

The Production of Independent Popular Music during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Guayaquil City

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Abstract: This work delves into the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Guayaquil's music scene, with a focus on the adaptation strategies of independent music producers. Drawing on the concepts of musical scenes proposed by Bennet and Peterson (2004), the study reveals how a traditional local music scene shifted towards a virtual one, impacting various cultural circuits. The pandemic necessitated the migration of music production and recording processes to digital platforms, revolutionizing the modes of listening and audio production. The study employs a qualitative, descriptive, and exploratory research approach, encompassing field research, netnography, and ethnomusicology. It offers a holistic understanding of how independent producers coped with the challenges of the pandemic and continued their work.

Keywords: Guayaquil, Music Scene, COVID-19 pandemic, Independent music producers, Digital transformation.

INTRODUCTION

Guayaquil, Ecuador, was the first city in Latin America to be ravaged by cases of COVID-19. In just a few weeks, millions of sick people overwhelmed the city's health system. The government imposed compulsory confinement, which meant severe restrictions on mobility. Similar to what was happening in the rest of the world, scientists had neither answers nor means to face this critical scenario. In this situation, the music and entertainment scene was affected, including live music. Nevertheless, in such a tense situation, access to recording technology allowed independent music producers to explore virtual spaces to develop themselves and grow into fields for establishing creative ways to stay in business (Bush 2022); and even if they started these activities during the COVID era, they continue to do so this day.

In this paper, we focus on the musical productions in Guayaquil during the COVID-19 pandemic. In doing so, we base our approach on some particular concepts of musical scenes proposed by Bennet and Peterson (2004). These have helped us to see that what began as a local scene became a virtual one with an impact on different circuits of culture, through activities that emerged on the Internet. The utilization of Bennet and Peterson's (2004) concepts of musical scenes provides a foundational framework to comprehend the transformative shift from traditional local music scenes to virtual platforms amidst the pandemic. The rationale behind this selection could stem from the concepts aptitude in capturing the socio-

cultural, spatial, and technological dynamics within the music industry, offering a lens through which the impact of the pandemic on musical production and the adaptation to virtual spaces can be comprehensively analyzed.

Moreover, contextualizing the study's results within the broader societal spectrum is pivotal to understanding the implications of virtual scenes on cultural domains and people's lives beyond the musical realm. The elucidation of how the transition to virtual spaces within the music industry influenced or interacted with other cultural facets, such as art, entertainment, or social connectivity, provides a holistic understanding of the pandemic's broader impact. By outlining the ripple effects of this shift on societal and cultural paradigms, this study can offer insights into the multifaceted ways in which the virtual transformation in the music industry resonated across various dimensions of people's lives. This contextualization augments the study's significance by portraying the interconnectedness of cultural shifts during the pandemic and their influence on the broader fabric of society.

Guayaquil had what could be described as a traditional local music scene, known for the salsa, as representation of Tropical Music; hip-hop and reggaeton, a current movement with a lot of presence on local stages; and rock music, like other musical manifestations, a product of the international circulation of music (Medina Campos, 2020; Miranda Arévalo, 2020). However, the social distancing caused by COVID modified the work of musicians, who began to move towards virtual spaces to develop their activities (Buch 2022). Music production, and recording processes have changed throughout the pandemic, to

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some extent in response to the restrictions of meetings and long lockdowns. As a result, independent record labels resorted to technology and Internet distribution taking their activities to streaming platforms. Thus, the social aspect of music moved to virtual spaces. Even if the musical expressions were the same, the modes of listening and audio production were disrupted. In fact, communication theorists have recorded the changes of this media phenomenon in real time during the pandemic. One prominent change is the accelerated adoption of virtual communication platforms. With physical distancing measures in place, people turned to video calls, online meetings, and virtual events as the new norm. This shift not only impacted the way we work but also transformed social interactions. Another interesting angle is the surge in digital content consumption. Whether it is news updates, entertainment, or educational content, people flocked to online platforms for information and distraction. This trend has implications for media outlets, advertisers, and content creators, shaping new strategies to engage audiences in the digital realm. Lastly, the pandemic underscored the importance of social media as a double-edged sword. While it served as a vital tool for disseminating information and fostering connections, it also highlighted the risks of misinformation, echo chambers, and the mental health toll of excessive screen time (Rodríguez Reinoso 2022; Kavtaradze, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, live music venues and the economic mechanisms supporting them have faced a crisis. Taylor *et al.* (2021) analyzed the UK government announcement on July 25th, 2020, to allocate £2.25 million to aid 150 music venues nationwide. However, the allocation processes, emergency funding distribution criteria, and the ability of the live music industry in the UK remain unclear. Taylor *et al.* (2021) emphasized the intricate dynamics through which space is generated and experienced within a live music setting. Expanding this perspective to encompass Lefebvre's concepts of dominated and appropriated space, they contend that the economic viability of live music is rooted in its spatial characteristics. They argue that addressing the ongoing crisis necessitates a heightened awareness of the spatial practices involved in music production and consumption.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cultural workers, particularly those in the realm of live music, was more pronounced compared to many other

occupational groups. Notably, the role of live music as a response to crises underscores the positive aspects of performing arts during times of isolation. However, there is a risk of normalizing the expectation that musicians perform without compensation. Fürnkranz (2021) explored the intersection of live music with social and cultural issues, with a specific focus on Vienna's popular music scene. Drawing on insights from live music research, particularly the works of Philip Auslander and Simon Frith, the author examined the widespread consequences of the pandemic on music creation, and how it was emerging communities the one to emphasize the concept of "sense of community" as described by Auslander. Fürnkranz (2021) focused on three case studies that delved into the strategies employed by musicians in navigating the crisis.

Ptatscheck (2021) examined the existing mental health struggles of musicians as they navigate this unprecedented situation, offering a retrospective view of the experiences of those affected. The COVID-19 crisis exacerbated the challenges faced by an industry already marked by mental health issues arising from demanding working conditions, such as precarious financial circumstances, unconventional work hours, fatigue, and a lack of ability to plan for the future. Drawing on a qualitative interview study involving EDM DJs in Germany during the initial lockdown, the author presented three illustrative cases to provide insights into their unique living environments and working circumstances. The analysis revealed the interconnection between the COVID-19 crisis, their prior life situations, mental well-being, and self-perceptions as DJs. In addition, the researcher postulated that while the current crisis may negatively impact the already challenging mental health of creative professionals, it also has the potential to promote well-being.

On the other hand, the recording studio, traditionally a component of the network shaping the music scene, has undergone significant transformation with the advent of the digital revolution. This revolution has fundamentally altered the physical nature of the studio, crafting a virtual space that fosters new creative possibilities within a digital community. The global pandemic has compelled individuals to adopt the practice of working 'in the box,' a term associated with conducting mixing and mastering processes entirely within a computer without external processing devices, even among previously skeptical professionals, through network connections. This shift represents a paradigm

change in the professional and interpersonal dynamics between producers, sound engineers, and artists, fundamentally reshaping conventional approaches to music production. Juan de Dios Cuartas (2021) analyzed, employing a non-experimental descriptive methodology based on non-participant systematic observation, the impact of digital advancements in music production and the redefinition of the recording studio and the concept of the music scene within the new reality shaped by the professional environment of music production in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are not many published works about music production and the music scene during the pandemic in Guayaquil. However, there are unpublished theses and dissertations that show the interest that researchers have in the subject. For example, Luque Molina (2020) studied the relationship between dissemination and content amidst social networks in Guayaquil. This work began in 2019 but it was only completed during the first year of COVID-19. This made it possible to document the first changes that the music scene underwent during the early stages of lockdowns, which continued to occur on social networks after the confinement restrictions were lifted. Another study, one that combines music and technology, was conducted by Vargas Prias and Guzmán Barrios (2022), who analyzed the ear training of professional musicians using new technologies before and during the pandemic. For this study, authors used a representative sample of undergraduate students and professionals graduated from the Santiago de Guayaquil Catholic University. In 2021, Cervantes Chacón (2021) conducted another study that focused on the city's music industry, where she compiled information on the impact of the pandemic, and the strict biosecurity protocols that were imposed in the city.

METHOD

This work has a qualitative, descriptive, and exploratory method. The questions that guided this research were: how did music change during the pandemic? Did the topics change? What about its content? Did the audience change? Did music help people survive the pandemic? If it did, how exactly did it do it? Qualitative research focuses on exploring and understanding the underlying meanings, motivations, and experiences of individuals or groups. It often involves in-depth interviews, observations, and the analysis of non-numerical data. The researcher

conducted interviews with music producers and recording artists to gain insights into their experiences and perspectives during the pandemic. This method allowed for a nuanced understanding of the subject matter. Descriptive research is concerned with providing an accurate portrayal of a situation, often without manipulating variables. It aims to describe the characteristics of a phenomenon. This study detailed the activities, behaviors, and trends observed among the interviewed music producers and recording artists. Descriptive methods are valuable for presenting a comprehensive picture of a subject. Exploratory research is conducted when the researcher seeks to gain insights into a new, poorly understood, or complex issue, it is often used in the early stages of investigation. In this context, the researcher likely used exploratory methods to delve into how independent producers adapted and continued their work during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal was to generate hypotheses and provide a foundation for further research.

Field research involves collecting data firsthand in the natural environment where the phenomenon occurs. It often includes direct interactions with participants. Interviews with music producers and recording artists were conducted in their work environments, providing an authentic and contextual understanding of their experiences during the pandemic. The study likely involved conducting semi-structured interviews with seven music producers and musicians who released their works during the pandemic. The questions in the interviews have covered several areas: adaptation strategies, to understand how the producers navigated the transition from traditional to virtual spaces. Technological shift, to exploring the use of digital platforms, home studios, and technology in their production processes during the pandemic, challenges faced, to inquire about the specific challenges they encountered in creating and promoting their music during the pandemic; thematic and creative choices to discuss the themes and inspirations behind their works, especially those reflecting the impact of the pandemic or the choice to maintain traditional themes. Netnography is an online research method that involves studying and analyzing social phenomena in the context of online communities or social networks. In this research, this method was employed to analyze the activities of popular urban genre artists on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Spotify. This method helps capture the online dynamics and behaviors of the

studied individuals. Ethnomusicology is the study of music in its cultural context. It often involves examining the relationships between music, culture, and society. In this study, ethnomusicology likely played a role in connecting the study of sound files and audio records to broader research tasks (García 2019, 2020 y 2021). It helps contextualize musical production within cultural and societal frameworks.

These methods collectively contribute to a rich and holistic exploration of how independent producers navigated the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in the realm of music production. Likewise, journalistic material that allowed a better understanding of the context of the musical production activities was used. The study period ranged between March 2020 and December 2022, and the main objective of the research was to analyze how independent producers continued in the arena conditioned by COVID-19.

The selection of the sample was limited to musicians who live in Ecuador and whose musical production process was affected by the pandemic. In this regard, we worked on the following productions:

Rosero. *Montaña rusa* (2020) CD.
 El búho de Minerva. *El nuevo fin* (2020) CD.
 Miel. *Flores del Edén* (2020) CD.
 Biera. *La última fiesta* (2021) CD.
 Mojo Myst. *Midnight Lab* (2021) CD.
 Mauricio Mena. *Sí* (2021)

These artists made their productions in the middle of the pandemic. Their production process began in home studios and digital audio processing was sophisticated enough to meet Spotify's quality standards. The platform employs advanced audio compression algorithms, such as Ogg Vorbis, to deliver high-quality sound while minimizing file sizes for efficient streaming. Spotify's commitment to audio excellence extends to its curation and recommendation algorithms, employing machine learning to tailor personalized playlists based on user preferences. Additionally, Spotify prioritizes user interface design, making the app user-friendly and accessible across various devices. By consistently refining its audio technology, content curation, and user interface, Spotify sets and maintains industry benchmarks for quality, enriching the music streaming experience for millions of listeners worldwide.

Some projects used the theme of the pandemic as a *leitmotif*. Others, used pop rock themes in their lyrics:

love, encounters and disagreements. The lyrics of rock music have undergone a profound shift in response to the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditionally known for its rebellious and introspective themes, rock music has adapted to capture the unique nuances of this global crisis. Many lyrics now reflect a shared sense of isolation, yearning for connection, and a grappling with the uncertainties brought about by the pandemic. The themes of resilience and defiance, often inherent in rock, find new expression as artists navigate the complexities of lockdowns, social distancing, and the collective yearning for a return to normalcy. Additionally, there is a notable exploration of the emotional toll of the pandemic, touching on themes of loss, anxiety, and the collective human experience in the face of a global health crisis. The lyrics of rock during this period serve as a poignant reflection of the times, providing a sonic diary that encapsulates the varied and profound effects of COVID-19 on individuals and society at large.

The pandemic and lockdowns forced cultural actors to produce and consume music entirely digitally (Quispe Lázaro 2022). Given the panorama of the first months of the pandemic, music producers in Guayaquil had to resort to psychological and economic survival strategies; thus it can be argued that the pandemic changed the musical practices at the beginning of the 21st century. It is true that digital music had gained virtual space before COVID-19, but, despite the many advantages of the streaming platforms, such as reaching new and wider audiences, these audiences would not easily take in the new music, making assimilation and consumption a slow, gradual process.

During the pandemic, the relationship between music and its modes of consumption was redefined. Buch and Nigro Giunta (2022) observed online and offline virtual proposals; the former was done in real time (synchronous), and the latter was done with previously recorded material (asynchronous). These authors highlight the difference between small and large producers. Local and small-scale initiatives did not have the same projection as multinational consortia such as Sony, Warner Music, or artists such as Rihanna or Janet Jackson. An example of this was the humanitarian aid crusade that was promoted by the online world, as *One World: Together at Home*, a mega-production involving international organizations such as Global Citizen, the World Health Organization and the United Nations (McIntosh, 2021). There were also viralization proposals from the Latin music industry, such as *Color esperanza*, which was

promoted by Sony Music Latin (Oliveira, 2020). These products were managed by the music industry, with work teams, technology, and international media reach. International humanitarian aid was covered with a large dose of spectacle. In the case of the groups that were in Guayaquil, the disadvantages were enormous, such as the absence of record companies, which withdrew from the country with the financial crisis of 1999–2000. In addition, independent producers began to suffer from the inflationary crisis that began in Ecuador in 2019 (Aguilera Bravo, 2015; Pizarro y Montoya Delgado, 2013).

GYE: Pandemic and Music

There was an emerging movement of local bands in Guayaquil before the pandemic, but their circuit was limited to small venues and private parties. However, COVID-19 changed this, raising the question of how Guayaquil's music producers adapted their work during the pandemic. During the first months of lockdown, it became clear that some professional musicians lacked expertise in digital audio production. This was reflected in the virtual broadcasts with poor sound in real time, an aspect that contrasted with productions such as *One World* (McIntosh 2020). Another problem was "shared acoustics," or the sound correlation between two or more performers sharing a virtual acoustic space (Datta, 2020). In some cases, such as choral concerts, synchronization between the metronome and audio corrections was used. Thus, the result of the virtual choirs was the product of delicate post-production work and not of the performance of the group (Theorell *et al.* 2023; Morrison 2021; Buch 2020). It is worth mentioning how amusing it was to see directors with a serious attitude giving the input of each of the voices that had been previously recorded, mixed, and, in some cases, mastered.

Shows and traditional musical performances were covered throughout the world during the pandemic. However, while producers in countries of the global North were redefining their visibility and marketing strategies (McIntosh 2020; Rendell 2020; Oliveira 2020), reality for Guayaquil and its context was different. We can talk about a local music scene with producers, sound engineers, venue owners, musicians, and audiences. A scene with a lot of activity but with a precarious commercial framework. The groups managed the spaces; they used little equipment to give concerts in small venues, and let us not forget the absence of a national recording industry (Viteri, 2021). In this way, when lockdown measures were imposed,

the owners of the establishments were among the most affected sectors; since there was no public to serve, no one who would pay for consumer goods and services. Instead, the local bands met with their fans through virtual spaces.

In this sense, it is not possible to speak of a "4.0" business model in Guayaquil, as proposed by Owsinski (2014), where musical productions make money in the virtual world.

Owsinski's model emphasizes how musical productions can generate revenue primarily in the virtual world. In contrast, the local artists in Guayaquil seem to have employed digital platforms not as direct revenue streams but as tools for promotion and audience engagement. To extract this information, the researcher conducted interviews with Guayaquil-based artists, delving into their strategies and approaches during the study period. Additionally, a netnographic approach was employed to analyze the artists' digital presence on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and others. This combination of qualitative methods allows for a nuanced understanding of how local artists in Guayaquil leverage digital platforms, shedding light on the distinctive nature of their business models in contrast to the virtual revenue-centric paradigm proposed by Owsinski. In Guayaquil, local artists used digital platforms for promotion and to get closer to their audience. For example, in some cases, such as Biera or Rosero, the live presentation of the album was replaced by listening to the recorded production on streaming. In this way, what would have been a concert with around fifty people became an event with national repercussions, with an audience throughout the country. An emotional bond was created with an audience that was in a different geographical space from that of the groups'. A construction of content that is appropriated thanks to the expansion offered by the virtual scene (Rendell, 2020; Segarra-Saavedra e Hidalgo-Marí, 2018).

In just a few weeks, the musicians became familiar with the relationship between audio production, social media, and sound for digital platforms. "Do it yourself" was the watchword for the psychological and commercial survival of the local groups. Virtuality was their new day-to-day, through the possibility of redefining artistic practices offered by the Internet. This forced them to change the means of production that traditional artists had. Suddenly, the intimate space of the home became the setting for the release of a record, a concert, and even a conversation. Artists on a

tight budget used their mobile phones as their primary audio and video production tools. It is noteworthy that other artists, such as the Argentinian Fito Páez, had a production team at home that was comparable to that of a television station (Buch & Nigro Giunta, 2022; Cabral *et al.*, 2020).

Pandemic, Performance and Lyrics

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the music industry transcends technical considerations and extends into the realm of creativity, genre dynamics, and audience engagement. To comprehensively address these facets, it is imperative to delve deeper into the transformative effects of the pandemic on musicians' creative processes, the evolving landscape of musical genres, and the consequential impact on the audience. The pandemic served as a catalyst for musicians to reevaluate their creative processes and adapt to the unprecedented circumstances. The interviewees stated that confronted an environment characterized by isolation, uncertainty, and emotional turbulence, which undoubtedly influenced the thematic and emotional dimensions of their music. A nuanced exploration of how musicians harnessed these emotional landscapes to shape their creative output is essential. Did the pandemic inspire introspection, leading to profound shifts in lyrical themes, musical compositions, or performance styles? A detailed examination of these creative responses would illuminate the multifaceted ways in which artists harnessed adversity as a source of artistic innovation.

Other interviewees considered the role of music as an emotional and psychological anchor during the pandemic, like a salient point of inquiry. Musical performances offer solace and emotional sustenance to individuals grappling with the uncertainties and stressors of the pandemic. Conversely, the collective emotions and struggles of the audience, fostering a sense of solidarity. A thorough investigation of these dimensions unravels the profound therapeutic potential of music during challenging times and underscores its capacity to provide solace and emotional support. A critical facet of this exploration pertains to the shifting dynamics of the audience. Three interviewees believe that the pandemic led to an expansion of the audience for musicians who turned to digital platforms. There were notable changes in audience demographics, preferences, or engagement patterns. An in-depth analysis of audience dynamics elucidates how music's relationship with its listeners transformed in the context of the pandemic, offering valuable insights into the

evolving nature of cultural consumption. In sum, to elucidate the intricate dimensions of music's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, an extensive investigation into the creative processes, genre evolution, emotional impact, and audience dynamics is indispensable. These facets collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of music's resilience and transformative power in the face of global adversity, enriching the academic discourse on the pandemic's influence on the music industry.

During the pandemic, the ways of listening and producing music were modified, and the public health emergency triggered artistic production. In this context, the band *El Búho de Minerva* produced *El nuevo fin* (2020), a work that revolves around literature and death. Their starting point were the personal stories of each member of the band, which worked as a sketch, "each song develops the depth of death from the perspective that each band member presents" (Cobos, 2022). Pandemic and death, as well as rock and irony, have been studied by Stratton (2021) and Jones (2020). In *El Búho de Minerva*, however, the theme is introspective. Half of the album was recorded in a home studio, with mixing and mastering taking place during the final phase of the pandemic, around 2021 (Cañizares & Tristanchó 2021).

In the case of Guayaquil, Rosero's EP, *Montaña Rusa* (2020), is a home production and a eulogy to the bedroom-pop phenomenon (Tomás García 2022; Baker, 2004). The theme of the album is anxiety and depression during the COVID-19 lockdown. All the lyrics of the songs are related to the isolation of the artist, who carried out the production in his room, space from which he took his proposal to streaming platforms. Creativity was managed during the lockdown, and this was encouraged by the network. In Rosero's songs, the lyrics talk about the use of a mask, something that was not common in Ecuador before the pandemic. It also highlights our relationship with the world through video calls, the uncertainty of international news and the national tragedy of illness and death. In Rosero's case, there was a close relationship with technology and streaming platforms in relation to his age; he was 19 when he released his production (Juanjo, 2022).

The connection between generational bias and new technologies also occurred with the *Miel* duo. They worked with basic audio production equipment, including a microphone, a computer, an electric bass, and various keyboard controllers. They quickly established themselves in the local electronic music

scene. Consisting of two performers who define themselves as producers, they mix genres such as pop, reggaeton, dance, and ballads. In *Miel*, "do it yourself" was the norm from the beginning. In all their recordings, they make use of technology, but at the same time, they have an essential characteristic in the art of "doing it yourself": spontaneity (Margolies & Strub 2021; Cuk 2021).

The strict lockdown allowed *Miel* to consolidate a project that they had been discussing for years with electronics and improvisation sessions. In this way, they produced *Flores del Eden* (2020) in the midst of the pandemic (2020). It is an auditory and sensory proposal that mixes different genres. As paradoxical as it may sound, unlike other groups that have gone from face-to-face to virtual, *Miel* did the opposite: they approached the live scene from the virtual world. Based on the reception they had on the networks, they managed to hold a concert at the *Teatro Sucre* in Quito and, later, in the cities of Guayaquil and Cuenca in 2022. From their experiences with the pandemic and lockdowns, this group has opted in recent years for a presence on stage and the consolidation of their own recording studio: *La Reina Records* (Puga 2022).

The pandemic reshaped the temporal relationship in show business. Artists performed in real time, and then recorded their performance on the Internet. Audiences could see and hear a concert again, or in the case of those who could not be present, they could watch it at another time. The performance ritual that integrated the artist, the producers, and the listener in the same place and space was disrupted. Not surprisingly, during the pandemic, the consumption of streaming platforms such as Spotify declined, and live production was consolidated through platforms such as YouTube, with simultaneous broadcasts through Instagram and Facebook (Buch, 2022; Buch y Nigro Giunta, 2022).

Biera's *La última fiesta* (2021) is significant in this regard. It is a concept album created as a movie script. The album was titled "album-movie" and tells the story of a movie that has not been made. The narrative structure is like that of a short novel, with dramatic nodes and endings. Due to the limitations of audio production during lockdowns, their main resource for telling the story was the cell phone. WhatsApp voice notes were the audio from which the narration was articulated. In this way, a story was spun in the middle of the pandemic, one that the audience was experiencing in reality. The homemade sound of a voice note aroused interest in listening to this

production. In the middle of the health emergency in Guayaquil, voice notes circulated reporting on the situation in different areas of the city: the collapse of emergency rooms, the morgue, and dead bodies in the streets. In this way, the tone of voice in the audio notes is connected to the everyday life at the moment. What in Biera began as "do it yourself" project became something attractive for the distribution and sale of the album.

Music served as a form of resilience and comfort for professional and amateur musicians and their audiences during the pandemic. Buch (2022) reveals the extent of the quantitative studies related to the use of music during the pandemic. The author criticizes the lack of studies on the real use of music, and highlights the link that has existed between recording and alternative or imaginary spaces in the consumption of music. The latter took on a new meaning through listening sessions or performances that took place via streaming during the pandemic.

The essential inquiries imperative to the discourse surrounding the impact of the pandemic on music revolve around transformative shifts in its essence and reception. These pivotal questions, such as how music evolved during the pandemic, whether its thematic content underwent alteration, and the audience's response and transformation, remain vital to understanding the socio-cultural role of music amidst crisis. Delving into the pandemic's influence on the themes and content of music is critical, shedding light on whether the shared global experience permeated artistic expression. Additionally, probing into the altered relationship between music and its audience, particularly regarding changes in engagement, preferences, and the role of music in aiding individuals during trying times, holds substantial significance. The fundamental query of how music potentially made it easy for individuals to cope with the challenges imposed by the pandemic—whether through emotional solace, connectivity, or offering a form of resilience—provides an intricate understanding of music's socio-emotional impact. These inquiries, if explored in research, would significantly enrich our comprehension of the role of music during crises, offering valuable insights into its transformative power within societal contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

The ritual of live music is an essential link between musicians and audiences, especially in genres like rock

and pop, where performance and interaction with the audience are expected and desired (Frith 2007). In Guayaquil, these musical practices migrated from the traditional to the virtual scene, which allowed for the translocal projection of the bands. Because this virtual scene is independent, and because there is no consolidated music industry, no market of supply and demand, producers have migrated to new ways of connecting with their artists and audiences.

The study of popular music in Ecuador is still developing. Nevertheless, some specific areas have been glimpsed from anthropological and sociological perspectives, such as interculturality, the relationship between popular music and ancestral cultures. There is still a need for research on musical production and consumption habits in Guayaquil during the pandemic. Reinvent or die was never more literal than during the public health crisis that shook the foundations of musical practices.

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