Kaikista intohimoisimmin Roxon suhtautui itse musiikkiin ja sen analysoimiseen. Hän arvosti transsendenttisiä ja ylimaallisia kokemuksia tarjoavia musiikkikokemuksia ja syventyi musiikin luonteeseen, tunnelmiin ja väreihin. Roxonin auktoriteettiasema rockkulttuurissa liittyi muun muassa siihen, että hän eli kuten ne, joista hän teksteissään kirjoitti – eli kuten rocktähdet. Hän oli oman elämänsä rocktähti, joka valvoi myöhään, vietti vakituisesti aikaa rockklubilla ja rockkeikoilla ja unohti terveytensä intohimonsa ja elämäntyylinsä takia. Roxon oli urauurtava rockkriitikko ja -journalisti, joka on kuitenkin jäänyt melko laajalti historiantutkimuksen varjoon. Tämä tutkielma tarjoaa monia mahdollisuuksia jatkotutkimukselle, sillä Roxonista ei ole juurikaan tehty tieteellistä tutkimusta. Sydneyssä sijaitsevalla New South State Libraryllä on hallussaan Lillian Roxon-arkisto, joka tarjoaisi varmasti varteenotettavaa materiaalia jatkotutkimuksia varten.