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Based on Anglo-American sources: Polish music journalism of the 1980s and the canons in popular music

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Abstract: In the paper, I discuss the use of Western sources by music journalists in Poland in the 1980s and its cultural consequences with regard to the journalists’ milieu, the media patterns, and the readers/listeners. The phenomenon is analyzed by exploring the music journal “Magazyn Muzyczny” (“Music Magazine”) in the 1983–1988 period as a case study. In the 1980s decade, it was the most important and influential Polish monthly devoted entirely to popular music. Feature articles, essays, artist profiles, news stories, and trivia were based directly on American and British music press. This essay explores translations as a practice typical for Polish music journalism in the context of a non-democratic regime. Importantly, the content published in the English-speaking press was the main source providing information on international music trends, new scenes, new albums and singles to Polish fans. This means they performed information and entertainment functions but also—or rather in the first place—they were involved in opinion-forming, culture-making, and group integration. The practice had significant cultural consequences. The music journalism of the 1980s was almost entirely dominated by the English-speaking music press, which bore certain results for the Polish audience. The American and English popular music scenes were presented in radio broadcasts and the journals as the most important and most valuable, with minimal interest in the performers coming from non-English speaking countries unless they had already gained fame in UK or USA. The latter affected the formation of music taste among the Polish audience and the establishment of music canons.

Subjects: Mass Communication; Music Industry; Press & Journalism; Journalism

Keywords: music journalism; music press of the 1980s; Magazyn Muzyczny; Polish People’s Republic; music canons

In this paper, exploring the example of the monthly popular music journal “Magazyn Muzyczny” (“Music Magazine”; hereinafter abbreviated to “MM”), I discuss how the opinion-forming music journalism in Poland in the 1980s was partly based on essays directly based on the Western music press. Polish music journalists used the content published in American or English magazines as a general basis for their efforts; accordingly, articles and news concerning Western music were commonplace in Polish press. The main argument is that in the 1980s, the music journalism of “MM” was heavily Anglo-centric: the journalists predominantly focused on information concerning the USA or the UK, and the artists from these countries were widely described and studied, and even niche American and British bands were able to enjoy some media exposure.
Such an approach had far-reaching consequences: the Polish music press depicted the domain of popular music in which groups from the USA and the UK were regularly promoted, and journalists gave these countries special attention while reporting on the field of popular music. Furthermore, they valued the USA/UK events as the most important and also tend to treat the albums released there with special care. The result was the dissemination of canons of popular music and the reproduction of phenomena considered important. The popular music canon consisted of Anglo-American artists and albums, which also resulted in the marginalization of artists from other countries, especially those who performed in their native language.

In the first half of the 1980s, as a young reader of “MM” I had read Kamil Sipowicz’s article “Music of the Dark Side of the World” (3/1983) concerning artists who sang pessimistic lyrics filled with a fascination with evil, accompanied by nervous, disturbing, industrial music. It is a work about the performers who created a gloomy, depressive, “suicidal” vision of reality, for instance, Joy Division, PIL, Dome, Throbbing Gristle, or Pere Ubu. My attention was drawn to information on This Heat’s releases: Sipowicz claimed that their records could be listened to at both 33 and 45 rpm, suggesting that the playing speed does not affect its reception. This extraordinary information impressed me: it seemed that the band planned its work against all musical conventions, and, depending on the playback speed, one deals with different ideological assumptions given by the artists to their music. After a few years, I became familiar with This Heat’s discography; although their post-punk style is imbued with a mysterious atmosphere, they were not from the “dark side of the world,” and their works could only be played either at 33 or 45 rpm, i.e., according to the standards typical for vinyl discs. The only recording that would fit the description was the EP “Health and Efficiency” (1980) for which side B—specifically “Graphic/Varispeed”—is an a-musical sound collage in which the amplifier-modulated potentiometer modifies tone, and its essential component is distorted noise. Regardless of the tempo (33 or 45 rpm), it remains a mere noise—a sound experiment by Charles Hayward.

When critically examining the article by Sipowicz, it is relatively easy to point out the source of the error—it seems that the journalist did not have access to the albums of most of the performers described in the magazine, and he had simply read the articles from English music press; presumably, he translated a word “record” as a “disc” but not as a “single recording.” On this basis, he gave information about This Heat’s genuinely revolutionary approach to the music industry. The journalist’s linguistic inexperience became the basis for spinning a narrative that was not present in the band’s music. The case of this particular essay allows me to think that this kind of practice was common during the discussed period. Limited access to the records resulted in journalists’ “helping themselves” using English-speaking music press or fragments of information (as the core content) in their essays.

1. Music press in the PRL: the case of “Magazyn Muzyczny”
As a field of activity, journalism has been the subject of multiple studies due to its relevance to contemporary societies (Hanitzsch & Örnebring, 2019; Vos, 2018). Typically, these studies emphasize the institutional, social, milieu-oriented, political, cultural, or economic nature of this occupation (BurnS, 2002; Salgado & Strömback, 2011). It is a profession implying the content provided to institutions that distribute it on a mass scale (Calcutt & Hammond, 2011). Some academic authors perceive journalism as a unique profession from an ideological perspective (Deuze, 2005; Golding & Phillip, 1979; Stuart & Clark, 2005). The journalistic practice covers the field of ideology regardless of whether one considers the profession in the context of traditional mainstream media and milieu-oriented journalism (Nash, 2016) or alternative journalism (Harcup, 2013).

Music journalism is a specific activity providing content concerning events, trends, and phenomena originating in the world of entertainment, including popular music: news, current information, announcements, interviews, and reviews allowing the public to get familiar with the events and market news. Publications typically include artists’ profiles, essays, cross-sectional feature articles, or interviews with musicians. Music journalism as a profession is practiced similarly to other
branches of journalism covering diverse forms of art (Harries & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007; Michelsen, 2015). The journalists play an important role because, apart from informing and providing entertainment to the audience, they shape the attitudes and musical tastes of the recipients through their opinion-forming activities (Jeziński, 2017; Starzec-Kosowska & Zięty, 2012). The social milieu-oriented attitude in music journalism practice is generally functional: music taste is typically shaped by the class background of an individual (the social milieu of a person and historical conditions in the broader perspective; Bourdieu, 1996; Peterson, 2015; Weber, 2015) and by the work of authority figures (Jeziński, 2017aa). Nevertheless, one can easily scrutinize these authority figures in music journalism.

The press in the Polish People’s Republic (It was the official name of the Polish state in the 1952–1989 period, hereinafter abbreviated to PRL) was, similarly to all other official media, ideologically controlled and politically licensed: it was subject to the control of the political authority. In a socialist country, the task of the media was to shape ideologically desirable attitudes, especially among young citizens (Eisler, 1992; Święda-Zięba, 2010). Therefore, the newspapers addressed to this target group usually published ideological and social-oriented content convergent with the ruling party’s expectations but supplemented with news and articles covering the realms of show business and sport to attract the readers. In fact, during the PRL’s regime, everything related to the West in general and the USA in particular was popular among the social masses as there was a desire to reject the official propaganda and cultural patterns that originated from the USSR (Eisler, 1992). This was the case with jazz music which gained popularity in the mid-1950s, and rock and roll which became highly successful at the turn of the 1960s and in the subsequent decades. At the beginning of the 1980s, during the boom of Polish rock, the young people demanded news about youth music, and consequently, the magazines and newspapers started to publish sections devoted to entertainment, i.e., artist profiles, concert reports, reviews, and interviews, or music trivia. Opinion weeklies and other magazines started to publish news and essays on popular music (such as Na Przelaj, “Razem,” “Magazyn Razem,” “Świat Młodych,” or “Nowa Wieś”), and those devoted exclusively to popular music publications became important for the young generation as they were habitually read by the vast majority of the audience. Those magazines addressed teenagers, young working people, and the student population. Despite the high popularity of rock music in Poland, only two monthlies focused exclusively on popular and rock music in the 1980s, namely, “MM” and “Non Stop.” However, people in PRL (including music journalists) had no broad access to music albums or were rarely able to travel abroad to watch the concerts or events. Hence, there was a need to use materials from the foreign music press and popular music encyclopedia.

“MM” beginnings date back to 1956 when the magazine was first published as “Jazz”: at that time, it was focused on jazz music, and its editorial practice was to publish translations of articles from the Western press, particularly from “Down Beat,” “Jazz Magazine,” and “Melody Maker” (Washko, 1970). Nevertheless, when the popularity of this genre diminished at the turn of the 1980s, and Anglo-American rock began to dominate, the magazine title was changed to “Jazz. Magazyn Muzyczny” to reflect the main cultural demands of the listeners. This was the period of the “boom of Polish rock,” that is, a lively development of rock music that unintentionally coincided with the emergence of the pro-democratic “Solidarity” movement and the profound economic crisis (Eisler, 1992). After a break in publishing due to martial law, the magazine was reborn as the “Jazz. Magazyn Muzyczny” in 1983 before rejecting the “Jazz” part in 1984, after which it operated as the “Magazyn Muzyczny.”

During the socialist regime, the authorities strictly controlled the travels of the citizens to the Western countries: apart from visa obtainment regulations, they had restricted policy on the passports, as the documents were kept in the state offices (people were not allowed to have their passports at their private places or homes). The citizens had to apply not only for releasing their passports but also for special travel abroad allowances whenever they wanted to go abroad. Some of the journalists traveled to the West for professional reasons to get the interviews with some artists
and attend selected concerts or festivals in the USA, Germany, Denmark, Austria, or the UK: they had to use the “professional passports” (released only for their job duties) then. Such professional travels provided opportunities to get familiar with new trends and scenes or buy music magazines, new albums, or single releases. In their work, the journalists of the “MM” benefited from mail-ordering subscriptions to such music press as “Melody Maker”, “Down Beat”, or “Jazz Magazine”, and the subscriptions were run by the MM editors and the Polish Jazz Association. Also, they used to study in the reading rooms of the western countries’ embassies or councils. As Wiesław Weiss, one of the leading journalists and editors of “MM,” recollects in an interview for Onet.pl site (Weiss, 2014): “In the library of the American Embassy in Warsaw I used to regularly read “Billboard” and “Rolling Stone” magazines, and at the British Consulate I read “Melody Maker” and “New Musical Express.” It was the practice applied by the music journalists of the era.

The publisher and the owner of the “MM” was the press corporation “Robotnicza Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza Prasa-Książka-Ruch” (the “Worker’s Publishing Cooperative Press-Book-Movement”) located in Warsaw. It was run by Polish United Worker’s Party (PZPR), the ruling party in Poland during the post-war socialist period. “RSW” corporation was responsible for publishing, distributing, and selling numerous books, press magazines, newspapers, and other types of printed media. Because of the privileged position in the media system, the corporation was largely subsidized by the state budget, including tax reliefs, tax exemptions, grants, or preferential loans (Ligarski & Latka, 2020; Słomkowska, 1980). In 1983 “MM” was turned into a teenage readers-oriented color magazine focused on rock and pop music (with some references to jazz which was the original focus of the magazine) with a nationwide circulation of 200 000 copies (Weiss, 2016: 257). After the fall of the authoritarian regime, the corporation was divided into several sections and privatized. In the 1990–1991 period, “MM” was published by “Dom Wydawniczo-Handlowy Vega” (“Publishing and Trading House Vega”), a private corporation operating in the free market. This publishing house did not manage to run the magazine effectively, so the last issue of MM was published in October of 1991.

It was a magazine with opinion-forming ambitions and tasks which was cross-sectional, focused on a broad audience, presenting the history of rock music and new musical trends, such as new romantic, heavy metal, post-punk, reggae, indie rock, mainstream rock, electronics, blues, jazz, and video technologies. Also, the presentation of the Polish music scene was understandably important for the editors. The magazine also had an essential educational value, publishing articles and essays on the artists substantial for the history of rock (e.g., Led Zeppelin, The Rolling Stones, The Doors, Yes, King Crimson) or culturally important festivals (Woodstock or Live Aid). The magazine had a dominant role in Polish music journalism of the era—during the time discussed, no meticulously edited publication could match its popularity. “MM” was a typical publication devoted to popular music modeled on Western magazines using information and diversified journalistic genres, with permanent sections such as news, reviews, polemic articles, columns, editorials, quizzes, and concert reports.

Notably, some of the magazine’s editors such as Mateusz Świącicki, Józef Balczerzak, Adam Sławiński, Andrzej Trzaskowski, Jan Borkowski, Marian Butrym, Janusz Mechanisz, Wiesław Weiss, Kamil Sipowicz, Wiesław Królikowski, Paweł Sito, and Jerzy A. Rzewuski have made considerable contributions to Polish music journalism. Importantly, the “MM”’s editorial board and journalists were diversified in their professional backgrounds. Only a few had typical journalist (Arkadiusz Prąglowski) or musicologist education (Piotr Majewski, Janusz Mechanisz), some graduated from English Philology (Jerzy A. Rzewuski, Roman Rogowiecki, Tomasz Beksiński), but numerous journalists graduated from other MA programs, including telecommunication engineering (Grzegorz Brzozowicz), history (Marek Wiernik, Wiesław Królikowski), psychology (Daniel Wyszogrodzki), philosophy (Slawomir Golaszewski), economics (Wiesław Weiss), or agricultural machines engineering (Adam Halber).

2. Methodological assumptions
For the purpose of the paper, the sample of the “MM” journal covering the issues published in the period 1983–1988 has been chosen for the quantitative and qualitative analysis. In this context,
content analysis is an appropriate method of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data obtained from found sources, i.e., produced by people, such as prints, magazines, or the works of material culture (Drisko & Maschi, 2015; Krippendorff K H, 2004). This method helps analyze the data obtained via sampling (Neuendorf, 2002; P, 1990). In the case of the present research, the sample was selected from traditional journal editions (printed issues). The year dates indicate the magazine’s period of activity concerning the realities of the PRL: the publisher revived it shortly before martial law was canceled in the Summer of 1983, while 1988 marks the eve of considerable changes in the music market, which took place in 1989. Overwhelmed by the economic crisis in 1987, the state gradually began opening itself to Western countries (especially Germany), and this resulted in the infusion of more and more music recordings from the West into Poland, such as novelties and the reissues of classic rock albums. This trend continued in 1988, and a breakthrough came in the next year: in June 1989, the parliamentary elections were partially free, and the candidates of the non-communist opposition were able to influence the political decisions, leading to an accelerated political and economic transition and the implementation of free-market principles in 1990 (Eisler, 1992).

During this period (especially after 1987), the state radio stations expanded the music they aired on, and record-taping services began to operate in numerous cities. This set of changes meant that owning music albums and the intensive use of the Western magazines was no longer the sole province of music journalists, as the increasing variety of records available in Poland made it possible for listeners to form their own opinions on a variety of sub-genres of rock. Foreign albums were not widely available in stores throughout the country, but in large urban centers, it was relatively easy to get recordings of the popular bands and LPs/CDs by little-known niche groups (mainly recorded on the cassette tapes). Consequently, the circulation of information concerning music or artists’ activity functioned differently at the end of the 1980s than at the beginning of the decade.

Methodologically, a stratified random sample selection was applied in which the publishing year of the magazine was taken as the strata layer. Three issues were randomly drawn from each publishing year and then coded. The articles (editorials, columns, portrays, reportages, essays) were coded in terms of their content, namely, defining the origin country of an artist or a group, the location of a concert, and the source of a music trend or phenomenon described in a particular article. Thus, a single article was ascribed to one of the following categories: (a) Polish artists, festivals, or phenomena; (b) artists or trends from English-speaking countries (USA/UK predominantly); (c) artists or trends from Western or non-English-speaking countries; and (d) artists from the socialist bloc countries. I applied a similar procedure to short materials: news, reviews, and informational mentions of current musical events, trends, or phenomena. From 1983 to 1985, the magazine was published six times per year, whereas, in the 1986–1988 period, it became a monthly (12 editions per a year with no other special editions). The technique of simple non-systematic strata random draw was applied, constituting 33.33% of all the issues of the magazine published during the analyzed period. The issues of the “MM” that formed the sample are given in

| publishing year | number of issues | sample issues | % |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|---|
| 1               | 1983            | 6             | 2; 4; 5 | 50% |
| 2               | 1984            | 6             | 1; 2; 6 | 50% |
| 3               | 1985            | 6             | 4; 5; 6 | 50% |
| 4               | 1986            | 12            | 5; 8; 11 | 25% |
| 5               | 1987            | 12            | 2; 5; 7 | 25% |
| 6               | 1988            | 12            | 1; 5; 11 | 25% |
| total           |                 | 54            | 18      | 33.33% |
the table below (a column “sample issues” identifies the issues published in a particular year chosen for a sample):

The question of the intensive usage of texts from foreign publications or even translations in some cases is challenging to define. From today’s perspective, it is unclear to what extent an author of given information, news, or article used the English language press directly; however, one can observe that the “MM” journalists delivered up-to-date information concerning music in Western countries in every issue of the magazine. As it was not a subject of interest to the state information agencies, Polish music journalists had to base their work on the Western press and reprint information or critical discussions produced by their American or British colleagues in a modified form. The music market in Poland at that time did not function according to the principles of supply and demand, and albums from the West (and any other countries) were not available commercially. They could have been obtained to a limited extent either via personal contacts or on the secondary market at the “album stock exchanges,” which used to take place weekly in the biggest cities. Some albums were sent or imported from the West and then presented to the Polish audience by journalists in the press or aired on the radio. Undoubtedly, cyclical radio broadcasts and certain popular music magazines gave a random picture of other countries’ music markets, with particular emphasis concerning American and British music. Interestingly, journalists were able to promote also some niche music phenomena of limited popularity in their country of origin, as demonstrated by the groups signed to the 4AD independent record label (Dead Can Dance, Cocteau Twins), who became bands surrounded by a sort of sectarian cult thanks to broadcasts on Polish radio.

Nonetheless, my familiarity with the music press of the 80s decade allows observing that Polish journalists used Western sources in their articles significantly. Therefore, based on my own experience as a media user and knowledge of the cultural context of the period, I can assess for the study whether a given article was based on sources from the Western music press. This cultural context was one of the parameters used to encode the data from the journal sample, and the primary indicator was the content of the articles examined in terms of quality. Thus, the following basic indicators in the study were adopted as the ones signifying the employment of foreign sources: (a) a large number of quotations from the Western press; (b) a detailed description or discussion of albums not available in the Polish market (especially singles and remixes); and (c) detailed biographical data regarding a particular artist taken directly from music lexicons. The detailed data in a particular article unambiguously indicates the use of materials from the press and Western encyclopedias or lexicons, as well as citations from music press published in the USA and the UK. Many of the musicians’ quotations and statements do not have the exact original source documented, so it is impossible to identify the source of a particular quote. The articles in “MM” occasionally contain the name of the publication and sometimes (extremely rarely) the publication year of the original source.

3. “Magazyn Muzyczny”: the Western inspirations and domestic readers
An important aspect that should be considered while interpreting the research results is the profile of the magazine’s readers. Firstly, its basic content included articles concerning artist profiles and musical phenomena (genres, current trends, and fashions in popular music), reviews, concert reports, interviews, columns, and short information or news covering the music market in Poland and abroad (new bands, new LPs, festivals or concerts). The target audience primarily consisted of teenagers, fans of Polish rock music, students looking for information about current trends in the rock scene, and essays on highly prominent artists. These articles were focused mainly on Polish and English-speaking performers, although there were a few exceptions, including Jean Michelle Jarre, Tangerine Dream, Klaus Schulze, Mercyful Fate, or Scorpions. Secondly, the magazine was read selectively by the readers: for the majority, the essential section was several-page long articles discussing artist profiles and general phenomena emerging in the world of rock. These essays were top-rated as they were the most significant part of the magazine’s profile in qualitative terms and constituted its program identity. This approach meant that the materials
concerning jazz, classical music, and columns were not read with considerable attention and were sometimes entirely ignored by the younger audience.

Notably, the articles identified as important for a particular issue were also deliberated and discussed by the recipients in informal social circles, being an extremely valuable source of information concerning specific artists and diversified musical phenomena. This category of works is epitomized by such articles as, for example, Wieslaw Weiss’s „Wielki poker” (4/1983), and „Lou Reed—prowokacja na raty” (4/1986), Jerzy A. Rzewuski’s „Źródła Nowej Fali” (4/1986), „Szarza lekkiej brygady” (1/1984), “PIL—to nie jest piosenka o miłości” (5/1986), „Mode Iwy” (5/1985), and „Fala” (8/1986), Sławomir Gołaszewski’s „Zasadzka” (5/1987) or “The Moody Blues” profile by Tomasz Beksiński (8/1987). Moreover, the names of the magazine’s editors formed a kind of pantheon of the most recognized music journalists of the era. It was a small group of distinguished names whose works were enthusiastically read and talked about by the audience—their articles were eagerly awaited, and people would often turn straight to these articles. For the reading public, the articles by these authors guaranteed high journalistic quality and were an essential element of specific sub-genres of rock promotion, including trends such as new wave, post-punk, mainstream rock, art-rock, or reggae. These articles were mainly based on materials from the Western press and rock encyclopedias.

The magazine’s program profile was correlated with the above. In the first years of its publication (1983–1985), the “MM” magazine was focused on readers with a refined musical taste, which was reflected in frequent information and articles on jazz (a large annual report from the Jazz Jamboree Festival, profiles of distinguished jazzmen such as Miles Davis, Wes Montgomery, Keith Jarrett, or Glenn Miller) in accordance with the title of the magazine, blues (numerous materials devoted to blues festivals), and classical music, i.e., information, reports, and articles about competitions and festivals, including the Vratslavia Cantans Festival, Henryk Wieniawski’s violin competition, the work of classical musicians abroad, such as Jacek Marczyński’s “Export Production” (2/1984); a profile of the composer “Alban Berg—a classic of dodecaphony” by Janusz Mechanisz (5/1985); or interview with Andrzej Szmidt, Dean of the Department of Entertainment Music of the Academy of Music in Katowice “Academy without stars” (2/1983). In the following years, such content did not appear in print (also, “MM” abandoned information on jazz festivals), and the editors replaced it with articles describing mainly rock and light entertainment issues. For example, after 1986, much space in the magazine was occupied by works covering heavy metal performers due to its popularity in Poland. This was a tendency represented by “Saxon” by Jerzy A. Rzewuski, “Sztukmistrz z Dubline” by Wieslaw Weiss 5/1986, “ZZ Top on the stage” by Wojciech Mróz (2/1987), a series of articles by Wiesław Królowski covering the history of Led Zeppelin (10/1987, 11/1987, 12/1987, 1/1988), or a series of artists’ profiles by Jacek Dernkiewicz promoting the heavy metal scene “Voo Doo” (11/1986), “Devils gave us Mercyful Fate” (11/1986), “The Clan of the Cursed” (2/1987), or “Helloween” (1/1988) to name a few examples. Thus, it is observable that in the second half of the 1980s, “MM” became a magazine addressed mainly to the newcomers into the popular music domain, i.e., people with heavy-metal bias and no proper general background in the field.

Interpreting this shift in the “MM’s” audience, it is evident that at the beginning of the 1980s, the magazine’s recipients were people with some appropriate background in popular music acquired before the “rock boom” in the early part of the decade. They were brought up on music promoted by the media in Poland, that is, classic and progressive rock, soft MOR and pop music, or easy-listening classical music and jazz. In the mid-1980s, the new generation was present in the market: their music taste reflected the new Western tendencies in popular music (new romantic, cold wave, goth-rock, synth-pop) and the Polish “rock boom,” which elevated entirely new pop stars to the fore. At the same time, the Polish rock market was suffering a distinct collapse and stagnation, and consequently, the promotion of Western music and increasingly popular new trends (e.g., heavy metal) seemed to be a legitimate marketing move undertaken by the journal’s editors. Thus, the new teenage target group displayed different expectations. The young generation of the era
considered rock music an important aspect of their cultural identity and perceived it as an essential part of their daily use of cultural goods. This generation had rock music readily available in the media: they listened to the “Programme Three Hits List,” “The Evening with Albums,” “Scout Hits List,” and “Welcome to the Programme Three” on the radio, watched the “Television Hits List” or “Hits of Programme Two” on the television, and read the music sections in “Razem” and “Na Przełaj” and other newspapers or weeklies. From this perspective, reading “MM” and “Non Stop” was one of the main rituals for young people keen on popular music.

4. Quantitative research
The content published in “MM” during the discussed period has been examined using two perspectives. The first one presents the percentage share of long journalist forms regarding the country of origin of the artist depicted in an article or where an event took place. Special attention was devoted to the scope of Polish journalists’ usage of English-written materials while writing an article for “MM.” In this work, the term “long journalist form” is understood as an article, event report, interview, or column occupying at least half a page. The content of a single issue of a journal consists mainly of such works as the vast majority of the content published in the magazine was usually long-form articles. The second perspective relates to the “short journalist forms,” including reviews, notes, brief information, or short announcements (Table 1). They were published in each magazine issue and blocked on two pages, but the amount of content would differ concerning a particular edition, also, this dynamic changed over the publishing years following the editorial policy (Table 2).

The long forms printed as the content covered the 18 issues: the sample consists of 407 forms, including articles, columns, interviews, concerts, and festival reports. This list excludes short forms, i.e., reviews and news. One hundred ninety-seven units of the sample are the articles concerning Polish performers and events taking place in the PRL, and this amounts to 48.4% of the entire sample, which is easily explainable as it was a magazine published in Poland. Among the sample articles, 40.3% are materials devoted to artists from the USA and the UK, while 5.16% relate to the non-English-speaking West and 6.14% to socialist states (portrayed on graph 1). The latter is a relatively small ratio since most of these pieces are reports from events, namely festivals and concerts that took place mainly in Czechoslovakia and the GDR.

Consequently, this distribution gives a clear picture of the musical map of the world according to “MM” editors: the USA and UK are essentially the only places on Earth where something musically interesting happens. The circumstances indicated, become more evident when we examine the articles devoted only to foreign artists and phenomena, excluding articles on Polish musicians and concerts from the sample. Consequently, out of 210 articles and other content in “MM,” reports on the artists from the USA and the UK occupy 78.09%,

| Table 2. Number of articles in the sample; own compilation |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|---------|--------|-----------|
| year | articles/ | reviews | notes | brief info | announcements |
| 1983 | 32 | 6 | 9 | 0 | 2 |
| 1984 | 37 | 14 | 11 | 2 | 6 |
| 1985 | 37 | 13 | 12 | 8 | 7 |
| 1986 | 28 | 16 | 14 | 3 | 2 |
| 1987 | 32 | 20 | 9 | 6 | 7 |
| 1988 | 31 | 22 | 18 | 2 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 197 | 91 | 73 | 21 | 25 |
with less than 12% accounting for reports on the musicians from socialist countries and 10% on the performers originating from other Western countries (Germany, Japan, Jamaica) (presented in the graph 2).

The next important parameter was the ratio of articles that have been written with the apparent use of Western materials (journals, lexicons, encyclopedias). Out of 407 articles, 95 can be estimated as having content based on translations, which amounts to 23.34% of the sample. This is, however, a misleading result, as it has been calculated using all the articles published; in other words, this ratio also includes topics concerning Polish artists and performers from socialist countries. For obvious reasons, these articles were not based on materials originating from Western magazines or English-speaking rock encyclopedias. Therefore, if the data devoted to Polish and socialist performers is subtracted, 51.35% of the 185 published articles contain significant qualitative use of English-speaking materials.

The second aspect under investigation was the brief information content published in the “MM” journal, i.e., new albums, minor announcements, reviews, notes, and information. In the issues of the magazine analyzed in the sample, such content appeared with diversified frequency. Even though they were placed in the fixed sections, namely “33⅓” (new albums from various countries, excluding Poland), “From the exhibition and under the counter” (new albums by Polish artists), and “Muzykalia” (news, trivia, and information notes), in 1986 the names of the latter two were changed to “All that hustle and bustle” (news from the West and the rest of the world, excluding Poland) and “Screams and whispers” (news from Poland), respectively. The amount of data
obtained in the sample varies from 159 news in 1985 to 411 news in 1988, with a similar distribution in the categories analyzed. The categorization in the study was carried out according to classes such as Polish artists, English-speaking performers, Western non-English-speaking bands (outside the USA, Canada, and the UK), and socialist musicians.

What was worth examining, particularly in the present content analysis, was the ratio of information concerning artists, music events, new releases, and publications on English-speaking countries juxtaposed with other ones (including Poland); the former was usually based on English language materials which were adopted, reprinted or paraphrased from British and American magazines. They contain data that was not accessible to Polish journalists: they are the journalistic materials not covered by the Polish news agencies. Therefore, regarding this aspect of journalistic publications in “MM,” the share of translations was the highest. Notably, the content concerning American and British artists accounts for 71% of all news, including news about Polish artists and events (23.79%). This seems to be an enormous disproportion given that longer articles constitute a significantly higher percentage of published materials selected for the sample. The disproportion appears to be exceptionally prominent if one excludes news covering Poland and compares data regarding the USA and UK with data about other Western and non-English speaking countries (including socialist systems). News and mentions of musical phenomena from France, Germany, Austria, Japan, and Jamaica occurred several dozen times over the six years in question, but only 3.62% of them were in the sample. As in the previous case, we can also examine the percentage of information from particular areas after deducting news covering Polish issues. The percentage increases to 93.25% of all news for the American and British artists represented in the content, so it can be assumed that news from countries other than the English-speaking ones appeared

Graph 3. News, reviews: total.

Graph 4. News, reviews: excluding Poland.
in the journal only incidentally. Such a picture means, on the one hand, that Polish journalists focused entirely on providing information from the English-speaking area while omitting other regions. On the other hand, it confirms the thesis about the information dependence of Polish music journalists on English language sources. As a result, music journals from the UK and the USA set out not so much a general orientation towards Anglophone rock, but it somewhat overshadowed the broad horizon of the music press in Poland and determined journalists’ activities. In other words, “MM” formed and maintained the impression that if something important was happening in the world of popular music, it was necessarily an American or English phenomenon; and also only the phenomena from the USA and UK would receive the approval of the Polish music journalists. Graphs 3 and 4 below provide data concerning this issue.

5. Music press in the PRL of the 1980s: discussion
In this part of the article, I discuss the consequences of the approach presented in the quantitative study above, i.e., the focus of Polish music journalists on the English-speaking popular music circuits. Devoting almost all attention to them led to creating an English language monopoly as the quality of music as a market offer is concerned. In other words, according to “MM,” the media map of the musical world was dominated by English and American performers: if one wanted to look for valuable artists, one had to seek them in the UK—and more specifically in London—or the US. From the issues of “MM” published at the discussed time, it is clear that even though numerous rock music events take place in different parts of the world every week, the activities of Anglophone artists were the most noteworthy or even the only remarkable ones. Moreover, these circumstances left readers with little opportunity to discover performers from other countries.

In “Understanding Popular Music,” Roy Shuker (1994) states that music journalism has an essential opinion-forming function. The transmission of opinions and the indication of what is valuable, i.e., shaping musical taste, has become a primary field of activity for music journalism covering popular music. Journalists in articles and reviews “constructing their own version of the traditional high/low culture split, usually around notions of artistic integrity, authenticity, and the nature of commercialism” (Shuker, 1994: 96). Moreover, their opinions, as Shuker (1994: 96) argues, “became bibles in the field, establishing orthodoxies to the relative value of various styles or genres and pantheons of artists. Record collectors and enthusiasts, specialization and second-hand record shops, inevitably have well-thumbed copies of these and similar volumes close at hand”. Shuker emphasizes the special formative role of music journalism, which allows for creating an individual’s cultural capital on a broader scale. Thus, a well-shaped and reliably formed musical taste could be either an asset or a burden in personal relationships depending on the social milieu in which an individual is active (Bourdieu, 1996), as Nick Hornby (1995) wittily highlights in his fiction novel “High Fidelity.”

The history of popular music (especially rock) is a story written and told mainly from the positions of supreme power achieved by Great Britain and the USA. The progress of rock as a genre is subordinated to the development of music in these two countries, and consequently, the artists originating from the USA and the UK are placed on rock pedestals. Rock fans and music journalists discuss them as the ones creating the essential rock and pop idioms. Pop music is a tool of the English-speaking West’s cultural domination at the expense of the achievements of the local performers (Negus, 1996, 1993). As a result, local cultures are effectively colonized by Anglo-American patterns in popular culture and are subject to the powerful influence of Americanisation and British domination.

In this context, the following question is of particular importance: How was it possible that, given the ideological control of the ruling party, the PRL authorities allowed the publication of a magazine which directly delivered information on popular USA/UK music to the young audience yet omitted music from other socialist countries? It is puzzling why rock from the socialist countries such as Hungary, Czechoslovakia, or Yugoslavia was not fully promoted in the media as it might have been an aesthetically interesting attempt to break the monopolistic position of Anglophone music as the
dominant source of musical content in the mass media. News and feature articles concerning the artists from these countries appeared incidentally in “Razem” weekly or “Non Stop” monthly; however, they were not frequent and cannot be considered representative of the magazines in question. Although some artists recorded interesting albums, the “MM” journalists also used to ignore Western rock groups not originating from the USA or the UK. They were essentially not covered in “MM” or other Polish magazines despite the popularity of Italian or French music in the 1970s and 1980s. It is relatively straightforward that the popularity of rock and roll and “Beatmania” (including the popularity of other British groups) focused young people’s interests in Anglo-American popular music, which was reflected in the music press, as indicated by the case of “MM” during the 1980s. The practice of ignoring non-British or American performers also persisted in the following decades, and for instance, it was demonstrated by the first Polish “Rock Encyklopedia” by Wieslaw Weiss (1991), wherein the vast majority of entries are devoted to English-speaking performers.

Consequently, reporting news and trends in popular music in capitalist countries in a magazine published in a socialist country seems important as such content was dominant in “MM” during the analyzed period. One can observe two significant trends: firstly, the rejection of patterns promoted by the socialist state based on the model of Soviet culture, with the simultaneous glorification of Western patterns, primarily originating from the USA and the UK, and secondly, the controlled attempt to channel the interest of the youth. The latter aspect will be discussed by applying the concept of the “safety valve” used by the state establishment to tame possible anti-socialist tendencies. The approval of the rock boom by the authorities was a strategy that would ensure the ideological neutrality of young people while also offering the possibility of controlling their behavior.

In the conflict theory of society, Lewis A. Coser L A (1956) assumes that conflict as such is functional; it increases the integration and adaptability of the system, mainly when the system is based on structural solidarity (Turner J H, 1986). Systemic tensions may concern values relevant to the entire social setup. One of the ways of reducing tensions is the institution of a safety valve, i.e., the possibility to relieve the negative pressures without intensifying social conflict. As Coser L A (1956: 45) writes, “the need for safety-valve institutions increases with the rigidity of the social structure, that is, with the degree to which the social system disallows expression of antagonistic claims where they occur.” This is essential for the system as a whole, enabling the exercise of power and the reproduction of values relevant to society. It is, in Coser L A’s (1956: 45–46), “an institution which serves to channel hostility and to prevent release against the original object, thereby maintaining the structure of the social system, may also have serious dysfunctions for either the social system or the actor, or both.” The permission for rebellious anti-systemic performers granted by the authoritarian regime is a pro-integration activity that channels youth rebellion. From this perspective, it is unsurprising that the activity of youth bands, concerts, radio hits lists, or the Rock Musicians Festival in Jarocin was controlled by the state authorities to a lesser or greater extent. It seems that the music press of the era followed this disposition and presented the Western artists according to the readers’ demands while avoiding political issues typical for some rock genres. For instance, while discussing the 10th anniversary of the punk movement in the UK, Jerzy A. Rzewuski, in the article “Dziesięć lat później” (2/1986), tried to avoid political issues unless they were rooted solely in the British system. Consequently, he had shifted political points (always criticized by the UK punks) to social and economic questions, making them typical for the Western societies, exposing mainly economic crisis and generation gap. As a result, politics led by the Polish ruling class did not appear in the “MM,” even when describing the domestic punk movement.

Thus, the main reason why the rock movement flourished was that it did not threaten the system of power in any important aspect; namely, it did not undermine the methods of capital accumulation while generating additional systemic profits (Makowski, Szymański 2010; see also, Djilas, 1957). As a result, it did not destabilize the system of privileges of the ruling class, and, most importantly, it did not challenge the political power as such. The new trends in music, i.e.,
new wave, rock, and punk, as well as their associated youth subcultures, were necessary identifiers for a considerable part of the youth, but they remained an apolitical part of their identity. This pattern was also present during the previous decades: since the end of the 1950s, young people had tried to remain apolitical, finding specific niches for social activity, not accepting the ideology of socialism as their own but also not rebelling against the strong ideologization of everyday life, displaying conformist attitudes and intentionally using the system as a means to achieve their personal goals (Świda-Zięba, 2010). Their careers depended on compliance with the ideologized requirements set by the system: young people, like their predecessors, mainly lived in a manner controlled by propaganda and did not question the system's assumptions as such. Under these conditions, enabling the publication of content covering Western popular music without ideologically charged content was, on the one hand, a substitute for the media's openness to the Western trends in music, and, on the other hand, it functioned as a safety valve; in other words, it enabled the audience to release tension without questioning the system as a whole. The popularity of music columns in the weekly press and music magazines in the PRL of the 1980s provided an opportunity to channel the energy of the youth, who mainly were ideologically passive and politically neutral.

6. Concluding remarks
Music journalists publishing in “MM” during the 1980s shaped the aesthetic taste of young people through articles presented in the magazine. At that time, given the lack of real competition in the market, “MM” played an essential opinion-forming role: each issue included important news, new releases, feature articles, and essays that had a substantial impact on its audience. By describing contemporary artists, music events, or trends and significant phenomena from the history of popular music, the journalists presented a certain biased point of view, judging the artists presented in the magazine on an aesthetic basis while omitting performers whose work was not in line with the magazine's program assumptions. The research presented in this paper demonstrates that Polish journalists based their articles on British and American music magazines and Western encyclopedias, and popular music lexicons. Gaining knowledge of the music industry and information about artists, events, or concerts modeled on the West magazines was typical for Polish music journalism of the 1980s and the previous decades.

This strategy of journalist practice had far-reaching functional and symbolic consequences. In the context under study, music journalists delivered a limited picture of popular music as a world entirely dominated by songs, albums, and performers from the USA and the UK. In this way, a reproduction of symbolic, aesthetic patterns took place: US/UK music was promoted as canonical and a “good music” formula for popular music, including music overlooking the Polish entertainment industry. By presenting a particular type of music in their articles in the press or during radio programs, journalists effectively acted as guides, i.e., persons shaping the musical taste and aesthetic sensitivity of the listeners and readers; at the same time, these individuals educated the audience. Before 1989, music journalists were a specific group who had access to newly released Western albums that were not present in the primary music market. New Western music and re-issues were obtained only through personal contacts, album exchanges, or travels abroad. Music was a commodity available to the general public only through the radio and news reporting on artists and their albums in the music press. This provided a space for formational, educational, and promotional activities undertaken by journalists. They presented new recordings, taking advantage of the lack of alternatives (the broadcaster was always in a privileged position as the authority concerning music presentation): aside from radio broadcasts, the audience generally had no access to new recordings. The monopolistic position of a music journalist was conducive to stimulating listeners’ taste, and the journalists often became oracle-like regarding their readers' musical tastes. This was the case articles and essays published in “MM” by Adam Halber, Wiesław Weiss, Wiesław Królikowski, Tomasz Beksiński, and Jerzy A. Rzewuski.
