

Presentation by Rasmus Rex at the conference “Popular Music and the Nordic Region in Global Dynamics”

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Titel: Exploring Narratives of the Indie Artist Subject in New Media: Auteur, Persona or Brand?

Abstract: Through recent years, music industry discourse has increasingly developed an understanding of artists as brands with distinct social, value and aesthetic connotations. However, this discourse could be problematic, as the allocation of artistic capital in the field of popular music traditionally has been built on an antithetical distinction between art and commercialism. This paper explores conceptions of the artist subject as auteur, persona and brand. It is argued that these conceptions often represent parallel discourses of the encounter between artists, fans, industry actors, bloggers, etc. Most notably, they all understand issues of identity and value as something that is negotiated in a dialectical relationship between artists and their audiences.

The paper draws on branding theories as well as theories of the popular music artist as auteur. It is argued that indie rock artists are understood and valued on the basis of audience perception of metanarratives surrounding the artist, and that these metanarratives are constructed in ongoing social interactions between artists, journalists and fans. The different conceptions of this interaction are explored, and it is discussed if they can be integrated in analysis and discourse.