

Pleasure as a culturological problem of modern pop music

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Introduction

Modern civilization, emerging on the basis of a consumer society, on the one hand, gives the desire for pleasure the character of a cultural imperative, and on the other hand, condemns it, demanding seriousness even where it is traditionally absent. Pop music falls into the ranks of such controversial sociocultural phenomena: it is required to simultaneously feel and intellect, lightness and complexity, pleasure and seriousness. Turning to pop music as entertainment for the sake of pleasure is today condemned as an irrational and shameful act. This occurs with the obvious spread of hedonistic slogans and signs of pleasure in society and the simultaneous constataion of dissatisfaction with their quantity and quality. The current situation indicates the formation of a new anthropology of pleasure that meets the realities of modern culture. Therefore, it is relevant to consider pleasure as a culturological problem in pop music. The phenomenon of pleasure is of interest precisely as a cultural technique for working with musical material that characterizes massive distribution, impact, and consumption. From this point of view, pop music as a practice of pleasure is an object of study for the articulation of sociocultural challenges and problems expressed in bodily-sensory practices and integrated into the structure of everyday experience. The subject of the study is the culturological aspects of the existence of pleasure, which form the problematic functioning of modern pop music. Purpose of the study: to reveal the connection between pleasure and entertainment, pop music and culture. Tasks:

- consider the ontology of pop music as entertainment content of culture;
- to reveal the essence of the phenomena of pleasure and entertainment and their functional interdependence in the process of forming the pros-

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pect of positive synergy of individual existence and cultural experience, producing new spiritual meanings and principles of individual morality;

- to identify the causes and consequences of social disapproval of pop music as a form of mass art and the devaluation of the pleasure received from it.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study is a combination of a general philosophical and cultural approach with methods and approaches from related fields of the humanities (psychology, anthropology, art history, musicology, and the sociology of music). The integrated use of these methodological principles makes it possible to develop a holistic philosophical and cultural approach, the use of which makes it possible to reveal the nature of the phenomenon of pleasure as the basis for the entertainment of pop music and to reveal the essential relationship between the pop music practice of pleasure and cultural identification mechanisms. The novelty of the study lies in the theoretical substantiation of the need for pleasure as a result of entertaining pop music practices to improve the spiritual world of people, and as an indicator of the level of culture. The results of the study can be practically applied by everyone who are simply interested in or professionally studying the strategy of obtaining pleasure when consuming products of modern popular music, as well as the principles of philosophical and cultural conceptualization of pleasure and entertainment in social life with the help of pop music.

1. Pop music as entertainment content of culture

The meanings that are born in musical practice are combined in the way dictated by the people themselves belonging to a particular culture.

Among all the musical diversity, the applied function of entertainment is traditionally performed by popular music or pop music.

Pop music is realized in a variety of its own genres and styles (K-pop, J-pop, Europop, Arabic pop, Latina, Britpop, synth-pop, disco, dance music, Chiptune (8-bit music), Nintendocore, Synthwave/retrowave, Electro, abstract, minimal-wave, techno, sci-wave, VHS-wave, »Soviet wave«, Vaporwave: power pop, pop punk, pop-rap, pop-folk, pop-rock, soft-rock, indie, etc.). All of them are characterized by the pop standard: the song (verse-chorus form or rondo without episodes, but with two refrains that alternate) as the dominant genre; elementary melodies; relying on traditional musical archetypes already known to the listener; simplicity of the instrumental part, clear rhythm; emphasis on vocals, overall ease of sound and perception; memorable intonation and text relief; a unique performing style and »vocal shortcomings« (hoarseness, instability, tremulation of the voice, delayed phonation, unusual timbre color, mobility,

wide range, frequency power of the vocalists' voices); a bright and shocking image of the performers (frontman of the group and its composition, as well as back vocalists) and, of course, effective management and commerce as a form, concept and formula for success in this area of the music entertainment industry.

Pop music accompanies, comments on, and evaluates sociocultural life by entertaining. Why entertaining? The fact is that pop music belongs to the sphere of mass art, which itself is inherently entertaining. The metahistorical constants of musical entertainment (and entertainment complexes fused with them) are:

- human physiological need for the release of vital forces (in music as a creative, playful, artistic, and aesthetic act);
- growth of human interest from simply imitative to increasingly unusual sound expressiveness, due to the emergence of new musical instruments and more complex and high-tech methods of sound production. Gradually, as Khurst notes, classes of »new instrumental techniques« (performing and composing) are being formed, offering the use of such methods as glissando, vibrato, smorzato, ultra-high tones, very low tones, flageolets, bisbigliando, permanent breathing, micro-intervals, slap, flap, labial »pizzicato«, tongue ram, half-noise, »aeolian sounds«, »loud« whistle tones, »pizzicato« with a bow, sourdine, resonance of another instrument; playing on a separate knee, head, mouthpiece, reed of the instrument; connecting parts of an instrument differently, multiphonics, sons fendus, singing with playing, rolling notes, etc.¹ This classification is complicated by modern engineering developments related to the digital synthesis of musical sounds, the digital processing of sound signals, and the digital recording of various sonorous structures.

Modern pop music, as part of entertaining mass art, exists in the context of the cultural problems of the modern world. The cultural situation of our days is characterized by an apocalyptic psychology of non-classical perception of the world, an increase in mosaic and structurelessness, and an oversaturation of artistic forms. In times like these, what does a person expect from an encounter with art in general and pop music in particular?

The epistemology of art proceeds from the fact that a person wants not only to have fun and have pleasure but also pursues the goal, with the help of art, of finding stability in this world and, consequently, his return to culture and being in harmonious unity with its values. However, our contemporary, who is under constant stress from his own, not always successful, attempts to stabilize

¹ Cf. Nikolay KHRUST, *Novye instrumental'nye tekhniki: opyt klassifikatsii* [New instrumental techniques: classification experience], PhD Thesis, Moscow, Moscow Conservatory, 2017, 6-27.

the disintegrating world and who, as it seems to him in such circumstances, does not have a real reason for entertainment and pleasure, provides himself with only a reason for this.

Reason and occasion are different phenomena. As Frankl noted, the reason will always be biological or physiological, and the occasion will always be psychological or nomological, that is, related to the being of the human spirit. The being must realize meanings (ideals) that are higher than itself, and the consequence of realizing such a meaning will actually be pleasure, which »arises automatically as soon as the meaning is embodied«. ² According to Frankl,

»The will to pleasure is, in fact, a self-defeating principle, since the more a person tries to achieve pleasure, the less he receives it. This is due to the fundamental fact that pleasure is a by-product, or by-result, of the realization of our efforts, but it is destroyed and poisoned as they try to make it an end in itself. The more a person sets himself the goal of directly achieving pleasure, the less he achieves it«. ³

The bright-pronounced predominance of the external over the internal, entertainment over spirituality as a reason and meaning makes pleasure the real problem of pop music itself. Pleasure as an end in itself of pop music excludes emotional depth, psychological re-live, sincerity of expression and conceptuality, which are traditionally the conditions for the existence of music as an art form. Therefore, modern pop music is actively required to do something that contradicts its essence: to synthesize entertainment and pleasure with semantic ambiguity, multidimensionality, seriousness, and intellectuality. The consumer of pop music content, focusing on such requirements, also finds himself in difficult circumstances: in search of ontological meanings that are important to himself, he moves in listening to pop music from the emotionally and intellectually understandable and habitually pleasurable to the exciting new, and, without finding it necessary, experiences fatigue, satiety, and, in the worst case, anhedonia.

So, pop music and culture are ontologically united. Pop music is the fundamental entertainment content of culture, which, even in fleeting sound, reveals, like a flash of lightning, the appearance of an entire culture. The entertainment value of pop music historically captures and represents the essential aspects of various needs that are not directly related to the functional existence of a person: communication with art; emotional saturation; the possibility of carrying out a spiritual experiment; experiences and feelings of many situations that do not occur in real life, etc. The »anchoring« of the needs for pop music entertainment and pleasure has an extremely strong impact on human emotional memory, attitude, worldview, and self-realization in culture. Pleasure in this process is necessarily present not as a reason, an end in itself, or the sum

² Victor FRANKL, *Volya k smyslu* [The will to meaning], Moscow, April' Press, 2000, 8.

³ Idem, 3.

of human aspirations, but as a result of the search for meaning and building a hierarchy of values. Pleasure here is not only the result of pop music's response to sociocultural challenges in the form of entertainment but also a reflection of the internal intentions of pop music itself as a form of mass art capable of producing its own spiritual meanings, reorienting public psychology and consciousness, and anticipating the peculiarities of culture's development.

The idea that pleasure practices are hostile to spirituality and questionable from the point of view of the truth of human beings remains in the past as a legacy of the era of need. In order to answer the demands of the modern era, which is creating a new anthropology of pleasure, in our study it is important to consider the internal foundations of the functioning of pleasure in the entertainment industry of pop music, as those that would not only explain the production in culture of the whole variety of historically changing (becoming simpler, more complex) artistic forms of popular music, but also were to the same extent the equivalent of a human, general cultural good. With this approach, understanding the essence of the phenomena of pleasure and entertainment and their functional interdependence in the process of forming the prospect of a positive synergy of individual being and cultural experience in modern pop music is fundamental.

2. The functional basis of pop music is entertainment for pleasure's sake

What are entertainment and pleasure in relation to pop music, and what is the connection between them?

Entertainment is an activity (individual and group, varying in the number of participants in the action and the degree of energy consumption) for active and passive leisure time for the sake of obtaining pleasure, new emotions, and new information.⁴ Entertainment is any attempt to shift spiritual attention away from the problems posed by the everyday conditions of human life; it is a way to distract from commonness and fill its »empty places«.

»Therefore, the main content of any entertainment – from playing cards or tennis to dancing, from reading detective stories to hunting and fishing – becomes the experience of freedom for a person belonging to himself.«⁵

⁴ Vladimir RYZHOV, *Religiya kak razvlechenie* (na primere sovremennoy massovoy kul'tury) [Religion as Entertainment (Using the Example of Modern Mass Culture)], In: Evgeniy DUKOV (ed.), *Razvlechenie i iskusstvo* [Entertainment and Art], Saint Petersburg, Aleteya, 2008, 100.

⁵ Tatyana CHEREDNICHENKO, *Muzyka v istorii kul'tury* [Music in the History of Culture], Moscow, Allegro Press, Vol. 1, 1994, 156.

Entertainment is a cultural universal that fixes one of the most important spheres of a person's daily life, which can influence the quality and degree of harmony of being of an individual, society, and civilization.

The functions of pop music as entertainment in culture are extremely diverse: switching the focus of attention; restoration of strength; relaxation; overcoming with everyday stress and stress; escape from routine; enrichment unusual emotionally expressive experiences and information; being on the same wavelength with others and erasing social boundaries; strengthening family and friendly ties; intellectual and emotional development; developing openness, empathy and tolerance; building conceptual evaluation schemes (one's own versus another's; good-bad, high-low) of pop music as a leisure practice and a way of creating status units; building a hierarchy of tastes; deeper knowledge of yourself and other people; expanding modes of cultural consumption; creative synthesis of traditional and innovative.

We can say that pop music, while entertaining, gives everyone, according to their needs, as much as everyone can carry. The main functional »gift« of pop music as an entertaining art form is the pleasure traditionally experienced by both its creators, performers, and listeners.

Pleasure is a phenomenon without which neither the person himself nor his existential experience, nor the socio-cultural context of the life of society, nor society itself, can be formed and understood. The language of pleasure can give a person a lot of power to describe the specifics of his presence in the world.

It is no coincidence that the concept of »pleasure« in culture was endowed with different meanings, for example:

- hedonistic, in connection with the problem of the highest good and happiness;⁶
- compliance of actions with the individual rational and strong-willed constitution;⁷
- foundations of spiritual and practical orientations;⁸
- understood pleasure, the instrumental basis of happiness is well-being and welfare based on receiving simple material pleasures;⁹
- ethical, related to the problem of moral pleasure that accompanies choice and serves as an additional criterion for its moral adequacy;¹⁰

⁶ Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Bol'shaya etika* [Magna Moralia], Moscow, Nauka, Vol. 4, 1984, 505.

⁷ Cf. Idem, 506.

⁸ Cf. Claude HELVÉTIUS, *O cheloveke* [Treatise on Man], Moscow, Mysl', Vol. 1, 1973, 687.

⁹ Cf. Ludwig FEUERBACH, *Eudämonismus*, Moscow, Nauka, Vol. 1, 1995, 427-475.

¹⁰ Cf. Jean-Marie GUYAU, *La morale d'Épicure et ses rapports avec les doctrines contemporaines*, Paris, Germer Baillière, 1981, 372.

- the highest goal of human activity, even in the presence of a synthesis with autonomous objective values of human life of a non-hedonistic nature (spiritual perfection, self-esteem, beauty, order, truth).¹¹

Entertainment and pleasure are interrelated as experience's phenomena. »For the same reason that work and duty are sometimes unpleasant, entertainment is always pleasure and delight«. ¹² A person's re-live of entertainment and pleasure when appealing to pop music is revealed by the following categories:

- openness and involvement in the world – that is, such a state of unity of the act of consciousness and the emotional process – when a person experiences complete involvement through pleasure in the flow of life as happiness;
- protection from the world reduction of corrective contact between the sphere of experience and the emotional sphere – avoidance of painful experiences through compensation, replacement, rationalization, and other ego- mechanics from contact with reality, from the need to realize and reflect;
- existential lightness and simplicity: in receiving pleasure, a person is guided by one desire, and the confidence that this desire will be satisfied;
- the truth of being; a person, having fun, experiences pleasure as the truth of being when he is confident in his actions, recognizes them as adequate to reality and gives them meaning;
- one's own being; during entertainment, a diverse range of experiences of pleasure is generalized as the most desirable, mastered, appropriated, and becomes one's own.

It can be assumed that it is pleasure and entertainment as emotional experiences that make pop music the actual reason for a person to fill his own life with deeply personal content and turn it into a »world of worlds«.

Pop music also contributes to the construction of such »life worlds« if we proceed from its entertaining symbolic-emotional sonar-imagery, which prevails over intellectuality, and its reliance on the deepest subjectivity of the preferences of the listener, performer, and composer. A shift from expert-rational music listening to emotional entertainment means a departure through pleasure from normative-logical regulators of listening to individual-personal, deep-value ones. As a result, human life, reflected in pop music through entertainment and pleasure, appears as an empirical, world-sensing being, as the life

¹¹ Cf. Frederick ROSEN, *Classical Utilitarianism from Hume to Mill*, London, Routledge, 2003, 56-57.

¹² Cherednichenko, *Muzyka...*, 156.

of the human soul in goodness.¹³ A person who may find it difficult to understand the essence of moral behavior nevertheless strives for pleasure, since this is his personal understanding of the good. Good is what is good from my point of view, and due to the unity of human nature, others will also appreciate it as good. Despite the fact that the choice of the pleasant is not at the same time the choice of the good but only its prerequisite, pleasure is a necessary element of a happy life. It is a type of good; it is one of the factors in the formation of virtue; and, moreover, not only through reason but also through pleasure, a person is able to come to understand and lead a moral and happy life.¹⁴ In general, the main sociocultural function of popular music – entertainment – makes it music for self-knowledge and self-identification through pleasure (for the soul and/or for the body); music when »the subject enjoys himself«,¹⁵ as the philosopher Ortega y Gasset aptly noted.

Thus, the functional basis of pop music is entertainment for the sake of pleasure. Through experiencing entertaining pop music content with pleasure, a person experiences an emotional sociocultural experience and the formation of new meanings. Pop music, as a unique artistic reality, itself turns out to be reformatted with new intuitive, intellectual meanings and emotional states, i.e., a new spirituality, whose content does not necessarily coincide with the value-normative volume of the existing spiritual culture of society. Pop music as a form of mass art turns out to be capable of not only going back to the basic categories for a given culture but also producing its own spiritual meanings, generating new values, reorienting public psychology and consciousness, and anchoring them in pleasure. Through pleasure, pop music goes beyond the scope of an artistic phenomenon and becomes a moral and sociocultural phenomenon. Because of its functional essence, that is, what allows pop music as a part of mass culture to remain itself (to entertain and give pleasure), it is classified by people in the category of socially disapproved phenomena. Next, we will consider the causes and consequences of dissatisfaction with pop music as a form of mass art and the devaluation of the pleasure received from it.

3. Devaluation of pleasure in modern pop music: causes and consequences

The essence and reasons for dissatisfaction with pop music as part of mass culture were critically expressed by Adorno, using the term »consumer music«.

¹³ Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, Moscow, Nauka, Vol. 1, 1975, 115; EPICURUS, *Pis'mo k Menekeyu* [Letter to Menoeceus], Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1955, 208-213.

¹⁴ Cf. Aristotle, *Bol'shaya etika...*, 505.

¹⁵ Cf. José ORTEGA Y GASSET, *Degumanizatsiya iskusstva* [The Dehumanization of Art], Moscow, AST, 2008, 42.

The specific features of this music, which is an object of mass consumption under the conditions of monopoly capitalism, are its

»availability, variety, sense of irony, and reasonable abstinence from everything that may be too complex in spiritual or purely musical terms. The utilitarian applicability of such music is service to the client. She controls the buyer«. ¹⁶

In his works, Adorno pointed out that the problem of popular music consists of two parts: the music and the listener. Pop music is that which is easy to understand; it is not autonomous; it is wholesale standardized; it is replicated; it is associated with the repressive nature of the daily cycles of capitalist society but does not reflect the contradictions of modernity; it is devoid of social truth; it is not aimed at the human self and does not require active reflection; being a product of the cultural industry, it has no opportunity to acquire aesthetic value. Such music, causing the listener to need himself through the mechanisms of habituation and repetition, does not contribute but rather prevents the occurrence of changes in his »musical diet«, making him a passive consumer. The leisure time of a pop music listener is closed and meaningless. ¹⁷

»Consumers seek novelty, but the stress and boredom associated with actual work mean that leisure time offers them the only opportunity for truly new experiences. They crave a substitute for work. Popular music offers them this opportunity«. ¹⁸

A de facto counterexample to Adorno's theory and a unique marker of social discontent with pop music these days could be K-Pop. Despite the apparent ease of this genre, K-Pop raises acute and relevant social topics: beauty standards imposed on people by society; criticism of cultural or generational stereotypes; not always the positive impact of social networks on communication, self-esteem, and everyday life, etc. In his song »instagram«, DEAN puts into words the feeling that each of us has experienced while sitting alone at night and aimlessly scrolling through our social media feed. People's posts about their lives are so colorful and interesting that it's easy to feel worthless.

»This damn information age
There is definitely a problem
These days, knowing more
Makes you more miserable«.

Instead of relaxing and enjoying your free time, you fall through again and again, losing yourself in the black hole of social network.

»All night

¹⁶ Theodor ADORNO, *Vvedenie v sotsiologiyu muzyki* [Introduction to the Sociology of Music], Moscow, RossPEN, 2008, 168.

¹⁷ Cf. Theodor ADORNO, *Negative Dialectics*, N.Y., Seabury Press, 1973; Theodor ADORNO, *Esteticheskaya teoriya* [Aesthetic Theory], Moscow, Respublika, 2001.

¹⁸ Adorno, *Vvedenie v sotsiologiyu...*, 77.

Just wasting time like this
Inside your Instagram«. ¹⁹

EXO-K's track »Mama« talks about how technology and the online world have changed the way we communicate with other people:

»At some point, we have voluntarily
Trapped ourselves in a smart prison
We base our personalities from
A digital world made of 0's and 1's
There's no life, emotion or warmth
...

Why won't we look each other in the eye anymore?
Why won't we communicate? Why won't we love?« ²⁰

BTS in the song »Can You Turn Off Your Phone?« literally shouts about the need for live communication during friendly meetings instead of posting photos or searching for news:

»Could you turn off your cellphone?
Though they say everyone is smart,
We're becoming dumber and dumber
Could you turn off your cellphone?
Give me a mention face to face
I don't need a like«. ²¹

TWICE's hit song »Likey« tackles the issue of how much we have to conform to beauty standards and not look like ourselves just to get someone's attention on social media.

»Put on BB cream, pat pat pat
Put on lipstick, mam mam ma
Shall I make a pretty pose for the camera?
Look at this and smile for me
And please press it
On the bottom, that cute and red
Heart heart«. ²²

The musical fabric of K-Pop is also quite autonomous – in the spirit of a postmodern understanding of innovation and development – not as an author's supergoal but, on the contrary, as eclecticism, collage-pressing into a single layer of different styles, genres, and forms. The inability of people to fully

¹⁹ DEAN, *instagram* (2017), <https://colorcodedlyrics.com/2017/12/26/dean-instagram/> (Jun 14, 2024).

²⁰ EXO-K, *Mama* (2012), <https://colorcodedlyrics.com/2012/04/07/exo-k-mama/> (Jun 14, 2024).

²¹ BTS, *Could You Turn Off Your Phone?* (2014), <https://doolsetbangtan.wordpress.com/2019/03/22/could-you-turn-off-your-cellphone/> (Jun 14, 2024).

²² TWICE, *Likey* (2017), <https://colorcodedlyrics.com/2017/10/30/twice-likey/> (Jun 14, 2024).

experience the new in modern sociocultural circumstances becomes a physiological reason and a spiritual occasion to deny the novelty of any pop music product.

As a result, the world community habitually continues to multiply calls to redirect the flows of the pop music industry into the channel of serious, intellectual, moral, and ethical leisure. The motives have also long been known: the loss of aesthetic and moral guidelines in pop music and the transition of many of its forms and genres into the sphere of an antisocial-hedonistic pastime - one that gives people pleasure but has a low or negative moral assessment from the majority of society. While creative or passive pastime is suitable for some people, for others (especially if they are united in groups), prolonged aimless rest can lead to aggression, a splash of energy accumulated in the process of recuperation. In the latter version, pop music no longer just invigorates the human condition but promotes:

- awakening low-lying instincts;
- manifestation of aggressive and depressive states;
- loss of strength and increased anxiety;
- implementation of various forms of deviant and self-destructive behavior;
- the formation of complexes of threats and related ones (crime, alcoholism, prostitution, suicide, drug addiction);
- a detrimental effect on the intellectual and mental state, on the value system, and on the physical well-being of a person.

Thus, in general, the sociocultural significance of the entire layer of modern pop music is decreasing, even despite the constantly improving digital and online technologies, which facilitate not only the creation of pop music content that is different in every sense but also its active distribution and demand.

Musical demand is formed by young people. Their preferences directly depend on the information environment and standard of living. However, it is not so easy for even a young layman to enjoy music today.

What is it that the consumer of pop music »stumbles« over? Again, in order to enjoy pop music, the consumer will have to work just as hard, to carefully select the works he needs (only those that are pleasant) among all the fast and non-stop moving, changing flow of popular musical and textual information. This approach requires effort and time, and obviously not all users will use it; for many, the very process of finding the desired music track will cause displeasure. In addition, the rapid filling of pop music content deprives the creator, performer, and listener of music of »creative silence«, that is, time for comprehension and acceptance, and therefore deprives them all of the opportunity for dialogue, which is the vital purpose of musical culture.

A genuine dialogue with a piece of music is possible only in a situation where the composer, performer, and listener are on the same axis of vision of the world, at the meeting point of common understanding and the creation of culture.

A failed dialogue causes irritation in the consumer of pop music products, increases negative emotions, and causes misunderstanding. Often, a wave of rejection boils up not against the song itself, the text, or the musical composition, but against the phenomenon with which a person associates it (a trip on public transport, in a taxi) with a certain (difficult, alarming, tragic) period of one's own life or society. A person's condition influences the enjoyment of music, and a personality trait influences the choice of music depending on its emotional context. The choice of pop music itself is not always amenable to control and reflection. There is so-called intrusive music (advertising, hits, video clips, soundtracks for films and TV series), which constantly sounds from the outside and spins in your head. Therefore, many consumers will most likely stop at the fashionable, easiest, or already quite familiar musical product for their perception, thereby devaluing the more complex, innovative, and interesting.

Observing what is happening with modern pop music, the gloomy tribe of moralists is becoming even gloomier, and what do they offer to change the situation? Having identified the problem, moralists just continue to complain about people's inescapable craving for pleasure, criticize it, and condemn it. Purposefully seeking pleasure in pop music is now considered weak, selfish, delusional, and lacking intelligence. Pop music has become a »guilty pleasure«.

Shame is a sociocultural emotion. Shame about pop music can even arise because others' playlists are different from ours. Having different interests in pop music makes a person feels isolated, and his self-esteem suffers. People listen to something »shameful« from pop music at home, but it is desirable and gives them true (perceived this way even at the physiological level) pleasure. They hide it to be on trend, to keep up with fashion, and to conform to group norms and expectations. What is so attractive about »non-intellectual« tracks? Absurd melodies and lyrics awaken new feelings, activate imaginative thinking, and »turn on« irony, jokes, and laughter. This is one of the reasons why popular songs are most often made into parodies and cover versions by other performers and parodists. And laughter itself is a facet of pleasure, inseparable from entertainment. »Laughter, with its inversion of habitual logic, is akin to the playful construction of rules that have nothing in common with the pragmatic laws of everyday life. But laughter is also 'anti-tears', 'anti-fear', and 'anti-shame'. A joke is used to console, encourage, and help jokes get out of an awkward situation. Finally, laughter has long been connected to criticism of certain aspects of life or persons - and, as a rule, primarily those on which a person depends«.²³

²³ Cherednichenko, *Muzyka...*, 157-158.

The role of pop music in affirming and supporting existential values is obvious. Pop music and the phenomena it generates (hits) can be masterpieces that harmoniously combine artistic value, commercial profitability, and the axiological features of national cultures. Such examples of pop music, as unique cultural models of listening to music, create a situation or problem, the solution of which is impossible without attentive »feeling« into the sounding intonations and their experiences. Consequently, the intonational vocabulary and emotionality of the listener develop: passivity gives way to intellectual activity; the processes of thinking, imagination, and memory are activated. And all this is done based on the individual properties of the individual, contributing to the formation of her independence, resourcefulness, and originality of thinking. The accumulation of musical and sensory impressions and emotional responsiveness to them creates the ground for direct artistic pleasure and aesthetic experience as the basis for a person's disclosure of his own spiritual resources.

Thus, many modern pop music items present it as becoming increasingly sad and slow; simple and loud; antisocial, angry, and depressed; more mechanical and less melodic; giving us today (who are fed up with it) less pleasure than before our parents. It seems that modern pop music is losing its traditional position in culture as a stable source of safe and positive entertainment in favor of genuine and intense pleasure.

What could be the consequences if pop music stops transmitting pleasure, and becomes something else (intellectual or serious) in the world of mass culture? In this case, the very ability for humanity to balance the ability to think with the ability to experience pleasure will disappear.

Conclusion

Modern culture is fixated on pleasure as a socially false and shameful phenomenon that arises when a person turns to pop music as a non-intellectual consumer product. This does not take into account that entertainment and pleasure are cultural universals and culturological constants of pop music as a mass art form. Pleasure is present in pop music not as an end in itself but because of modern culture's search for meaning and building a hierarchy of values when responding to sociocultural challenges in an entertaining form. The pleasure delivered by pop music as a form of mass art is a reflection of its internal intention – the ability to produce its own spiritual meanings, reorient public consciousness, and anticipate the peculiarities of cultural development. Through pleasure, pop music goes beyond the scope of an artistic phenomenon and reveals the moral principle of good and individual morality. Reasons born of culture and reflected in pop music (utilitarianism, difficulty accepting new things and establishing dialogue, the speed of change in pop music informa-

tion) devalue both pop music itself and the pleasure from it. In fact, pop music hits can quite harmoniously combine entertainment for the sake of pleasure with the artistic and axiological value of culture and commercial profitability. Our contemporary, deprived of emotional balance by life, will again and again, as if for salvation, return to pop music that does not oblige him to anything, and, therefore, will invariably expect from it not lofty meanings but pleasure.