

## New uses of music

An analysis based on indie music in Buenos Aires

### *Novos usos da música*

*Uma análise baseada na música indie em Buenos Aires*

### *Nuevos usos de la música*

*Un análisis basado en la música indie de Buenos Aires*

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**Abstract:** During the 2000s, the term “indie” became common and relatively principal for the juvenile, urban music of the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires. How can we understand the indie phenomenon in the history of juvenile music related to Argentine rock bands? What variables should we take into consideration to comprehend indie since its logic differs from the one established by the identitarian appropriation of music genres? In order to answer these questions, we describe indie music in Buenos Aires and show its evolution. We suggest that indie is much more than a way in which people identify themselves with music. It is the manifestation of a new relation with music and its means of production. In line with this idea, we explore the most recent pragmatic approach to “music into action” and music as mediator of the social to reformulate the notion of music to use.

**Keywords:** Indie music; Uses of music; Identity; Pragmatic approach; Buenos Aires.

**Resumo:** Durante a década de 2000, a palavra “indie” era comum e relativamente central para a música juvenil e urbana da zona metropolitana de Buenos Aires. Como entender o fenômeno indie na história de músicas juvenis associadas ao rock na Argentina? Com quais parâmetros compreendê-lo, já que se trata de um fenômeno que escapa à apropriação identitária dos gêneros musicais? Para responder estas perguntas descrevemos a música indie em Buenos Aires e mostramos sua evolução. Afirmamos que o indie é muito mais uma forma de fazer do que se identificar com a música. Nesse sentido, é a manifestação de um novo relacionamento com a música e a produção de música. Para tanto tem sido necessário explorar o discurso pragmático sobre a “música como ação” e sobre a música como mediadora do social que habilitava este olhar sobre o indie. Analisando deste modo, reformulamos o conceito de música de uso.

**Palavras-chave:** Música indie; Usos da música; Identidade; Abordagem pragmática; Buenos Aires.

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Resumen: Durante la década del 2000, la palabra “indie” se volvió común y relativamente central para la música juvenil y urbana de la zona metropolitana de Buenos Aires. ¿Cómo comprender el fenómeno indie en la historia de las músicas juveniles asociadas al rock en Argentina? ¿Con qué parámetros entenderlo dado que su lógica escapa a la instaurada por la apropiación identitaria de los géneros musicales? Para responder estas preguntas, describimos la música indie en Buenos Aires y mostramos su evolución. Afirmamos que el indie es mucho más una manera de hacer que de identificarse con la música. Es la manifestación de una nueva relación con la música y con los medios de producción de música. Exploramos, a la vez, las discusiones pragmáticas recientes sobre la “música como acción” y la música como mediadora de lo social que habilitan esta mirada sobre el indie y permiten reformular el concepto de música de uso.

**Palabras clave:** Música indie; Usos de la música; Identidad; Abordaje pragmático; Buenos Aires.

## Introduction

During the 2000s people started to use the word “indie” more frequently in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires. At the beginning, this word was mainly associated with music, but also with movies, editorials, design and fashion pieces. Regarding the music listened by youngsters, most people pose that the indie style is a response to the crisis of the prevailing rock variants, particularly the “barrio” variants of rock or “rock chabón”, accused of not being “aesthetically novel” (Alabarces, 2008), and the rock related to the entertainment industry, which is supposedly more interested in becoming part of the sociopolitical *establishment* than in writing songs. The double distress was parallel to the socio-institutional crisis which “exploded” in December 2001, and it was especially affected by the Cromañón<sup>1</sup> club tragedy three years later. On this background, people often use the term “indie” to refer to the production and handling experiences dissociated from the classic record production industry. Likewise, saying “indie” in Buenos Aires implies arousing a type of controversy which moves ideas on style related to social classes (Peña Boerio, 2011) and morality (Boix, 2017) with the ability to determine musical experiences which affirm their distinctive mark, although this refers to an identical tag. In this way, “indie” is a very polysemous, generalized and diffuse word.

Whilst many analysts expect to find in this phenomenon the great, new, local, rock bands for the youth in Argentina, which might not be as related to traditional rock as before, or even expect to find a new, aesthetic pattern that came to shake the established stagnation of the music world and to give

<sup>1</sup> The República Cromañón nightclub fire occurred on December 30, 2004, killing 193 people during a rock concert hosting the band Callejeros.

youngsters new ways of expressing one's identification and narratives, the emergence of indie in Argentina stands out because of an organizational novelty. Even when one could argue that indie has set other aesthetical codes, different from the ones crystallized in "rock nacional",<sup>2</sup> when we talk about "indie" we refer to a lasting series of interconnected local scenes, which attract a loyal and increasing audience, whose taste is not tied to mainstream sonorities and whose favorite bands do not depend financially on important record labels. How can we understand the indie phenomenon in the history of juvenile music related to Argentine rock bands? What concepts come from a musical phenomenon for whose recognition the production devise is so vital? The present study aims at answering these questions and showing the related empirical and theoretical changes.

Indie music implies a challenge to the traditional ways in which Argentine social sciences understand music in a discursive and narrative sense. Generally, in studies, this music has been questioned when it comes to conveying messages to transmit life experiences, sociopolitical needs and social identities, choosing lyrics as privileged ways to access to interpretation. In Argentina, this approach to music was developed by Vila (1987), by his concept of "music to use". Is it possible to comprehend the contemporary generalization of indie music in Buenos Aires based on this idea? There is a positive response to this already. Its variants can be seen in a national context (Peña Boerio, 2011) or in national contexts (Hesmondhalgh, 1999; Hibbet, 2005; Newman, 2009; amongst the most important authors). Throughout these research papers, what is indie music marks a new aesthetic for the middle-class youngsters. It also satisfies a need for being socially different and distinct. Nevertheless, defining "indie" solely in terms of this perspective only renders the issue less clear. The music production is not taken into account and it is key to understanding its contemporary importance. Indie music is not just related to style and identity; it is related to the music production itself and this is why indie serves as a generational code.

Recent discussions on how music is handled led us to wonder if this is less associated to identitarian appropriations and more associated to social action. Sticking to this premise, we noticed that, in indie, the common language provided by a music genre is replaced by a collective action enabled

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<sup>2</sup> We prefer the term "rock nacional" [national rock] over "Argentine rock" as to be faithful to the term favored by the members of the indie scene. The term "rock nacional" was coined during the military dictatorship 1976-1983 (Vila, 1987), projecting on the past of rock music in Argentina (whose exponents preferred the concept of "progressive music"). "Rock nacional" speaks about sounds and social movements and has a deep sense of national identity.

by a novel *modus operandi* regarding the music production and consumption. This new way of using music is articulated in the convergence of a generation and aesthetic, mercantile, social and technological possibilities which did not exist in the so-called “era of the record labels’ empire” (Gallo and Semán, 2016). This historical change in the ways of connecting the music with the production means is observed also in other genres, such as variants of electronic music.

To show that, in indie music, the production is more important than the identification with certain aesthetic codes, first we ponder on the historical elements of recent studies, which let us understand the origins of indie. Next, we deal with indie in the city of La Plata, for it is from here that indie spread to the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires. Thirdly, we reflect on its evolution through the years. This allows us to observe, in detail, what is generally seen as the movement from indie as a primarily aesthetic approach to indie as a means of producing and feeling music, which traces the path to a new, stylistic heterogeneity. What variables should we take into consideration to comprehend indie in Buenos Aires since its logic differs from the one established by the identitarian appropriation of music genres? In the following section, we analyze the key elements to studying musical expressions regarding music to use and we observe how indie is inadequate in this conceptual context, recovering theoretical and empirical innovations which, in this field of study, let us go over this discussion. Finally, we reach a conclusion and contribute with a renewed concept of “music to use”, which may fit the contemporary musical phenomena in a more suitable way.

## **The emergence of indie in Buenos Aires**

How has the term “indie” become so common and relatively principal for the juvenile, urban music of the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires? Although the immediate antecedent of indie, as its protagonists say, is 90’s alternative music, we need to consider the greater movement from the late 70’s and early 80’s, which started when rock or progressive music opened up and was fragmented. This starting point showcased the beginning of rock nacional in its consecrating moment and the emergence of underground music as an option that became more and more viable as time went by.

After the Malvinas War (1982), rock nacional was established: great contracts with big label records were signed, massive concerts were held and there was an increasing internationalization process (Díaz 2005; Pujol, 2006). It could be stated that a progressive massification process had already taken place since the end of the 60’s. In 1969, during the BA Rock, 30,000 people

gathered during five days. But, although the audience progressively increased during this period, until the “explosion” of rock nacional, in the 80’s, the production of rock was so limited one could count the bands and solo artists of each historical cycle of this music world (Díaz, 2005).

The massive consecration in the late 70’s and early 80’s of the “pioneering” projects (Díaz, 2005) converged with the most visible moment (at least in a retrospective way) of the alternative routes to the ones proposed by consecrated musicians and big companies. According to several studies, these options became more and more viable for the youth and functioned as a hotbed of the major leagues. Although there had been previous alternative options, it was in the 80’s when the most important artistic explosion was triggered. The so-called 80’s underground music affected our history: a series of initiatives caused a fragmentation and pluralization process in the world of rock nacional.

Di Cione (2012, p. 1) highlighted the technological aspect to the origins of underground music: musicians recorded homemade tapes in portable studios of four channels and experimented with unconventional uses of instruments and recording equipment. This let them record outside the big, local record labels’ studios, which were a common place for rock nacional throughout most of its development (Alabarces, 2008; Díaz, 2005; Pujol, 2006). In the same sense, López (2017) recovered the explosion of the cassette culture in the 80’s. In 1985, these habits were relevant enough so as to draw a distinction in rock music between those who were “professionals” (who produced their records in multinational companies and embarked on national and international tours) and those who were in the “under” (or “independent”) scene: those artists who frequently played live, in small venues, in front of their loyal audience, but who could not manage to leave a mark on the market (Di Cione, 2012). The latter sector shows a variety of sounds (open to pop), critics to the softened and compliant spirit of certain kinds of established rock music and a deep, generational renovation (Flores, 2012).

Chroniclers of underground music in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires have suggested there is a connection or continuity between this scene and what would be called “alternative” and “indie” music in the following decade (Flores, 2012). This continuity hypothesis has not been exploited by academic studies, but it is worthy of consideration as a general guideline. Many artists who edited their first records in the under way, years later, signed their first recording contracts with multinational companies, representing an “alternative” scene. Likewise, artists who began their careers in the underground scene, then, moved on to the alternative and indie scene in the

90's and 2000's. Now, even though what is underground and indie express a continuity both in the aesthetical sensibility and in the tradition of producing records outside the musical institutions solidly established in each period of time, as we will see, what is underground and indie is not continuous when it comes to the recording industry, the performance and scale.

During the 90's, rock nacional developed a novel variant rooted in popular sectors, which was called "barrio" variants of rock or "rock chabón". It was a nationalistic and danceable rock, at the same time against neoliberalism and the intellectual tradition of "pioneering" projects. At least, when it began, rock chabón brought about two innovations related to the tradition of rock nacional. Firstly, until it was interrupted, rock music (even the one which came from the underground scene) was mainly rooted in the middle class of Buenos Aires, when talking about its logic of production and its self-image (Semán, 2006). Thus, rock chabón obliged people to abandon the premise of the homogeneity present in most of the studies on rock nacional. It discovered other themes, territories and subjects when it came to genre (Semán and Vila, 2008). Secondly, the production of rock chabón was characterized by the organization of shows in small or medium venues, thanks to the "aguante"<sup>3</sup> of the followers (Semán, 2006) and the collaboration of the artists themselves. In general, these artists had "independent" phonographic records first and, then, had recording contracts with big record labels, which were limited when it came to making artistic and commercial decisions. This aguante democratized the relation between "producers" and "receivers". It also shaped a vector in the professionalization of the bands, who "made something of themselves from scratch" (Benedetti, 2005). Nonetheless, this second novelty, which referred to musical production and institutional formats, was not privileged in the analyses.

During the 90's, the Argentine barrio variants of rock and their critical and more glamorous counterpart, even though their recurrent topics and views on reality differed, took a twist towards the entertainment world and became part of show business (Alabarces, 2008). The phenomena of the "barrialization" of a variant of rock and rock in general becoming part of the industry, radicalizing the historical conflict between what is alternative and commercial in music, led to a particular modulation focused on feelings and glamour, on intimate narratives rather than on social ones (Gallo and Semán, 2009). This was the so-called "alternative" rock and pop. This denomination finally had repercussion after 1993, when a series of festivals were held, and

<sup>3</sup> We maintained the native term "aguante", instead of "support", for this word entails more than just following or supporting a band. It speaks of a popular, corporal identity.

the organizers proclaimed the existence of a “new Argentine rock” (Lunardelli, 2002). The most visible groups of this renovating variant were Babasónicos, Juana la Loca, Los Brujos, El Otro Yo, and Peligrosos Gorriónes, among others. In this respect, towards the end of the 90’s, a group of specialized journalists started to talk about “indie”, certainly in a more limited way than the one adopted nowadays to refer to a genre of alternative music which recovered the sonority of the Anglo-American independent rock and distanced itself from the “Latin alternative” rock, which, back then, in its prime, combined autochthonous (Andean, Caribbean, and so forth) sounds in rock formats. After the Cromañón club tragedy and the damning of the rock chabón (the genre was criticized for having “poor” aesthetics, and that basically started the fire: Semán, 2006), these alternative and indie variants had the opportunity to back their proposal: one which had already called for some kind of action and was legitimate. In this fashion, during a process that cannot be pinpointed with precision and which has not been extensively studied, the space for “juvenile” music in Argentina has been open in terms of themes and styles, delimiting the end of a cycle.

What did “indie” mean and where did it come from? Originally, “indie” was the short form of “independent”. Both terms started to be uttered in England towards the end of the 70’s and the early 80’s to mark the economic separation from the so-called major labels. This early indie scene, based on independent record labels, developed the DIY ethic and the idea of appropriating means of production (Dale, 2009) of punk and post-punk. Thus, historically speaking, “indie” was firstly related to the economic and institutional sides of the production and circulation of musical works. However, in the 90’s, the massive success of certain indie bands and the logic of the market of the record labels changed the meaning of this term. The opposition between indie companies and major labels began to blur and “indie” stopped reflecting a different way of producing music. It started to be the name for an international music genre (Hesmondhalgh, 1999, p. 35) sonorously related to punk and post-punk. That is to say, it moved from an economic and institutional category to an aesthetic category.

Taking into account these connotations, the word “indie” arrived in Argentina in the 90’s and, as we have seen, it was associated, at least in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires, to a specific kind of guitar rock. In this first appropriation of the term, “indie” did not refer to an institutional or technical condition since, to denominate those who were self-managed or unrelated to multinational companies, among other alternatives, the term “independent” had always been used. This aesthetic use of the word found a continuity in the

first indie scene of the city of La Plata in the early 2000's. In a short period of time, it became highly visible in the national media, which posed it was a promising renewal of rock nacional since La Plata was a young city, full of college students and rock. It was a place where many iconic rock bands were born.

At least until 2009, when we set out to pursue this ethnographic study, the “indie platense” (i.e., indie from La Plata) was a distinct, young music style, produced, handled and managed by musicians themselves. For most of the members, artists and fans of La Plata’s “independent” music scene, the world of local indie and its most prominent bands (like *El Mató a un Policía Motorizado*, *Valentín y los Volcanes*, *Sr. Tomate*, *107 Faunos* and *Shaman*) was sonorously connected to American college rock, to bands like *Pavement*, *Pixies* and *Sonic Youth*. Nevertheless, just as I affirmed in previous papers (Boix, 2017), the notion of a particular sonority was not enough so as to identify indie platense as a musical phenomenon. There were obvious cases in which local artists who adopted such sonorities did not feel identified with the term “indie”. At the same time, in the neighboring city of Buenos Aires, Peña Boerio (2011) showed that indie artists did not worry about continuing the spirit of rock. She stated indie embraced bands which recovered some autochthonous instruments and sonorities. Facing the scene of Buenos Aires, the members of the indie scene in La Plata created a symbolic sense of belonging through moral attributes: to be “indie” was to be “relaxed”, “rocker”, “not a careta”.<sup>4</sup> Firstly, the idea of being relaxed also implied how one connected to and produced music. Secondly, the idea of being a “rocker” prolonged the sound transgressional attitudes of the rock culture. Finally, being indie resiggnified a historical notion present in various juvenile cultures in Argentina (particularly in the world of rock): what it meant not to be a careta.

In La Plata, with the indie scene blossoming, from 2012 onwards, the idea of the college rock from the beginning was residual and the stylistic references were pluralized. Leaving the sounds aside and the attitude characterized by being rocker, anti-poser and relaxed, there was a certain way in which to set the music. Even though it could be assimilated to another version of asserting independence, it had elements which, at least in the years we carried out our ethnographical investigation, rendered the indie platense scene a unique experience. What was called “indie” in La Plata entailed a

<sup>4</sup> Although we could use the word “poser”, “careta” has a stronger meaning in Spanish. Indie musicians appropriate the term in a specific way, though maintaining the historical meaning (to be careta is to be fake, to follow the order; to avoid transgressing lawfulness or customs).



certain way of establishing music: musicians collaborated with each other (this was what they called “labels”) and were strongly related to college circles. It also entailed a certain style of nightlife: people would rather gather at homes, small, independent cultural institutions and shady bars than at fashionable discos. In these circles, technologies were intensely used, friendships were cemented (some members of the indie scene even shared rooms) and modest but sufficient investments in projects were stimulated.

The labels of the indie scene in La Plata were founded during the past decade by musicians and artists through their intensive and shared use of technologies (social media and audio equipment) and their method of collaboration. Members contribute with their skills and artistic expertise. The members of the different music labels are college students or recently graduated students. When we carried out the study, they were between the ages of 18 to 30. In general, these youngsters are supported by their families, who finance their studies in a total or partial way since they believe education is a family strategy to achieve upward social mobility. This cultural norm, in Argentina, is intimately connected to the middle class. The members of this scene learn to live on their own, without a family to protect them in a direct manner. Affectively and economically speaking, they rely more on their friends and partners. A common tradition here is to grant favors or lend one’s goods. This occurs in a controllable, friendly and geographically specific space: in the relatively small city center, where albums are recorded, live shows are hosted and cultural institutions, radios and university classrooms are available.

When the members of the indie scene “gather”, this act is based on friendship, a practice which does not necessarily imply a close, intimate, emotional connection but it does imply reciprocity. Firstly, this involves having connections and contacts, which, in part, help organizing the musical practice. Secondly, this implies sharing specific rules throughout the practice. On that count, friends are friends because “they are in sync” and they feel close to each other in a special way because they are artists. This complicity reaches those who, in other music worlds, are merely fans or followers. Here, they are committed to making music happen, to promoting, appreciating and financing it.

This circle of friends produces albums, but this is not its sole or main activity. Friends organize parties, events and festivals. They rent equipment, make and sell T-shirts, stickers, fanzines and other design objects related to the artists. In these spaces, playing (writing, executing) music is not the only activity which organizes the members of the indie scene into hierarchies; handling the music experience also leads to this. The circle of friends produces

a criteria of appreciation, evaluation and legitimization. It creates a material environment for the music and values the artistic product. Thus, the notion of “label” here has a completely different meaning to the one imposed by big companies. Maybe this is the reason why most of the musicians use the short form “label”, instead of “record label”. This new kind of label (I call them “emergent music labels”: Boix, 2017), in comparison, incurs a lesser risk. It is more dynamic and functional. It yields profits when, in the past, it would have been a commercial failure and this would have marked the end of the entrepreneurship. Likewise, labels have changed their opposition against the “market”, a word whose semantic family gains a new legitimacy.

Following the case of La Plata, it can be noted that, in default of a determinant stylistic criteria, what was called “indie”, in every sphere, was produced among very specific mediations (Hennion, 2002) and that rendered it singular. Indie was different because of its aesthetic malleability and the weight (for those involved) carried by how one established music, the weight of everything (technologies, relationships among members, moral strengths, the materiality of the scene, among others) that makes a given kind of music special. Consequently, in each indie manifestation, the characteristics of the production devise and of the music’s location were more determinant than the stylistic qualities (even though they kept evoking notions of style). Here, there is a change in the way we categorize those facts, which is important in itself (and it allows us to intervene in a field of study which, when pondering on music and society, has focused on identity and not on social action) and which also enables us to polish the interpretation on the indie phenomenon.

### **A new approach to the uses of music**

What happens historically with indie carries a deep meaning that needs to be elucidated through contemporary bibliography. As anticipated, we suggest that indie is much more than a way in which people identify themselves with music: it is a way of doing. Indie presents a challenge to Argentine social studies on music.

In the bibliography published after the spread of democracy (1983), a series of studies reflected upon rock nacional to understand it in relation to the messages conveyed to create the identities of social groups. Vila’s pioneering work (1985) showed this theoretical orientation, recovered from the English subcultural theorists and applied to the construction of a “social movement” rather than a subculture, with the aim of examining the relation between rock and the last dictatorship period (1976-1983). His thesis was that “youngsters” used this music to rebel against the dictatorship, in massive concerts, which

functioned as a generational refuge. This is how Vila introduced the notion of “music to use” (1987): like tango and folklore music, back in their times, rock nacional was proposed as a social movement, where we could identify the specific social actors, who used music to support their identities and collective action. Since then, this view in which music matters, for it serves a greater socio-political function, has dominated sociological studies on rock in Argentina (or on juvenile music in general, we could argue).

Years later, Vila (1996) admitted his previous studies were rather mechanical. Indeed, when analyzing how youngsters identified themselves with rock, one could not see the heterogeneity of music: if we considered that rock, as a social movement, was cross-class (Vila, 1985, p. 145) and composed by different sectors of the middle and popular classes, the study argued that every youngster of those classes were rockers. In the same manner, these youngsters were classified in diverse groups in the movement, in structural homologies regarding their social positions (popular class people were related to hard rock; middle class people, to rock nacional; and upper middle class people, to punk). This argument ignored each style was anti-totalitarian in a different degree. It also ignored those styles did not correspond uniquely to those social classes. To solve the issue regarding homological reasoning, Vila (1996) created an analytical tool focused on the articulation of musical interpellations and narrative identities. Thus, he introduced the concept of plural identifications regarding one kind of music: there is no already established group which, then, expresses itself with cultural activities; music, as a type of practice, articulates a social and aesthetical process, where people give meaning to their collective and individual relations. This interpellations-narratives dynamics drilled the homological logic.

After Vila’s studies, many analyses dealt with recent Argentine history and the practices of consuming, interpreting and putting in circulation certain musical expressions, especially those regarded as important for the popular sectors: cumbia and rock chabón (Semán and Vila, 1999, 2008; Semán, 2006; Alabarces, 2008; Benedetti, 2005; among others). Throughout these studies, the interest of followers and listeners was partly connected to the thesis that, during a social, neoliberal restructuring, the identitarian narratives (especially juvenile ones) were constructed around cultural practices and symbolic repertoires offered by cultural industries, rather than around classic socializing units, such as families, political parties, unions and pedagogical institutions. These analyses focused on reception and, once again, entailed an “identitarian use” of music. None the less, they were based on the fact that the world of rock was already fragmented, and this allowed for the different ways

in which social actors appropriated the same kind of music. For example, rock chabón was understood as a version of the rock nacional of the middle class according to the experiences of new subjects (Semán and Vila, 1999; Semán, 2006).

However, some of these research efforts were found to be mechanical to a certain degree, when analyzing the relation between music and identity taking into account that, previously, Vila's critical study (1996) to his analysis of rock as an agglutinant, social movement and producer of a juvenile, anti-totalitarian identity had questioned the hypothesis of a *complete* identity. Subsequent to a series of studies carried out after 2000, when technical and economic contexts merged with the productivity of the creations and musical appropriations of the young, active audience, Semán and Vila (2008) moved forward with this critical review. They revealed one could no longer state that an exclusivist, univocal adhesion norm of music consumption existed or state that fixed, homogeneous, interpretative communities existed. By contrast, there was an appropriation mobile and situational of music.

In tune with these changes, as we explained in the previous paragraph, the segmentation and the creation of collective actors in the music world related to rock had been transformed. It is worth mentioning that, since its beginnings with the 80's underground music and its opening to pop music, rock music started to incorporate other genres in a more frequent way. Back then, this mixture was still coherent to the fusion identified by Vila (1987, p. 24) regarding classic rock nacional, where genres were still clearly defined and the established or vanguardist versions were mixed. During the past three lusters, on the contrary, mixtures started to be more and more radical until, at the beginning of the last decade, there was a definite aesthetical opening to what had been rejected before, particularly when rock became close to cumbia and "commercial music", its former antagonists. In the indie of the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires, this mixture, which had the goal of making genres explode, was displayed in a systematic way.

Faced with the fact that mixture prevailed, analysts noted that cultural studies like the ones of the Birmingham Center, obsessed with a correspondence between social groups and styles, were not very efficient at explaining the production and (above all) consumption of music. Moreover, they were being challenged by innovations in the field of study. Among these, we explore the critical approaches to the identity concept and the innovations in music studies stimulated by DeNora (2000) and Hennion (2002), for they let us reformulate our theoretical tools to grasp the uses of music.

Over the past years, several studies incorporated critical approaches to the limited analyses on the use of music regarding identity and started to point out other analytical problems, examining the many reasons why people get close to music (Semán, 2015, p. 122). What do people do with music, besides feeling identified with it? When incorporating DeNora's arguments (2000) on the way in which music was a resource for practice and an experience, and facing, once again, more plural objects, we saw these approaches were, compared to their predecessors, more aware of how musical practice diversified the uses of music and more aware of the level of singularity required for analyzing this. More recently, the incorporation of elements of the work of Hennion (2002) allowed us to see the way in which music could be used and the way in which, based on that usage, each type of music was not always the same. The way in which Hennion defined "music" allowed for this displacement. This was not a closed object; it was a mesh where one could not dissociate music from its mediations: institutions, technical objects, material tools, narratives and the subjects' performance. Thereby, Hennion allowed us to regard "use" as an effort in which heterogeneous agents intervened.

When recovering these developments, Gallo and Semán (2016) believed that, in emergent musical productions, novelty was not related to style; it was related to the kind of relation a generation has with music. This was reinforced since technological conditions enabled, like never before, self-production and pluralized consumption. In their own words: "Following the music genres which, at other times, were music to use, there is no new music genre; there follows a new way of producing and using music, a new relation with the media producing music. Because of this variation, even if previous musical patterns were repeated, music is not always the same" (Gallo and Semán, 2016, p. 21). Once more, this concept questions the uses of music, the collective nature of the original formulation. But it is oriented to answering to another logic in the construction of the collective, one which responds less to the relation between narrative identification and music: one which responds more to the subsequent forms of action, through which people produce, put into circulation, live, experiment with and appreciate music. Alternatively, these coincidences allow us to re-think the identification processes between youngsters and music. Thus, firstly, there is a less holistic category which does not take the risk in transforming each person in yet another expression of collective identity. This is why individuals are more important. Secondly, this is a notion beyond the opposition between production and reception, since it deals with contexts in which the pattern of production also takes into account what used to happen at different times, what was divided in dichotomies.

Finally, this concept is much more aware of the possibilities implied by the uses of music, of its singularity. So, it goes together with the effective employment of music in contemporary times.

### **Final reflections**

Originally, the category of identification and collective action we call “music to use” meant to ponder on a kind of music representative of a certain period of time and social group. This notion of the uses of music was thought out in relation to the categories of identity, social movement and music genre. It was an analytical association which entailed an employment of music based on identification, which expected political action for the interpretative community and which comprised under the term “rock” various kinds of music that (even though they were indeed fragmented beyond imagination in that political, academic context), after the return to democracy, would undergo a further process of fragmentation into more specific genres.

The dialog between our field investigation and this bibliography reveals that, when we talk about “indie”, we pose a challenge to the specialized field of study, which, over the past 30 years, has considered the relation between music and youth as a meaningful object. We talk about a musical phenomenon where style gives its prominence to the institutional ways in which those stylistic qualities are produced. Then, we are not talking about a mere fragmentation of Argentine rock, as rock chabón and other derivations of rock nacional did, regarding music (a new subgenre), careers and vital attitudes (musicians’ biographies) and class (new classes and fractions of the classes of musicians and audiences). To these factors we add a more general one, which overdetermines them: the manifestation of a new relation with music and its means of production. In this fashion, to conceptualize this contemporary, musical phenomenon, we go back to the most recent discussion on “music into action” and music as mediator of the social (DeNora, 2000; Hennion, 2002). This lets us reformulate the concept of “use”.

Thus, like Vila, in 1985, when describing the space of concerts and their functioning as refuges during the military dictatorship, allowing for a certain interpretation on how young sociability aspects were organized based on music, nowadays, in the means of productions provided by new technologies, which foster local music scenes and are decentralized from music genres, interested in both the handling and the aesthetics of music, and based on friendly relationships, we can find a use of music typical of certain kinds of contemporary, young groups. The main difference is that, for the members of these aesthetic worlds, one does not merely listen to music (this is not merely

for developing identities). Music is a committed practice, a consequence of a uniquely defined action and a resource to connect with others and create bonds and institutions.

In this context, we elaborate the concept of “use” again, following recent discussion in the field of study. We emphasize the social action dimension of the original concept in relation to the most predominant (and studied) dimension of identification since we are interested in observing how music is produced, put into circulation, appreciated, valued, experimented with and, all in all, lived. We state the concept of “music to use” is collective but we relativize its holism. We come across more heterogeneous phenomena, products of deep changes in the analyzed music world and of the study of certain individual, singular expressions. Moreover, we overcome the traditional opposition between production and reception. This does not imply that, from now on, there will not be “musicians” and “audiences” but there will not be “production” and “reception” activities in their classical sense. We consider that, when analyzing indie in Buenos Aires this way, we have a more refined comprehension of what it entails and we debate on the biggest and most diverse possibilities of using music observed in our time. We make a contribution to the discussion on the historical changes in the music world.

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Received: Mar. 01, 2018

Accept: May 15, 2018

Published: Mar. 01, 2019

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