

ROCK IS DEAD?

MA Online Journalism

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On January 10th 2011, The Guardian newspaper published an article declaring that rock was dead. The rock community was shocked, and there began a series of defensive articles aimed at disproving this theory.

I intend to investigate this claim, its counter claims, and examine the UK music scene over the past 20 years to see if rock really is on its last legs.

Classification

From the outside I need to decide on a classification of ROCK. It is a far reaching term. Will I include indie (who's fans often have a very different mindset to rock fans). Crossover artists, collaborations and genre-bending songs are commonplace now, how will I deal with these within the study?

"What goes around, comes around"

There is a claim in the music industry that the popularity of genres goes in cycles, when rock is in the ascendancy, dance and pop take a back seat, and it all shuffles around in a cyclical movement. Is rock simply having an off-year?

I intend - by analysing and displaying the top 10 album chart activity for the past 20 years, whether this is actually the case or an urban myth used by the industry to explain poor sales and falling interest in a genre.

What are the cycles and when can we expect to see rock fight back?

A Changing Industry

The industry as a whole is suffering - physical sales have been hit by the digitisation of music, which has encouraged the sharing of files for free. How much is this affecting the different genres, and has rock been a particular victim?

Using data from the music industry I hope to show, via a series of visualisations, how different areas of the industry are being affected by this problem (via declining sales), and what is being done to solve it (the number of labels / bands USING digital music to their advantage, signing up to digital services e.g. Spotify)

How many new bands are being signed, and which kind of deals are they signing? Has the loyalty to bands dropped, (ie from 3 album deals to 1). How prevalent are these controversial 360deg deals, which allow the label to take ownership of touring, merchandise etc?

Looking back - thinking forward

A genre of music can only survive in the future if there is enough support and investment in NEW artists - how much money are labels investing in A&R - recruiting new bands and scouting new talent? Or are they simply relying on the cash cows of the past?

Analysing the bands featured in several leading modern music publications (e.g. NME, Kerrang! Mixmag), I intend to highlight the column inches given to NEW up and coming artists ... are they looking for the next big thing or glorifying the past?

Live Music

Gigs are now a major focus of the music scene - with so much music being "stolen" digitally, the attention turns to live performances, and merchandise, to generate revenue. Is this where rock is at it's strongest? Are live shows getting bigger and better, and more of a money spinner? Or is a combination of promoter greed and ticket touts forcing the ticket prices up and the real fans out of the running?

I intend to deliver an interesting, and clear study into the state of the music scene right now, create a series of off-shoot articles and prove, or disprove, the claim that rock is dead.