

future oriented, since at the moment the book provides inspiring ideas more than empirical evidences.

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## Damon Krukowski

*The New Analog. Listening and Reconnecting in a Digital World*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 2017, pp. 240

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*The New Analog: Listening and Reconnecting in a Digital World* is a book by the musician, journalist and poet Damon Krukowski, focused on the implications of the shift from analog to digital technologies in music production and circulation. Although this is not a book rooted in science & technology studies, but an essay for a wider and non-academic, it anyway offers several relevant points of interest for a STS audience interested in music and sound technologies. This is especially true for those of us involved in the field of *sound studies*, which is the way STS has approached, in the last fifteen years, the role of technology in relation to music, sound and the acoustic environment – a field distinctively led, among others, by prominent STS scholars such as Trevor Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld (Pinch and Bijsterveld 2003; 2012).

Before entering more deeply into the issues *The New Analog* raises for STS-oriented sound studies scholars, let me quickly present what the book is about and its major thesis. First of all, *The New Analog's* author, Damon Krukowski, is a musician (drummer for the late '80s alternative rock band Galaxy 500) and journalist (for major music magazines like "The Wire"

and “Pinchfork”), also having a scholarly affiliation with the Berkman Klein for Internet and Society at the Harvard University (where Krukowski has also been student when younger). The book presents an outline of music digitalization’s process from analog devices to digital technologies, expanding its insights across the whole history of recorded music (for instance, making parallels between the issues raised by the technology of player piano at the end of the nineteenth century, with the case of the file sharing platform Napster one century later) and mixing this story with author’s own experiences as both listener of LP and Spotify and musician approaching analog recording studios at the beginning of the ‘80s. Hence, the seven book’s chapters deal with many relevant issues related with the shift from analog to digital technologies, including the role of stereophonic hearing and microphones in creating the listening space, the change in sonic media and supports, the relation between music volume and perception, the means to exchange music and the role of noise as sonic as well social element. The main thesis of the work is that the adoption of digital technologies, in production, circulation and consumption, mainly produced a “demolition” of the role of “noise”, intended not just as the noise characterising analogue recordings, but more generally the noise as the presence of a real life in our mediated environment, an important part of our situated experience of time and space. Above all, as the author points out in the conclusion, digitization results in the filtering of all information not considered relevant by entities like Spotify or Facebook, thus contributing to lose those pieces of humanity and the sense of situatedness that were represented, in the analog age, by a stratified and unavoidable noise.

As the reader can see from this quick picture, the points of interest for scholars involved in sound studies and music technologies are manifold, first of all because the author delivers what, as STS scholars, we would address as the consequences of a change in music infrastructuring process. However, at the same time, as STS scholars we could also be deceived, as the author does not intercept any of the major literature in sound studies and especially among STS works dealing with some of the major topics of the book, notably the role of noise, the topic of Karin Bijsterveld’s 2008 book *Mechanical Sound*. By the way, the intellectual references enriching Krukowski’s work fall short also to grasp many of the most recent contributions in the social and cultural study of sound, excluding notably the first book by Jonathan Sterne on the cultural history of sound reproduction (Sterne 2003); hence, most of the intellectual references of the book remain anchored to classical – but at the same often addressed – works, including for example the writings by John Cage, Glenn Gould and Walter Benjamin. While it would not be fair to complain about the lack of STS-oriented references in this kind of book (as said mostly devoted to a non-academic audience), what is anyway interesting to ask is how much Krukowski’s book could be interpreted as a lack of penetration of STS-inspired litera-

ture in sound studies among essays, journalist accounts and other dissertations targeting a general audience of listeners, musicians and music enthusiasts.

That said, the book not only is very enjoyable to read for scholars in music technologies, but it also offers several examples that resonate very loudly with STS concepts and sensibilities. As anticipated, many of the issues raised by the author are good instances of what occurred, at different level, during the deep and quite fast modification in music infrastructures, in doing so bringing light to some rarely addressed consequences of digitization of music circulation. A very nice example is the account, partially based on author's own experience, about the changes occurred in music shops (by the way, an issue very poorly addressed both in sound studies and popular music studies, maybe with the notable exception of Pinch's study on the Moog synthesizer; Pinch and Trocco, 2002). Indeed, in chapter 4, the author describes some of the infrastructural consequences of the shift from LPs to CDs, a change which included not only issues in sound quality, but also a transformation in shops' political economy: the reconfigured materiality of the smaller and less prone to be damaged CD was instrumental in the emergence of huge mega-shops, like those established by the chain Tower Records, which opened a big flagship store in Boston in 1989. However, changes triggered in music infrastructures by the CD were not affecting just issues in political economy and distribution systems, but also smaller and more situated issues, like for passage from LP to CD. The question was not only that stealing music records became easier, due to the smaller dimension of a CD over a LP, but also because the new digital format allowed for different surveillance and anti-thief systems, which evolved from the human bag-checker, located at the entrance of the shop, to non-human metal detectors, able to reveal the presence of metal strips attached as anti-thief systems to the CD, enclosed in plastic boxes. As consequence, "employees no longer had to watch while you browsed to make sure you weren't pocketing good. And there was no reason for them to engage you in conversation" (p. 96).

Insights like this discussed by Krukowski (many other regard, for example, the change in how musicians experienced the relationship with technology in recording studio) can enrich the understanding of the infrastructural shift in music, especially when translated through STS notions (i.e. in relation to "delegation" processes to non-human artefacts of previously human-based activities; see Akrich & Latour, 1992). In sum, despite not being a book based on STS concepts, *The New Analog* represents anyway an inspiring reading for those scholars that aim to explore further the implication of digitization and over the music world.

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### **Elisa Giomi and Sveva Magaraggia**

*Relazioni brutali. Genere e violenza nella cultura mediale [Brutal relationships. Gender and violence in media culture]*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2017, pp. 240

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Identity and differences are seen as the effects of relationships, technoscience – thus media – as the expression of male instances. This work is to be read as a thoughtful investigation to which Science and Technology Studies feminist scholars have much contributed. Giomi and Magaraggia have focused their attention on media products starting from the classical assumption that, in order to narrate the social world, media draw conceptual and linguistic tools from the same social world, and, by narrating it, they also build it in a certain measure. Within this framework, the authors relate gender violence, gender order, and media representations one to the other, in order to support the idea that violence representations contribute to the process of gender status, and that gender representations supply the construction of violence. They show how this double process is achieved between different media objects gathered around two discursive knots, i.e. violence against women and – on the other hand – violence performed by