The SAGE Handbook of
Popular Music

Introduction

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Despite its status as a relatively recent academic field of research, popular music studies has made significant leaps over the last thirty years, both in terms of the breadth of its focus and institutional support for its core concerns. The foundations of popular music studies were established over a period of ten years between the late 1960s and the late 1970s, punctuated at intervals by the publication of highly influential books such as Dave Laing's (1969) *The Sound of Our Time*, R. Serge Denisoff and Richard A. Peterson's (eds.) (1972) *The Sounds of Social Change*, Wilfred Mellers's (1973) *Twilight of the Gods* and Simon Frith's (1978) *The Sociology of Rock* (republished in 1981 as *Sound Effects*). As the scholars associated with these titles collectively illustrate, from its very beginnings, the academic study of popular music was a multi-disciplinary affair and this is something that has remained a centrally defining feature.

Complementing the evolution of popular music studies in this formative period was the stimulus provided by emergent forms of music journalism from 1966 onward. As rock grew to a position of dominance in the wider field of Anglo-American popular music production during the 1960s its economic rise was accompanied by a new set of journalistic outlets, designed to explain its cultural and political impact. In the UK, long-standing music publications such as *Melody Maker* (founded in 1926) and *New Musical Express* (founded in 1952) turned their attention to 'rock' with new focus during the early and mid-1960s, and by the early 1970s were joined by other, newer publications such as *Sounds* and *Let It Rock*, which first appeared in 1970 and 1972, respectively, and were dedicated to rock-related news and criticism. Meanwhile in the US, *Crawdaddy* (founded in 1966) and *Rolling Stone* (founded in 1967) led the way towards a burgeoning rock press that encouraged readers to invest the music with deep cultural importance and to take an interest in the historical roots of rock as well as

its contemporary currents. Non-academic histories of rock such as Charlie Gillett's (1983 [1970]) *The Sound of the City* and Greil Marcus's (1975) *Mystery Train* provided models for the writing of rock history that academic scholars of rock and pop would seek both to emulate and to critique; and the dialogue between academic and journalistic writing on popular music has remained ongoing, with many key figures – including Simon Frith, the British sociologist who did much to establish the legitimacy of popular music studies as a field – working between the two spheres.

The fundamental eclecticism of method and subject matter that infused popular music studies in its early evolution was integral to the formation of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) in 1981. IASPM brought together scholars from Europe, the UK, Australia, Asia and the US, engaged in research on various aspects of popular music production, performance and reception from myriad disciplinary perspectives including: musicology and ethnomusicology; media and cultural studies; social anthropology; sociology; law; journalism; and historical studies. The first issue of *Review of Popular Music* (or *RPM*), the newsletter of IASPM, published in 1982, featured a statement of purpose by musicologist Philip Tagg that foregrounded interdisciplinarity as a core feature of the organization and an essential quality of popular music scholarship. According to Tagg (1982), the division of academic inquiry into discrete disciplinary specializations mirrored the division of labour that characterized industrial societies more generally, and inhibited a fuller grasp of the social significance of popular music as a facet of modern life (p. 1). Only cooperation between those working across disciplines could allow understanding of how popular music aesthetics joined with its sociological or psychological effects and so promote a suitably complex analysis of popular music as a facet of 'human activity and communication'.

Since the inception of IASPM, the international profile of popular music studies has been significantly strengthened by the introduction of dedicated academic journals, among them *Popular Music & Society* (US, founded 1971), *Popular Music* (UK, founded 1981), *Journal of Popular Music Studies* (US, founded 1988), *Perfect Beat* (Australia, founded 1992) and *Volume!* (France, founded 2002); and the establishment of university-based popular music research centres, notably the Institute for Popular Music at Liverpool University in the UK (founded in 1987). In the context of teaching and learning, popular music studies has also become increasingly prominent with higher education institutions (and increasingly schools and colleges) offering theory and practice-based courses and degree options in popular music. A small but growing number of research collections serve popular music scholars, with the UK's National Sound Archive (based at the British Library in London), the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Library and Archives and the Bowling Green State University Music Library in the US housing especially noteworthy resources. Museum exhibits or whole museums dedicated to popular music have also proliferated in recent decades, a sign that popular music history and heritage has assumed unprecedented visibility and legitimacy as markers of local and national identity (see, for example, Leonard, 2010).

The present volume provides a survey of the field of popular music studies at a moment when it has generated a considerable academic literature, has achieved substantial institutional support and stands at the intersection of a number of important scholarly currents. This *Handbook* is far from the first such overview, and we have not sought to reproduce the work done by valuable previous collections including Frith and Goodwin (eds.), *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word* (1990); Frith, Straw and Street (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Rock and Pop* (2001); Hesmondhalgh and Negus (eds.), *Popular Music Studies* (2002); and Scott

(ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Musicology* (2009).

We have organized this collection with two primary goals in mind. Firstly, the chapters included herein present something of a 'state of the field' report about popular music studies, with an emphasis on emergent areas of inquiry and key issues such as the impact of globalization and new technologies. Secondly, this book should serve as a primer for those newly initiated to the field, treating popular music from a range of perspectives – as a facet of the music industry, as a text to be analysed formally, as a phenomenon shaped by a wide range of media and technological formations, as a locus for identity formation and contestation – that are representative of the richness of the subject matter and the multi-dimensional character of popular music studies.

MAIN CURRENTS: CULTURAL STUDIES AND NEW MUSICOLOGY

For all its interdisciplinary breadth, the crystallization of popular music studies as an emergent field in the 1980s and 1990s owed a debt primarily to two main currents of academic thought. The first was the impact of cultural studies, most influentially that devised through the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), founded in Birmingham, UK, in 1964. The history of the Birmingham School and its impact has been recounted many times and Gilbert Rodman's chapter in this *Handbook* provides an account of how cultural studies has mattered to the study of popular music. Still, it is hard to overstate the importance of the scholarly blueprint offered by Stuart Hall, Dick Hebdige, Angela McRobbie, Paul Gilroy and others who taught or studied at the CCCS. Hebdige's (1979) *Subculture* has especially continued to loom large over the field of popular music studies and subcultural studies remains a primary underpinning

to much popular music research, even as the concept of 'subcultures' has been subject to repeated challenge (see, for example, McRobbie, 1990; Clarke, 1990; Harris, 1992; Bennett, 1999). The enduring relevance of Hebdige's work stems from a variety of factors: a theoretical method that combines the semiotic approach of Roland Barthes with a critique of ideology drawn from Marxist thinkers Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser; an analytic model that extends from the established, class-based focus of Marxist cultural studies to consider race as an equally critical social category; and a compelling account of modern industrial consumer societies that locates the capacity for resistance to domination in the creative appropriation of style, located in music, fashion and other mass cultural forms. Perhaps as important as the particulars of his argument was the basic fact that Hebdige offered a timely analysis of a phenomenon – punk – that in itself stimulated a renewed impulse to think critically about popular music and its social effects, and would along with rap and hip hop become an area of popular music that proved to generate a rich subfield unto itself.

Building upon the methods of cultural studies, popular music studies developed a substantial and ongoing concern with questions of culture, politics and identity. Through comprehensive analysis of music audiences, employing concepts of scene, community and subculture among others, popular music scholars have produced rich data on the meanings of popular music for audiences and the significance of particular music artists in the everyday lives of fans (see, for example, Chambers, 1985; Cavicchi, 1998; Bennett and Peterson, 2004). Particularly in relation to youth, the findings of popular music scholarship on the audience's highly diverse, inter-textual relationship with music and related cultural resources such as fashion and literature has provided a foil to the moral panic-making machinery that has been seen to spin into action at regular intervals since

the emergence of music- and style-based youth cultures during the early 1950s (see, for example, Cohen, 1987; Thornton, 1994). In contrast to representations of the relationship between popular music and youth in largely pathological terms, popular music studies has offered counter-interpretations that explore the value of music in relation to the formation of identity and creation of bonds between young people in both physical and, increasingly, online spaces.

A rather different trajectory was put into place through the work of the second main current that fed into the growth of popular music studies, the new musicology. To a significant extent the turn taken by musicological scholars such as Joseph Kerman, Rose Rosengard Subotnick, Susan McClary, Richard Leppert, Ruth Solie and others starting in the late 1970s was tangential to popular music studies. For all that they embraced the paradigms of Foucault, Kristeva and Derrida, their precursors such as Adorno and Benjamin, and other theorists who represent the more 'Continental' wing of cultural studies – as opposed to the British wing discussed above – many of these scholars continued to devote their attention to music of the Western European classical tradition. Yet their rejection of the ideology of autonomous musical art that had dominated academic musicology, and accompanying recognition that music was shaped as much by questions of power and cultural representation as any other expressive form, was a necessary precondition for taking popular music more seriously as a subject of academic study. Previously it was all too easy to dismiss popular music for its 'impurity', for the degree to which it was implicated in economic and social processes and so lacked aesthetic content of sufficient complexity to warrant careful analysis. However, if scholars recognized that classical music was comparably implicated in these processes, the grounds according to which popular music was deemed unworthy of consideration became increasingly untenable.

Three books can be used to trace the growing engagement with popular music among academic musicologists during the late 1980s and early 1990s. McClary and Leppert's (1987) *Music and Society* was a groundbreaking collection that purposefully included essays on Bach and Chopin alongside pieces that focused squarely on popular music, notably John Shepherd's 'Music and Male Hegemony' and Simon Frith's 'Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music', in the latter of which Frith outlined the concerns that would later manifest in his work, *Performing Rites* (1996). In their introduction to the volume, Leppert and McClary call for a 'crossover of methods' analogous to the call for interdisciplinary work made by Philip Tagg upon the founding of IASPM five years earlier, through which 'the aesthetic dimension of popular music becomes visible at the same time that the social and political functions of "serious" music become unavoidable' (p. xvi). Four years later, McClary's (1991) *Feminine Endings* further pursued this effort to combine analysis of the 'serious' and the 'popular'. McClary's feminist reinterpretation of the Western musical tradition laid repeated emphasis upon the ideological character of musical form and acknowledged that in the face of the patriarchal assumptions that continued to shape Western music, we might need to turn to popular artists like Madonna to find new ways forward. Robert Walser's (1993) *Running with the Devil* marked the culmination of these developments. Taking as his subject one of the most routinely castigated popular music genres – heavy metal – Walser brought an unusual level of analytical detail to a popular music form. At the same time he showed himself to be well versed in the methodological moves of cultural studies, and so presented a model for critical cultural interpretation of popular music that remained grounded in musicological method but was alert to the ways in which music might serve as an instrument of power.

POPULAR MUSIC AND GLOBALIZATION

Concerned from an early stage in its development with looking at popular music as a global phenomenon, popular music studies has, in an overall sense, produced a compelling narrative of popular music's position within a global-local nexus of production, performance and reception. This hallmark of the popular music studies approach was inspired to some degree by the music journalism of the late 1960s and early 1970s (see Shuker, 2001; see also above) which remained narrowly focused around the Anglo-American dimensions of popular music, effectively sidelining issues of cultural imperialism (see Tomlinson, 1991), globalization and core-periphery relationships in relation to the cultural production and reception of popular music. In applying a global focus, popular music scholars have sought to redress this imbalance through supplying 'missing histories' of popular music production, performance and reception in South America, the Middle East, Africa, South East Asia and Oceania. For example, Motti Regev (whose work is included in this volume) has produced highly compelling accounts of popular music's diverse trajectories in Israel, where Israeli rock, which as its name suggests takes inspiration from Anglo-American influences, is placed in the local musical soundscape alongside musica mizrakit, a style that draws upon traditional Mediterranean and Middle Eastern musics (see Regev, 1996). Similarly, Tony Mitchell (1996, 2001), another contributor to this book, has looked extensively at how rap and hip hop, a musical style and associated set of cultural practices with roots in the US, has been adopted and adapted by youth in different parts of the world, taking on distinctively localized characteristics. Similarly, the work of Jan Fairley has been of significance in providing perspectives on popular music's cultural significance in South America (see the recent

collection of Fairley's work edited by Frith, Rijven and Christie, 2014).

Within this global context, there has also been extensive study of popular music's contradictory status as an object of mass cultural production with multiple layers of symbolic and aesthetic meaning in everyday contexts. From the foundational work of Simon Frith (1981; 1987) to later contributions from Keith Negus (1992) and Robert Burnett (1996), the complexity of the music industry as an arm of late capitalist production engaged in the packaging of popular music and the 'selling of high seriousness' (Frith and Horne, 1987) has been a key contribution of popular music studies. At the same time, however, scholars have been alert to the fact that popular music and its spaces of production and consumption are as much a feature of the periphery as they are at the core of global popular cultures. Studies such as Wallis and Malm's (1984) *Big Sounds from Small Peoples* and Manuel's (1998) work on popular music in India have been important in demonstrating the extent to which popular music production and performance extend beyond the Anglo-American sphere. In more recent years the focus of such work has extended to Ho's (2003) study of the local popular music scene in Hong Kong and Crowdy's (2010) research on popular music production in Papua New Guinea, to offer but two of a multiplying set of examples. This focus on the relationship between the global and the local in popular music production, performance and reception has also produced some highly influential work on popular music's micro-social significance as a way of life in mundane everyday spaces, as illustrated by in-depth ethnographic studies such as Finnegan's (1989) *The Hidden Musicians* and Cohen's (1991) *Rock Culture in Liverpool*.

Following upon the growing emphasis placed on ethnographic methods in popular music studies, much recent work on the global aspects of popular music production and consumption and the place of popular music in everyday life has been done from within the

field of ethnomusicology. This ethnomusicological turn towards engagement with popular music – addressed at greater length by Kevin Dawe in his chapter of the *Handbook* – marks something of a paradigm shift akin to that addressed earlier in connection with the new musicology. Since its rise as a field in the mid-twentieth century, ethnomusicology had typically eschewed commercially produced popular music as subject matter, seeking instead to document varieties of musical practice that circulated less widely through channels of capitalist production. Yet the rise of a 'world music' market in the 1980s provoked ethnomusicologists to dedicate more scrutiny to the processes through which local sounds and cultures became subject to commodification (Feld, 1988; Meintjes, 1990). Building upon pioneering work by Charles Keil (1966, 1994), since the 1990s ethnographic study of popular music has grown to encompass work on a diverse range of genres and local contexts of musical practice and production including hip hop and noise music in Japan (Condry, 2006; Novak, 2013); recording studio practices in South Africa (Meintjes, 2003); salsa, banda and electronic dance music in various parts of Latin America (Waxer, 2002; Simonett, 2000; Madrid, 2008); and heavy metal considered as a global popular music genre in its own right (Wallach, Berger and Greene, 2011).

POPULAR MUSIC AS HISTORY AND HERITAGE

In more recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on the history and heritage of popular music. While such a focus has arguably been in place for a significantly longer period of time (see, for example, Friedlander, 1996; Johnson, 2006), the plethora of ways in which popular music is now presented as a historical artefact in both physical and on-line contexts has sparked a much greater interest among popular music scholars since the early 2000s. Again, this research has a much broader focus than Anglo-American rock and pop music. For example, a recent special edition of the *International Journal of Heritage Studies* features papers on British Bhangra (Khabra, 2014) together with accounts of popular music heritage initiatives in countries such as Austria (Reitsamer, 2014) and Slovenia (Zevnik, 2014). In addition to such case studies of specific examples of popular music heritage in particular spaces and places, other work has focused on the cultural processes that have been involved in the transformation and re-classification of popular music from a mass-produced aspect of late capitalist production to a cultural form deemed worthy of celebration and preservation as a form of cultural heritage (see, for example, Schmutz, 2005; Bennett, 2009). The emergence of the internet as an everyday media technology during the 1990s has produced other opportunities for the re-presentation of popular music as cultural heritage, as evidenced by the variety of websites established by popular music fans in celebration of particular artists, genres and eras of popular music (see Kibby, 2000; Bennett, 2002).

For popular music studies this rise of interest in the value of popular music history has meant, in no small degree, that the field has found new avenues for gaining legitimization. Museums and other public or private agencies dedicated to popular music preservation have drawn significantly upon the knowledge developed by scholars of popular music and so have given the work of these scholars a wider hearing. Within this process, however, it remains a necessary task for popular music scholars not simply to assist with the task of preservation but to challenge some of the assumptions upon which the impulse to memorialize the past has been founded. The best historical work on popular music – a sample of which appears in this *Handbook* – has a distinctly revisionist cast akin to that surveyed by Shuker (2011), striving to

ask new questions about how popular music has evolved and to shed light on historical subjects that have generally remained unknown or unrecognized for their significance. Elijah Wald's (2004, 2009) work offers one model of such historical inquiry. Whether challenging the grounds according to which the hallowed American blues artist Robert Johnson has been canonized or those according to which the infamous American jazz band leader Paul Whiteman has not gotten his due, Wald continually questions received narratives and sheds new light on what appear to be familiar subjects.

HANDBOOK: STRUCTURE AND FORMAT

This *Handbook* comprises thirty-five specially commissioned chapters written by experts in specific fields of popular music studies. The chapters are clustered under nine main Part headings that correspond with major themes and issues pertinent to the current field of popular music studies. Part I focuses on theoretical and methodological approaches to popular music, covering ethnomusicology, sociology, cultural studies, musicology and archival research. Part II presents perspectives on the music industry and the commercial character of popular music, reflecting on the historical development of the music business, the function of intermediation, the nature of musical labour, and the uses of music in advertising. Part III concentrates on the historical study of popular music, with chapters dedicated to debates over the 'industrial' aspects of popular music, the evolution of music genres and the changing features of live music. Part IV examines the relationship between the global and the local in popular music through four specific case studies focusing on rap, dance, heavy metal and punk. Part V reflects on stardom and the star system, considering the historically unique qualities of rock stardom and

the performative gestures that go into the making of stars, and offering chapters on the ways in which gender and race have informed the construction of stardom in popular music. Part VI focuses on the theme of body and identity, applying different perspectives that have been applied in such work, including gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, body and movement, and listening and memory. Part VII presents an in-depth study of the various media forms that support the production, performance and consumption of popular music with chapters on the music press, television, cinema and the Internet. Part VIII studies the importance of technology in popular music, with chapters on the evolution and impact of sound recording, amplification and the rising ubiquity of music in everyday life. Finally, Part IX considers the changing conditions of the popular music economy in light of digital technologies, observing the shift in mode of production from albums to the collection of data, analysing the importance of musical copyright and changing standards concerning property, ownership and appropriation, and addressing the new systems of distribution made available through digital channels.

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