

# Institute for Studies In American Music

Conservatory of Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York

**N E W S L E T T E R**

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## *Jungle Jive:* Race, Jazz, and Cartoons

by  
Daniel Goldmark

Jazz was an integral element in the sound and appearance of animated cartoons produced in Hollywood from the late 1920s through the late 1950s.<sup>1</sup> Everything from big band to free jazz has been featured in cartoons, either as the soundtrack to a story or the basis for one. The studio run by the Fleischer brothers took an unusual approach to jazz in the late 1920s and the 1930s, treating it not as background but as a musical genre deserving of recognition. Instead of using jazz idioms merely to color the musical score, their cartoons featured popular songs by prominent recording artists. Fleischer was a well-known studio in the 1920s, perhaps most famous for pioneering the sing-along cartoon with the bouncing ball in *Song Car-Tunes*. An added



*Louis Armstrong in the jazz cartoon I'll Be Glad When You're Dead, You Rascal You (Fleischer, 1932)*

attraction to Fleischer cartoons was that Paramount Pictures, their distributor and parent company, allowed the Fleischers to use its newsreel recording facilities, where they were permitted to film famous performers scheduled to appear in Paramount shorts and films.<sup>2</sup> Thus, a wide variety of musicians, including Ethel Merman, Rudy Vallee, the Mills Brothers, Gus Edwards, the Boswell Sisters, Cab Calloway, and Louis Armstrong, began appearing in Fleischer cartoons. This arrangement benefited both the studios and the stars. Once the Fleischers chose a song from the featured artist to use in a cartoon, the writers constructed a story that made the song's performance the centerpiece of the short. That the song's title usually was borrowed for the cartoon's title was just one way in which such cartoons helped publicize a performer's work.

The Fleischers also responded to local influences of the Manhattan music scene in their choice of performers: they combined themes from their own lives as middle-class, secular Jews in New York with their own cultural and musical notions of African Americans, funneling all these raw materials into a popular representational form—cartoons. Their earlier success with the *Song Car-Tunes* was owed to their use of Tin Pan Alley tunes and nineteenth-century popular songs, styles familiar in the city on vaudeville and other stages. The proximity of the Fleischer studio to premier music venues, particularly the uptown clubs in Harlem that featured artists such as Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson, and Cab Calloway, clearly shaped their creation of cartoons in the nascent jazz era. The aura of danger and excitement that surrounded jazz, especially during the Harlem Renaissance, likely added to the attraction. As Nathan Irvin Huggins describes it: “How convenient! It was merely a taxi trip to the exotic for most white New Yorkers. In cabarets decorated with tropical and jungle motifs—some of them replicas of southern plantations—they heard jazz, that almost forbidden music. It was not merely that jazz was exotic, but that it was instinctive and abandoned, yet laughingly light and immediate—melody skipping atop inexorable driving rhythm. . . . In the darkness and closeness, the music, infectious and unrelenting, drove on.”<sup>3</sup> Lou Fleischer, the brother in charge of music for the studio, remembered going to the Cotton Club to listen to Calloway so that he could choose the songs that might work well in a cartoon.<sup>4</sup> The performances themselves no doubt gave the writers at the studio ideas for future cartoons. They could easily take the numbers they had seen onstage and, choosing to view them from the contrived primitivist perspective then dominant, create stories that blended the performers' music and the visual trappings of the clubs with the animators' ideas.

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Amiri Baraka points out that whites eagerly engaged with the new black music that offered such a novel image of America,<sup>5</sup> desiring to experience the sensual overtones ascribed to “primitive” music. By visiting clubs in Harlem and even by viewing cartoons, whites could gain access to something they felt implicitly lacking in their lives: the freedom and hedonism believed to be characteristic of a simpler, more instinctual society. By couching the featured songs within the stereotyped narratives that shaped the musicians’ live acts, the Fleischer cartoons enabled moviegoing audiences around the country to experience an even more fantastical version of those narratives that previously had been enjoyed by only a small group of nightclub patrons in New York City. Just as they had done while attending live stage shows with blackface performers, white audiences could watch blacks in these newer mediated spaces and hope for what Huggins calls “the possibility of being transported into black innocence.”<sup>6</sup> The cartoons that simultaneously presented the idea of jazz and primitivism also emphasized, in a tone mixing envy and condemnation, the stereotyped notion that blacks live their lives with careless freedom.

Louis Armstrong and his band made their sole appearance in a Fleischer cartoon in *I’ll Be Glad When You’re Dead, You Rascal You* (Fleischer, 1932). Like most of the cartoons in this series,<sup>7</sup> the film opens with a sequence of live footage following the title cards. Armstrong and his band are featured performing *before* moving on to the animated story, thereby both giving the audience the opportunity to see the actual musicians and providing Armstrong with valuable publicity. But rather than performing the title song right away, Armstrong and his men play another piece, “Shine,” that segues neatly into the background music for the animated sequence. The audience must watch what amounts to half the cartoon before Armstrong begins the title song. This clever strategy on the part of the studio kept viewers’ attention on the characters and reflects a technique commonly used in the musical cartoons created by Warner Bros.

The story centers on Betty Boop and her companions, Bimbo the dog and Ko-Ko the clown, as they explore the depths of the African jungle. They inevitably become involved in a chase with some natives, which culminates in the performance of the title song. As Bimbo and Ko-Ko try to give the slip to their pursuer, a repetitive “ONE-two-three-four” drum beat—a musical stereotype often associated with Native American drumming patterns—starts

playing in the background. This short rhythmic cue transitions almost immediately into the title song, for which the drums have set up the tempo. As the beat ostensibly comes from “native” drums and is heard as if being played off-screen, the music establishes, before any lyrics are heard, the supposedly native origin of the song, which then springs full-formed from the primordial rhythm. During the chase, the native pursuing Bimbo and Ko-Ko literally loses his head, which, detached from his body, flies after them in the sky. As the introduction to the song ends and its opening verse begins, the head dissolves into Armstrong’s own live-action head in profile, singing the title song. This transformation focuses on another facet of the primitivist caricature, implying that Armstrong is still a denizen of the jungle himself. The skies even darken forebodingly as the native/Armstrong initially runs up behind Ko-Ko and Bimbo, who clearly fear Armstrong, his jazzy song, and the black community that created it.

By placing Betty into a perilous setting in the jungle juxtaposed with Armstrong’s savage image, the animators created a compelling story. This plot was so successful, in fact, that in the three Betty Boop cartoons starring Cab Calloway, Betty likewise finds herself in what the animation historian Paul Wells describes as a “dark, mysterious underworld, characterized by transgressive behaviour and taboo imagery. Even in its crudest forms, representations of blackness or black-oriented contexts, operate as signifiers of danger and cultural threat.”<sup>8</sup> Betty represents the quintessential flapper: a young, newly liberated, and highly sexualized woman who is vulnerable to the visceral temptations of jazz. Betty is exposed to black men, who, stereotypically, want to make off with and possess white women, a characteristic of “bucks,” as Donald Bogle defines them in his history of blacks in film: “Bucks are always big, baadddd niggers, oversexed and savage, violent and frenzied as they lust for white flesh.”<sup>9</sup> In the jazz cartoons with black musicians, Betty almost always ends up being chased by the animated representatives of jazz—Cab Calloway in *Minnie the Moocher* (Fleischer, 1932) and *The Old Man of the Mountain* (Fleischer, 1933), Don Redman and a bunch of other literal “spooks” in *I Heard* (1933), and natives in *I’ll Be Glad*, a trope that perpetuates cultural myths about rapacious black males. To be sure, Betty is pursued by men in many of her cartoons, but the issue of race complicates the chase by making her a forbidden object of desire.

A number of features of these cartoons made them attractive for white viewers. Not only were audiences transported to faraway lands, but the humorous and fantastical sight gags that characterized the Fleischer style also removed the aura of danger from Africa by offering comical and dehumanizing images of African natives. Such portrayals could naturally be extended to the urban American black, who could become less (or more) fearsome to white audiences through such caricatures. Their experience of the forbidden music of Armstrong or Calloway as a soundtrack to the journey created an additional level of excitement.

Armstrong, of all the jazz personalities featured in Fleischer cartoons, probably received the most extremely stereotyped treatment in his single appearance. The dissolve between Armstrong’s live-action head and that of his animated savage counterpart made the animators’ visual statement about the

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constitution of his “inner” nature absolutely clear. Even Armstrong’s voice lent itself to the stereotype of the savage persona. In vaudeville, as Huggins points out, the dialect associated with minstrelsy characters “was coarse, ignorant, and stood at the opposite pole from the soft tones and grace of what was considered cultivated speech.”<sup>10</sup> Of course, Armstrong’s raspy and ebullient singing was a signature element of his act, yet in the context of this cartoon, his style of making music suddenly takes on primitive characteristics—especially given his frequent exclamations that often bordered on the unintelligible. Later cartoons that caricatured Armstrong fetishize the same idiosyncratic elements of his performing style; his voice is usually the most obvious, most easily imitated (albeit poorly), and therefore most often satirized aspect of his public image.



I’ll Be Glad When You’re Dead, You Rascal You (*Fleischer, 1932*)

Many of these features highlighting Armstrong’s “savage” qualities first appeared in *A Rhapsody in Black and Blue* (1932), a one-reel Paramount musical short that was directed by Aubrey Scotto. The film opens in a rundown home where a black man sits listening to his Louis Armstrong records and playing a makeshift drum kit while his wife admonishes him to clean the house. When she knocks him out cold with a mop, the bubbles in the soap bucket, combined with the jazz music in background, lead to his wild fantasy in which he is the king of Jazzmania. The scene is apparently set in a throne room where, dressed in a military outfit, the “king” is entertained by Armstrong and his band, all dressed in leopard skins and similar costumes, while unseen machines churn away and fill the foreground with bubbles. Armstrong sings “I’ll Be Glad When You’re Dead, You Rascal You,” followed by “Shine” before the man awakens from his reverie.

*A Rhapsody in Black and Blue* clearly had a powerful influence on the Fleischer animators. In *I’ll Be Glad When You’re Dead*, they used the same songs and primitive ambience featured in *Rhapsody*. Though the live-action short never leaves the soundstage, the Fleischers took advantage of the immense freedom of their medium by setting the story in the jungle itself. They even retain some of the camera work from *Rhapsody*. Only two musicians get close-ups in *Rhapsody*, Armstrong and his drummer, Tubby Hall. Likewise, both Armstrong and Hall receive special emphasis in the Fleischer cartoon, as both have their visages transposed with those of jungle natives.

\* \* \*

*I’ll Be Glad When You’re Dead* portrays African Americans as “contemporary savages” whose music quickly changes from stereotypical jungle rhythms (beating drums) to a much more modern and swinging sound, though one still understood to be primitive in origin. The Fleischer cartoons were not alone in fostering images of the emergence of jazz from the savage hinterland as all the major studios reproduced and circulated this

prevalent stereotype of jazz’s origins.<sup>11</sup> Juxtaposing urban African American jazz musicians with a primitivist performance of uncivilized music by uneducated savages creates a fictive identification that serves only to stereotype. What makes the Fleischer cartoons uniquely significant is that they provide films of actual performances, mediated by the cartoons into which they were placed. While not all their cartoons focus on such offensive generalizations, they nevertheless serve as reminders of both the popularity of jazz and the racist stereotypes that were inextricably bound into its consumption.

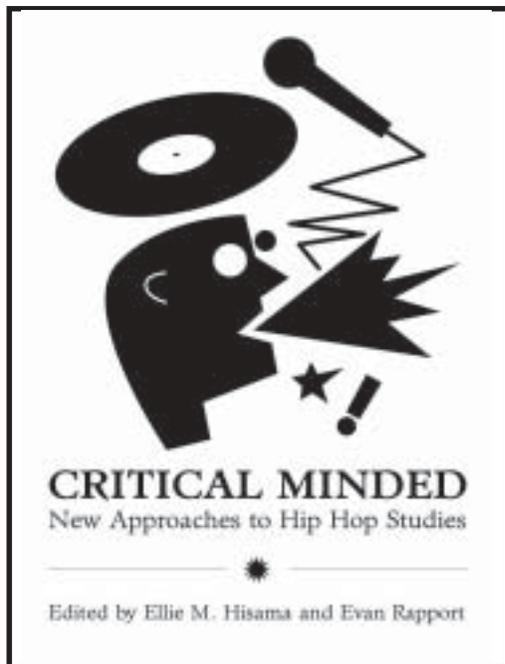
—University of Alabama

*Editors’ note: This article is a revised excerpt from Daniel Goldmark’s book, Tunes for ’Toons: Music in Hollywood Cartoons (University of California Press, in press).*

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *Jungle Jive* is a 1944 Walter Lantz cartoon, directed by Shamus Colhane.
- <sup>2</sup> Leslie Cabarga, *The Fleischer Story*, 2nd ed. (Da Capo Press, 1988), 63–64.
- <sup>3</sup> Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford University Press, 1971), 89.
- <sup>4</sup> Cabarga, *The Fleischer Story*, 63.
- <sup>5</sup> LeRoi Jones [Amiri Baraka], *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (Morrow Quill Paperbacks, 1963), 149.
- <sup>6</sup> Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 300.
- <sup>7</sup> Others in this cartoon series from Fleischer include Cab Calloway and his orchestra in *Minnie the Moocher* (1932), *Snow-White* (1933), and *The Old Man of the Mountain* (1933); the Mills Brothers in *I Ain’t Got Nobody* (1932), *Dinah* (1933), and *When Yuba Plays the Rumba on the Tuba* (1933); and Don Redman and his orchestra in *I Heard* (1933).
- <sup>8</sup> Paul Wells, *Understanding Animation* (Routledge, 1998), 217. Sean Griffin similarly describes Betty’s descent into the cave in *Snow-White* as “much like the entrance to a speakeasy, dark and secret.” See Sean Griffin, “Pronoun Trouble: The ‘Queerness’ of Animation,” *Spectator: USC Journal of Film and Television Criticism* 15/1 (Fall 1994), 99.
- <sup>9</sup> Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (Continuum, 1994), 13.
- <sup>10</sup> Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 255.
- <sup>11</sup> Henry Sampson’s chronicle of black images in cartoons, *That’s Enough, Folks*, confirms the ubiquity of the jungle portrayal of jazz’s origins. See Henry T. Sampson, *That’s Enough, Folks: Black Images in Animated Cartoons, 1900–1960* (Scarecrow Press, 1998).

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## ISAM Matters

This spring's colloquium series, **Music in Polycultural America**, brought a stellar group of speakers to Brooklyn College. **Daniel Goldmark** (University of Alabama), author of this issue's lead article, delivered a lecture on the origins of cartoon music in relation to Tin Pan Alley. Improviser-trombonist, composer, computer/installation artist, and MacArthur Fellow **George E. Lewis** (Columbia University) presented his research on the racial, ethnic, and class dynamics underlying improvisation in Germany and the U.S. during the 1960s. **Sherrie Tucker** (University of Kansas), in town as this year's Louis Armstrong Professor of Jazz Studies at Columbia, gave a paper on white women's use of jazz in relation to issues of appropriation and primitivism. Finally, Brooklyn College alumnus **Jason Stanyek** (University of Richmond) spoke about Brazilian diasporic performance in the U.S. and around the world. We gratefully acknowledge the Ethyle R. Wolfe Institute for the Humanities and the Cerf Fund for supporting the series.

We invite you to join us at the biennial conference **Feminist Theory and Music**, to be held at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and New York University on 23-26 June 2005. The conference features a keynote address by **Farah Jasmine Griffin** (Columbia University) titled "Midsummer's Night in Harlem: A Cultural Critic Listens"; an opening plenary session with **Farzaneh Milani** and **Elizabeth Wood**; fifteen sessions on topics ranging from feminist American histories to crossings of race and gender in jazz and pop; new documentaries on jazz pianist and composer **Mary Lou Williams** and gospel singer **Marion Williams**; and a closing plenary session with **Kyra Gaunt**, **Nadine Hubbs**, **Nilofar Mina**, and **Ruth Solie**. Performances will include works by **Linda Dusman**, **Pauline Oliveros**, **Milica Paranosic**, **Ursel Schlicht**, **Alice Shields**, **Karen Tanaka**, and Brooklyn College alumna **Frances White**, and electroacoustic music concerts at Columbia University and New York University. For further information about the conference, including the program and registration, please visit [www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/music/ftm8](http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/music/ftm8).

We wrap up the spring with a round of congratulations: first to **Pauline Oliveros**, who was named an honorary member of the Society for American Music at its thirty-first annual meeting, held in Eugene, Oregon in February 2005. And we warmly celebrate the marriage of Pauline and **Ione**, who tied the knot in Montréal in January 2005. Congratulations to ISAM Senior Associate **Ray Allen**, who received an Ethyle R. Wolfe Faculty Fellowship for a book project on the urban folk music revival, and to **Philip Rupprecht**, who received a National Humanities Center Fellowship to complete a book on British music since 1960. We are delighted to announce that **Harry Belafonte** received an honorary doctorate from the CUNY Graduate Center in May 2005. Lastly, we would like to acknowledge the superb leadership of **Frances Degen Horowitz**, who will retire after fourteen years as President of the CUNY Graduate Center. President Horowitz has strongly supported the Institute for many years, and we will always be grateful for her benevolent presence at our conferences and concerts.

—Ellie M. Hisama

performances of works by linda dusman • pauline oliveros • milica paranosic • ursel schlicht • alice shields • karen tanaka • frances white

# feminist theory & music

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## Preliminary Conference Schedule

### Thursday, 23 June ~ CUNY Graduate Center

**1 pm: Composing New Visions: Performance**  
Ursel Schlicht, *Ex Tempore: The Development and Practice of an Artistic Vision in Response to World Conflict*

**3:30 pm: Opening Plenary Session** with Suzanne G. Cusick, Farzaneh Milani, and Elizabeth Wood

**8 pm: Concert: *She Lost Her Voice & The Gender of Now***  
*She Lost Her Voice, That's How We Knew: A Chamber Opera for Solo Performer* by Frances White  
Kristin Nordeval, soprano  
Valeria Vasilevski, librettist and director  
*The Gender of Now: There and Not There* by Pauline Oliveros  
Sarah Cahill, piano ~ Monique Buzzarté, trombone

### Friday, 24 June ~ CUNY Graduate Center

**10 am-3:30 pm: Paper and Panel Sessions**

**12:15-1 pm: Lunchtime Performance**  
*Music for Violin and Electronics*  
Works by Linda Dusman, Milica Paranosic, Alice Shields, & Karen Tanaka ~ Airi Yoshioka, violin

**4 pm: Keynote Address: *Midsummer's Night in Harlem, 1943: A Cultural Critic Listens***  
by Farah Jasmine Griffin

**7 pm: Film Night: *Of Marion and Mary Lou***  
*Soul on Soul: The Story of Mary Lou Williams*, with director & editor Carol Bash

*Packin' Up: Marion Williams and the Philadelphia Gospel Women*, with director Ashley James, editor Kathryn Golden, & producer Ray Allen

### Saturday, 25 June ~ New York University

**10 am-6 pm: Paper and Panel Sessions**

**8 pm: Concert of Electroacoustic Music**  
*(re)sounding space*  
Works by Linda Buckley, Kali Z. Fasteau, Allison Johnson, Anne LeBaron, Sabrina Aguilar Peña, Daria Semegen, and Alice Shields

### Sunday, 26 June ~ New York University

**10 am-noon: Paper and Panel Sessions**

**12:15 pm: Closing Plenary** with Kyra Gaunt, Nadine Hubbs, Niloofer Mina, Nancy Rao, and Ruth Solie



**Feminist Theory and Music 8** is sponsored by the Ph.D./D.M.A. Program in Music, City University of New York; Department of Music, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, New York University; Institute for Studies in American Music, Brooklyn College, CUNY; Women's Studies Certificate Program, Middle East and Middle East American Center, Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies, and Continuing Education and Public Programs, CUNY Graduate Center; and the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality and the Program in Women's Studies, New York University.

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## Taking Henry Flynt Seriously

Philosopher, composer, and violinist Henry Flynt occupies a unique place in the history of experimentalism in the United States. Highly critical of established institutions of “serious culture,” Flynt began in the 1960s to combine blues licks and country fiddling styles with a modal approach to extended improvisation. He has recently released ten albums, a string of recordings spanning modernist sound experiments, hillbilly fiddling, rawkus garage rock, Hindustani-inflected solo violin improvisations, and what might be called “minimalist country.” Produced between 1963 and 1984, these works provide a wonderful opportunity to re-examine histories of experimental music in the U.S. from the critical perspective of an iconoclastic intellectual. However, the project of *interpreting* the story of Henry Flynt is being constantly deferred by what seem to be much more basic concerns: the need to establish a historical record in the first place, to provide some sense of the body of work under discussion, and indeed, to *justify* the whole enterprise. As Flynt told me last year, “I could bring you twenty to thirty people who would say that everything Henry Flynt ever did was totally worthless.”<sup>1</sup> So why do I think this obscure figure is important for the study of U.S. experimentalisms, and how can we justify work on such marginalized, or “outsider,” artists? I will return to these questions, but for now I’ll begin by offering a few short Flynt stories.

As a student at Harvard in the late 1950s, the classically trained violinist and self-taught composer Henry Flynt was exposed to jazz and became very enthusiastic about the innovations of John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, he read Samuel Charters’s book on country blues, and sent away for the accompanying anthology of Mississippi blues recordings.<sup>3</sup> Upon hearing these recordings, Flynt was turned completely around. As he later put it, “From that moment on...I’ve been ... a conscious, dedicated enemy of ... [laughing] the European vision.”<sup>4</sup> He soon began developing his own blues and country style on the violin and guitar, mixing it with minimalist tape-delay techniques and free-jazz sonic experimentation to create what he calls “avant-garde hillbilly music.”<sup>5</sup> In 1965 and 1966, after having taken guitar lessons from Lou Reed, he assembled a band called the Insurrections and recorded a series of political rock ‘n’ roll songs to protest the Vietnam war and colonialism in Africa (with songs such as “Missionary Stew”).<sup>6</sup> His musical activities in the 1970s included leading the communist country band Nova’billy, taking voice lessons with Pandit Pran Nath, collaborating with mathematician and composer Catherine Christer Hennix, and performing a few solo violin compositions over tambura drone. He

eventually stopped making music in 1984, having only played a few concerts over the previous twenty-five years, but amassing dozens of hours of his performances on tape. These tapes remained unpublished until 2001.<sup>7</sup>

In 1960, a twenty-year-old Flynt flunked out of Harvard, where he had been majoring in mathematics. In the spring of 1961, he finished his first monograph, called *Philosophy Proper*, in which he argued that language is a short-circuited system, and that mathematics is demonstrably false.<sup>8</sup> Several noted scholars, including Noam Chomsky and Saul Kripke, saw the manuscript and rejected it as worthless.<sup>9</sup> He continued developing a very eccentric and iconoclastic philosophy that encompasses (among many other things) aesthetics, phenomenology, cognitive nihilism, and the logic of contradictions. His only book, *Blueprint for a Higher Civilization*, was published in Milan in 1975.<sup>10</sup>



Henry Flynt, 1963  
Photo by Diane Wakoski

In December 1960, Flynt met the composer La Monte Young, who at that time was at the center of an active downtown avant-garde. Two months later, Flynt traveled to New York to give two performances on a now-legendary concert series curated by Young and held in Yoko Ono’s loft, where he presented “unstructured, improvised time-filling,” poetry, “jazz,” and other musical pieces (as listed on the concert announcement).<sup>11</sup> Influenced in part by Young’s short text pieces, Flynt wrote an essay in which he described a new aesthetic/mathematic practice, calling it “Concept Art” — “a kind of art of which the material is language.”<sup>12</sup> At the time, he wrote only four pieces that he considered properly of this genre, but in the late 1980s, he would revisit the form and make new works under this label.

In the spring of 1963, while visiting his parents in Greensboro, North Carolina, Flynt observed a civil rights demonstration and sent a letter about the experience to the Marxist-Leninist Workers World Party, which they subsequently printed in their newspaper.<sup>13</sup> After relocating to New York in 1963, he was quite active in the organization, attending meetings, distributing leaflets, and representing them in public on issues of race and colonialism.<sup>14</sup> Most importantly, he wrote for their newspaper, contributing some twenty articles in 1964 on subjects ranging from the civil rights struggle to decolonization in Zanzibar, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Congo.

In the meantime, Flynt was developing a strong anti-art position. He delivered his critiques of bourgeois high culture in

public lectures and at demonstrations outside of institutions including the Museum of Modern Art in February 1963. He led a picket in front of two Stockhausen concerts in 1964 in protest of the composer's disparaging remarks on jazz and the prevailing attitude that dismissed non-European musics as primitive, and soon thereafter published a pamphlet urging communists to give up on European folk and elite music, and to embrace black popular styles for delivering the Party's message to the proletariat.<sup>15</sup> He eventually left Workers World Party in 1967, and in 2004 told me that his sojourn in the dogmatic Left was in some sense a compromise to avoid being swept away into obscurity.

It is tempting to think of Flynt as a kind of willfully obscure hermit, or "outsider artist," so repulsed by the vulgar society around him that he would rather work in solitude than actually engage in a meaningful dialogue with the world at large, but this would be a mistake, for he was, and is, constantly straining to present his ideas to the public. After a January 1962 recording session with La Monte Young, Flynt sent tapes to Nesuhi Ertegün at Atlantic Records, who as Flynt recalls, "...wrote back to me and said, 'This is the most original thing I have ever heard, and for that reason, we cannot possibly publish it.'" <sup>16</sup> He also submitted demo recordings to Earle Brown at Time Records, and to Folkways and ESP, all of whom declined to publish his music.

Flynt himself has devoted several essays to exploring the condition of outsider status. In an unpublished text from 1979, "On Superior Obscurity," he stressed the importance of engaging with established institutions:

What I do say is that one must get one's protest of stupidity on the record. I do say that one must meet the enemy (in the military sense)... And you must not punish yourself because the establishment has failed you.<sup>17</sup>

His commitment to public dialogue led him to make necessary concessions to have his voice heard, he recalls: "I ... had to make all kinds of compromises not to simply be swept away. I mean, in other words, I ... should have simply starved in the gutter or something like that. The reason that didn't happen is because I started bobbing and weaving."<sup>18</sup> One example of this "bobbing and weaving" was the publication of his *Philosophy Proper*, which Flynt had edited down to a single-page manuscript titled "Primary Study Version Seven" by the end of 1963. After it had been rejected by two philosophy journals, Flynt took the advice of his friend George Maciunas and published it in a Fluxus newspaper called *V TRE*, which was being put together at the time by the artist George Brecht (Maciunas designed the graphics). Flynt explains, "[I]n one sense that has been a disaster, since the people that I'm dealing with... all that they see is that Henry Flynt has a text in Fluxus, that must mean that the text is a Fluxus text and that Henry Flynt is Fluxus. I mean, ... it was the only way I had of placing it on the public record in any form *at all*."<sup>19</sup>

I propose that we recognize Flynt's singular musical vision and the many ways his story complicates our understanding of the post-Cage continuum in New York. At a time when many

composers spoke of liberating the performer and enacting musical models of utopia, Flynt was agitating for a different kind of freedom: freedom from imperialism, from racial oppression, and from what he identified as elitist cultural institutions. What's more, he maintained that this commitment to liberation could not proceed from a European high-art position, arguing that the authority complex of "serious culture" was part and parcel of global systems of domination. Furthermore, his critiques of Cage and Stockhausen antedate the far better-known attacks of radical English composer Cornelius Cardew,<sup>20</sup> as well as the leftward turn of his Harvard classmate Christian Wolff.

After hearing one of my presentations on this subject, a colleague of mine noted, "There *is* a 'crackpot' side to all this," and he was right—Flynt has been called a charlatan by several respected figures in a wide range of disciplines. His often strident tone (which he now regrets as an unfortunate product of the times) and eccentric manner may be partially responsible for his obscurity, but surely many celebrated artists and intellectuals throughout history would be subject to similar charges. Rather than focusing on issues of personality or individual psychology, I find it more productive to examine material and structural reasons for Flynt's disappearance from the historical record. To put it another way, there is a difference between the terms "marginal" and "marginalized." That "-ized" signals a very important shift in meaning, for it calls attention to the way that discourses position subjects differently in structures of power and legitimacy; the study of "marginalized" figures necessarily entails an examination of the systems that produce them. For example, the absence of Henry Flynt's story from histories of experimental and popular musics, mathematics, visual arts, philosophy, and radical politics suggests the limits of bounded disciplines when dealing with multidisciplinary intellectuals.

But a more powerful explanation of Flynt's invisibility concerns the class and racial specifics of his cross-cultural appropriations, and how greatly they differed from the borrowings of many European-American experimentalists.<sup>21</sup> When other composers, such as La Monte Young, dipped into non-European traditions, their interest usually maintained a commitment to court musics and elite audiences; in this sense, the practice offered a limited experience of cultural difference, and bolstered already existing social hierarchies within the North Atlantic context. Long-standing discourses about race and authenticity in the history of modernism only sanctioned such encounters when they confirmed notions of the European subject in particular ways, and the differences between this familiar narrative and that of Henry Flynt are significant (and too many to include here). In contrast, Flynt completely abandoned modernism in favor of the music of working-class African Americans and poor whites, wielding it as a weapon to challenge the revolutionary bona fides of his avant-garde peers, as well as the very legitimacy of high culture as an institution. Pierre Bourdieu has called this refusal to play by the rules "the one unforgivable transgression"—one possible explanation for the near-disappearance of Flynt from historical narratives.<sup>22</sup> More importantly, this example suggests one way that studies of obscure

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# Hearing Hip-Hop's Jamaican Accent

Although hip-hop's dominant narrative typically begins with the introduction of Jamaican sound-system techniques and technologies into the South Bronx, the Caribbean presence in hip-hop tends to recede into absence after this originary moment.<sup>1</sup> Despite an increasing infusion of reggae into hip-hop over the last three decades, a hybridization reflecting New York's increasingly foreign-born black population, hip-hop histories routinely downplay such "outside" influence. Narrative strategies that seek to validate African American aesthetics against the denigration of mass media representations have thus obscured a more nuanced account of hip-hop's social character, with far-reaching implications for our understanding of such notions as race, ethnicity, and nation. The failure to acknowledge Jamaica's place in the hip-hop imagination overlooks the context-specific identification practices through which many performers have expressed the predicament of being both West Indian *and* black in New York. Such an oversight, in effect, maintains a discursive complicity with traditional, essentialized notions of race.<sup>2</sup>

This omission also fails to take note of important shifts in the politics and the very boundaries of blackness. If we listen more closely to the intersections between hip-hop and reggae—for instance, at moments when New York-based performers adopt or conceal a Jamaican accent—the contingent, dynamic character of race comes into stark relief. By paying attention to the shifting significations over time of Jamaicanness in New York, we can consider the ways in which historical context, social demographics, and cultural politics inflect conceptions of race and ethnicity. When Jamaican-born Kool Herc (aka Clive Campbell) loses his accent in the early 1970s, KRS-One employs one in the mid-1980s, and Mos Def goes "bilingual" in the late 1990s, music's powerful ability to mediate concepts such as race and ethnicity comes to the fore, reflecting as well as challenging dominant and often stereotypical representations. This article surveys the Jamaican-accented history of hip-hop, focusing on moments where the performance of Jamaicanness belies more stable conceptions of race and ethnicity.

Far from the aura of quasi-exotic cool that it carries today, Jamaicanness in the Bronx in the 1970s carried such a stigma that some young immigrants found it better to conceal their West Indian heritage. Kool Herc recounts the dangers of such an outsider identity: "At that time [the early 1970s], being Jamaican wasn't fashionable. Bob Marley didn't come through yet to make it more fashionable, to even give a chance for people to listen to our music. . . . I remember one time a guy said, 'Clive, man, don't walk down that way cause they throwing Jamaicans in garbage cans.'" <sup>3</sup> Even before moving to the United States as a teenager, Herc practiced an American accent by singing along to his father's record collection, which included records by Nina Simone, Nat King Cole, and country singer Jim Reeves. He continued to mold his voice upon moving to the Bronx in 1967, tuning to white rock and soul disc jockeys such as Cousin Brucie and Wolfman Jack, and absorbing the cadences of Smokey Robinson, the Temptations, and James Brown at house parties. Adjusting his accent so as to be intelligible to classmates, by the time he reached high school some of Herc's Jamaican friends didn't even know he

was Jamaican.<sup>4</sup> This chameleonic process extended to his performance practice, as he translated Jamaican soundsystem techniques for his funk-oriented Bronx peers. No fool when it came to playing to an audience, Herc selected "break" records—the hard funk of James Brown, Dennis Coffey, the Isley Brothers, Michael Viner's Incredible Bongo Band—rather than reggae tunes, to move the crowd. At that time in New York, Jamaican music was, as Orlando Patterson put it, still "jungle music" to the ears of most African Americans, many of whom, as first- or second-generation rural migrants from the South, still sought to distance themselves from a "country" past.<sup>5</sup>

Although the number of West Indian residents grew steadily in New York during the 1970s, due in part to British anti-immigration acts passed in the 1960s and the U.S. 1965 Immigration Act, which abolished national origins as the basis for immigration legislation, a critical mass had not yet crystallized so that borough culture could reflect such "foreign" infusions or so that normative blackness could include Anglo-Caribbean or even Latin Caribbean versions. Perhaps it was clear to recent immigrants like Herc that the best option for an individual seeking to navigate this new world smoothly was to, in a sense, become "black" (which is to say, African American) in walk, talk, and outward style. Of course, Clive Campbell had always been black. But to be Jamaican and black in New York in the 1970s signified something else, something different and somehow incompatible with American blackness.

Identity in this case was hard-won—at least among a prevailingly African American peer group. Although Campbell certainly reconciled such opposing identifications for himself when projecting a public persona, in particular through musical performance, he found that the Bronx's social pressures called for a particular type of assimilation. Herc's adopted and adapted accent illustrates the contours of racialized subjectivities at this time in New York. It is remarkable that Jamaicanness and blackness were at odds at this point only because they seem so easily reconciled today, but that shift would take place over the next three decades in a circular pattern of demographic change and mass media representation. Hip-hop, despite the way that its narrative restricts its Caribbean roots, would constitute one of the major media outlets for these changing perceptions of the difference and distance between African Americans and various black others.

As Boogie Down Productions' *Criminal Minded* (1987) demonstrates, blackness in the Bronx could be tied to Jamaicanness unproblematically by the late 1980s. KRS-One foregrounds his West Indian heritage on what would become, significantly, a seminal hip-hop album. BDP's brash, dub-accented production, "ragamuffin" language, dancehall-cribbed tunes, and glorified violence made an enormous impression on the hip-hop scene and helped set the template for what would later be called gangsta rap. It is especially telling that in one of hip-hop's most gloried turf wars—the contest between the South Bronx and Queensbridge over rap's place of origin, or "of how it all got started way back when"—KRS-One could so effectively represent "authentic" hip-hop with a style so heavily-indebted to reggae and thus so marked by otherness. Of course, what this demonstrates is that Jamaicanness no longer carried the same stigmatized sense of

otherness. It had become re-accented, as when BDP takes a classic reggae bassline and re-imagines it as a stiff, breakbeat-saddled piano riff, or when KRS-One sings a Billy Joel melody in a manner that recalls Yellowman's fondness for ironic quotation. That BDP's expression could at once be so Bronx and hip-hop, and yet so Jamaican and reggae bears witness to the degree to which Jamaican music and culture had become part of the texture of New York life by the mid-1980s.

Indeed, one might even say that, especially in Brooklyn and the Bronx, the Jamaican presence had become ubiquitous and, at times, dominant. This cultural shift is undoubtedly tied to the high rates of migration from Jamaica to New York during this period. According to sociologist Mary Waters, "In the 1980s alone, Jamaica sent 213,805 people to the United States—a full 9% of its total population of 2.5 million people."<sup>6</sup> 45% of these immigrants stayed in New York. And "[b]y 1996, it was estimated that 35.1% of the city's black households was headed by a foreign-born person—the vast majority from the Caribbean."<sup>7</sup> This demographic shift was accompanied by a powerful cultural visibility projected, on the one hand, through reggae soundsystem culture which filled streets, parks, and clubs with the sounds of Jamaica, and, on the other, by the rise of the infamous cocaine-running posses, which quickly came to dominate the drug-trade in New York. Legendary for their ruthlessness and firepower, the posses quickly took over corners across Brooklyn and the Bronx, and their powerful presence undoubtedly realigned many people's sense of what Jamaicanness—and reggae—could signify. Far from the islanders that were ridiculed as too "country" a generation before, Jamaican New Yorkers in the 1980s epitomized a powerful kind of cool in the dog-eat-dog world of urban America.

It is thus not surprising that KRS-One embraces the signifiers of Jamaicanness on *Criminal Minded*, despite that his personal connection to the Caribbean is through a biological father from Trinidad who was out of the picture from an early age, having been deported. Growing up in the Bronx or Brooklyn at this time could forge personal connections to the Caribbean that go beyond family heritage. Underscoring the power of this symbolic association, KRS alternately refers to Boogie Down Productions as the "BDP posse," an appropriation of the powerful gang signifier, which itself was, in a fine stroke of irony, a term borrowed from Hollywood Westerns, which have long been popular in Jamaica. Fittingly, mainstream media projections of Jamaicanness at this time—from the dreadlocked alien hunting Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Predator* (1987) to the vicious, demonic Rastas in Steven Segal's *Marked for Death* (1990)—served to reflect as they informed the stereotyped public perception of Jamaicans: a



Kool Herc

"cool and deadly" figuration which would later be reproduced in hip-hop films such as Hype Williams's *Belly* (1998) and in dozens of hip-hop songs where "rude bwoy" becomes an accented shorthand for gangsta.

Two years before *Criminal Minded*, Run DMC hinted at the degree to which Jamaican sounds had already permeated New York by collaborating with dancehall star Yellowman on the track "Roots, Rock, Reggae" (1985), which takes its name from a Bob Marley song. Indeed, DMC (aka Daryl McDaniels) acknowledges that Yellowman's music was already ubiquitous and influential in the hip-hop scene

by that point: "We grew up worshipping Yellowman, loving him, loving all of his records; what he said, how he sounded, how he looked, he was just cool. The Roxy, Harlem World, Union Square, Latin Quarter—they were all playing hip-hop and they were all playing Yellowman."<sup>8</sup> But, revealingly, in comparison to KRS-One's seamless incorporation of dancehall style, Run DMC sound awkward rolling their r's and clumsily riding a chintzy, quasi-Caribbean beat. On the other hand, by the early 1990s, Brooklyn-based groups such as the Fu-Schnickens, Das EFX, Black Moon, and Smif'n'Wessun were performing in a style that spoke from a kind of creolized subject position, containing as much patois and ragga-style flow as more traditional hip-hop stylistic markers, although almost always over hip-hop beats. Meanwhile, artists such as the Notorious B.I.G., Jeru the Damaja, Gang Starr, and A Tribe Called Quest more subtly incorporated

West Indian references and slang, and reggae lyrics and melodies into their borough-accented rap.

Such hybrid expressions demonstrate the degree to which Jamaicanness and blackness begin to overlap in New York by this point, no longer appearing as oppositional identifiers. The increasingly audible integration between what were previously ethnic enclaves refigures blackness in a more transnational sense, perhaps bringing hip-hop's expression more in line with a pan-African articulation of "modern blackness," as Deborah Thomas calls it, which Jamaicans in Jamaica had long been proposing through their own embrace and "selective appropriation" of African American styles.<sup>9</sup> Ironically, once Jamaicanness, as embodied in reggae musical style, becomes such a common feature of New York-based hip-hop, it almost recedes in audibility. One begins to hear a Jamaican accent as a New York accent, or a black accent or a more general hip-hop accent.

A decade after *Criminal Minded*, Mos Def would channel the sounds of Jamaica via the Bronx to make a Brooklyn-based statement about hip-hop that many listeners would hear as pure hip-hop classicism—a testament to the deep degree to which, by the late 1990s, the hip-hop lexicon had absorbed a reggae accent. On Black Star's "Definition" (1998), Mos Def brings a dancehall-indebted style to his flow, employing steady, staccato rhythms, a sing-song delivery,

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## Capturing Sound and Making Beats

Writings on the intersections of music and technology represent a significant new growth industry in musicology, as amply demonstrated by two recent publications, Mark Katz's *Capturing Sound: How Technology has Changed Music* (University of California Press, 2005; \$19.95) and Joseph G. Schloss's *Making Beats: The Art of Sample-Based Hip-Hop* (Wesleyan University Press, 2004; \$24.95). Katz's *Capturing Sound* represents an emerging musicology that is equally at home with the popular and the classical, with art and its institutions as well with music of everyday life, and with both traditional musicological approaches and the methods of ethnomusicology and cultural studies. The book concisely covers an astonishing range of topics linked to the rise of recording technology over the last century, including violin technique, the phonograph and American musical life, jazz improvisation, Grammophonmusik during the years of the Weimar Republic, turntablism and DJ battles, the techniques and ethics of digital sampling, and the complexities of copyright in the age of the internet. Some chapters are focused discussions of a single topic, such as the carefully documented study of vibrato, while others are structured more as collections of case studies, such as the chapter on sampling, in which Public Enemy, Fatboy Slim, and Paul Lansky rub shoulders.

Unifying the diversity of topics is a set of seven interrelated concepts connected to the rise of sound recording technology that together comprise what Katz calls the "phonograph effect": tangibility, portability, invisibility, repeatability, temporality, receptivity, and manipulability. Perhaps most significant is the degree to which we have become acculturated to all these so that they no longer strike us as strange. For example, Katz's category of "invisibility" refers to the fact that much listening—even in the age of DVDs and MTV—is to disembodied voices. He traces how musicians have compensated for this loss with examples ranging from Milli Vanilli's lip-syncing scandal to the rise of violin vibrato, that among other functions "could offer a greater sense of the performer's presence on record, conveying to unseeing listeners what body language and facial expressions would have communicated in concert" (p. 93).

Katz's approach is primarily historical, drawing on an impressive array of documentation from recording archives, advertising, and literary sources, but there are ethnographic elements, especially in the chapter on DJ battles. Throughout the text, Katz displays an admirable concern for the different perspectives of the composer, performer, and the listener. He thus considers the unexpected ways people use technology, including the do-it-yourself phonograph letters sent at the turn of the century, the impact of recording on

music education, the rituals of home listening, and the gendered context of the hi-fi aficionado. With its vivid and engaging writing style, the wide range of topics, and the accompanying CD with recorded examples for many chapters, the book will be an ideal text for courses on music and technology. Particularly useful are the clear explanations of gear and technologies, including sampling, MP3 compression, as well as the best analysis I have read of a DJ battle routine. Also excellent for class use will be his discussion of issues of race, gender, and economics in connection with the vocal sample by Camille Yarbrough in Fatboy Slim's "Praise You" (both tracks are included on the CD). While the book invites a general readership, there is considerable depth to the discussion, and every scholar will find much that is new here, supported by an extensive and up-to-date bibliography.

The idea of "manipulability" which Katz explores from the perspectives of turntablism, Grammophonmusik, and what he calls "the art of transformation" (p. 156) in sampled-based music, is the central topic in Joseph Schloss's *Making Beats*. This book is the first extended study of sampling techniques from the perspective of those hip-hop "producers" who create music primarily from loops and layers of short digital samples of previously recorded music. His approach is ethnographic based on participant observations with a considerable number of producers, starting in Seattle and then branching out to urban centers throughout the U.S. Much of the text consists of transcriptions of Schloss's interviews with the producers, conducted between 1998 and 2003. Schloss makes clear his deep involvement with, and loyalty to, the community of producers, writing "the core of this book is concerned

with the aesthetic, moral, and social standards that sample-based hip-hop producers have articulated with regard to the music they produce" (p. 12).

Perhaps the most striking feature of the book, in contrast to much popular music scholarship, is Schloss's emphasis on the producers' aesthetic values. He challenges approaches to hip-hop that have seen it as a product of general social and cultural forces of oppression and resistance, stressing instead the individual agency of the deejays and producers who created it. The main contribution of the book is its documentation of the producers' drive for innovation within a carefully transmitted and continually reconstructed tradition, and their encyclopedic knowledge of—and ideally ownership of—the essential discography. Indeed he points out the close connection of "hip-hop's celebration of the solitary genius," often working alone in his home studio, to the notion of the classical composer. He



New York DJs  
Photo by Henry Chalfant

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# Singing Ives

In his self-published collection of *114 Songs* (1922), Charles Ives reintroduced himself as a professional composer to a wide audience of performers and peers. During the two decades after walking away from a promising compositional career, Ives had developed an increasingly eclectic style that is apparent from the first page of his song collection. One moment he gleefully attacks traditional harmony (for example, in the massed clusters of “Majority,” which opens *114 Songs*), while other songs revert to dreamy impressionism (“Evening”), anti-Romantic modernism (“The Cage”) and nostalgic nationalism (“Down East”). Ives even deploys a quaint, unironic late Victorian parlor style in classroom resettings of European art songs (“Ich Grolle Nicht”) and in much later transferences of the field-and-flower imagery into the domestic space of his wife Harmony and daughter Edith (“Two Little Flowers”).<sup>1</sup> Each song crystallizes a musical voice, the collection comprising a series of diverse miniatures improbably bundled together and naïvely, provocatively, and insistently offered to the world.

Even as the compositional range of *114 Songs* testifies to Ives’s versatility, the printed versions of the songs have been notoriously unreliable—that is, until now. More than eighty years after the first appearance of *114 Songs*, Ives’s often brilliant but problematically transmitted solo songs have found their ideal editor. H. Wiley Hitchcock’s long-awaited volume *Charles Ives, 129 Songs* (A-R Editions, 2004; \$250) offers the first painstaking critical scholarly edition of *114 Songs*, supplemented with fifteen songs drawn from later publications and select manuscript sources: thirteen additional songs printed in subsequent years and two complete “songs without words” found among the manuscripts, as well as an alternative setting of “My Native Land.” Not included are fifty-four songs edited earlier by John Kirkpatrick.

The high price of the volume is justifiable given the wealth and quality of the material. For performers, scholars and students, this volume offers a previously impossible ideal. Ives’s completed, published songs are bound together in one volume for ease of comparison, study and performance, in reliable and musically sensitive editions with excellent reproductions and an essay of monographic proportions.

Hitchcock’s introductory essay, “Ives as Songwriter and Lyricist,” offers a thorough and thought-provoking analysis of Ives’s song “types” and his role as both lyricist and song-text “editor.” Nearly eighty pages of copious critical reports summarize the relevant editorial issues, while particularly significant later revisions by Ives are represented in the scores as cue-size notes and shaded ossia (for example, in “The Rainbow”). Concordance tables relate all earlier publications to the present, and beautifully

rendered song texts, both in English and in careful translations, will certainly prove invaluable to singers in preparing programs.

As Hitchcock explains in his introductory essay, the many musical and textual errors in Ives’s published songs stem not from a laissez-faire attitude towards notation, nor from a much-overstated desire to leave his works open to further revision and participatory composition. From an early stage, Ives appears to have invested in creating clean copies of his songs, either in his own hand or through hired copyists, and his employment of the Schirmer company to create professional engravings of the *114 Songs* continued this effort. Nonetheless, the original editions of *114 Songs* and the other published collections are riddled with mistakes. Ives’s lack of experience in proofing and correcting his own publications was part of the problem, while the absence of an active editorial intermediary for the later collections continued and sometimes magnified the errors. Hitchcock further suggests that the printers at Schirmer were probably German born, thus explaining many

of the errors in text.

But in addition to these problems stemming from the practicality of publication, I would suggest another source for Ives’s notational “errors.” In a work such as “On the Antipodes,” Ives attempted to bridge written and performative traditions, transcriptive and prescriptive notation, drawing on an aural ideal that was American, not European, in origin. He wrestled with copyists and engravers who misread his phrase slurs on the salty line “[Sometimes Nature’s nice and sweet, as a little pansy,] and sometimes ‘it ain’t,’” (mm. 18-19), that is to

be sung “between a shout and a drawl.” Hitchcock restores Ives’s slurs and realigns text and accompaniment, which will offer the performer more specific directions in conjunction with the ensuing decades of recordings, and performances.

While the impetus for such alterations is clearly outlined in the critical reports, some of Hitchcock’s other decisions could benefit from further elaboration. In “The Cage,” Hitchcock changes a central line (“only when the keeper came around with meat,” mm. 45-55) from its original notation in sharps to flats, on the basis that flat notation “maintain[s] the whole-tone collection complementary to that of [mm.] 21-44” (p. 429). Yet the manuscript source and all later printings have the same line notated in sharps, possibly signaling that Ives wanted to emphasize that the pitch content of this line balances the opening and closing passages of the song, effectively creating three symmetrical blocks, or “bars,” that structure the piece. Here, Hitchcock’s editorial decision appears to alter the work’s symmetrical layout without clear recourse to any corrections or additions by Ives.

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Excerpt from Charles Ives's *The Cage*  
Courtesy of A-R Editions

## Diversifying American Pop

“The history of American popular music,” write Larry Starr and Christopher Waterman, “is best thought of, not as a single story told in a single voice, but as a variegated and continually shifting landscape, characterized by the complex interaction of various styles, performers, audiences, and institutions.” In charting this diverse terrain for their book *American Popular Music: From Minstrelsy to MTV* (Oxford University Press, 2003; \$69.95), Starr and Waterman rely on a similarly eclectic range of expertise. Starr, a professor of music history at the University of Washington, has published books on Charles Ives and Aaron Copland, and it is worth noting that the title to his book on Ives, *A Union of Diversities*, could have served equally well as a subtitle to the current volume. Waterman, a professional jazz bassist, anthropologist, and ethnomusicologist, is Professor of World Arts and Cultures at UCLA, and has written *Jùjú: A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Music* (1990). Bringing their various strengths to the task, Starr and Waterman achieve a remarkably well-balanced and thorough survey.

As the authors point out on the first page of their preface, the interdisciplinary nature of *American Popular Music*, which combines “the study of cultural and social history on the one hand, and the analytical study of musical style on the other” (p. vii), distinguishes it in its field. Starr and Waterman’s seamless union of two potentially conflicting orientations, the historical and analytical, should be as instructive to denizens of popular music studies journals, conferences, and listservs as it is enlightening to the book’s non-specialist target audience. The attempt to achieve such a balance has exercised scholars of popular music for the past quarter century, during which time pop has emerged from its once ghettoized position in the ranks of musicological subject matter to become a hot topic. It is this rise from oblivion that has engendered the kind of college-level popular music survey for which *American Popular Music* would be an excellent textbook.

If the “diversities” of American popular music—ranging from nineteenth-century minstrelsy through twentieth-century Tin Pan Alley song, swing, blues, country, doo-wop, rock ‘n’ roll, heavy metal, punk, new wave, rap, reggae, and techno—are self-apparent, ways in which these disparate strands might be understood to constitute a “union” may be less so. To that end, Starr and Waterman identify several “themes and streams” in their opening chapter, narrative threads and sources of influence that span the chronological divide from Steven Foster to Ani DiFranco, offering some sense of diachronic continuity to an otherwise dizzying array of styles and milieus. These themes include “Listening,” “Music and Identity,” “Music and Technology,” “The Music Business,”

and “Centers and Peripheries,” and these are by no means mutually exclusive. Thus can the “long, complicated history of white fascination with black music” (p. 453) including the music of minstrelsy, Paul Whiteman, Bill Haley, the Beatles, and the Beastie Boys be understood in the thematic contexts of Music and Identity, Centers and Peripheries, and the Music Business. While these monikers are only explicitly rearticulated in the book’s conclusion, their presence as an organizing principle is felt throughout and infuses the narrative with nuance.

Starr and Waterman resist essentialist arguments and tired standard tropes. About the common distinction between black and white music, they observe: “The very fact that Americans speak of black and white music as though these were self-evident, well-defined entities stems from a particular history of racial segregation—and from the so-called Jim Crow laws designed during the early twentieth century to prevent racial commingling in the American South” (p. 453).

This tendency to deal unblinkingly with sensitive issues extends to their treatment of gender and sexuality, politics, race, and ethnicity in relation to such contrasting artistic personae as those of Merle Haggard, Ice Cube and k.d. lang.

Listening is the central unifying theme of *American Popular Music*, which comes packaged with two CDs of musical examples, representing only a fraction of the many songs and recordings invoked over the course of the book. It is in considering specific songs and styles that Starr and Waterman’s interdisciplinary approach shines the brightest, as neither technical detail, nor social significance, nor the ever-elusive “meaning,” in all its

myriad guises, are treated as secondary. Listening examples are treated in a number of ways, from brief mentions that last a sentence or two, to multiple-page “Listening and Analysis” sections, complete with listening charts. Like the rest of the book, these detailed accounts are written in a lively, engaging manner, and routinely present fresh insights on familiar material. After describing the unconventional formal structure of The Supremes’ “You Can’t Hurry Love,” the authors deftly observe that:

All this play with form would be just so much intellectual busywork if it didn’t reflect on the meaning of the song. “You Can’t Hurry Love” is a song about the importance of waiting. Formally, the song keeps us guessing—waiting for clarification for the functional relationships among the different sections. (p. 243)

The analyses do without musical notation, and technical terms that appear in boldface are defined in a glossary.

One of the few shortcomings about *American Popular Music* concerns the accompanying audio examples. The CDs are at times



*The Supremes*

## Diversifying American Pop (continued)

painfully incomplete, due of course to licensing restrictions and cost as the authors acknowledge in the preface, and even for some of the larger analyses the reader will have to find recordings elsewhere. In the age of iTunes, however, this absence is a diminishing inconvenience. A future edition would benefit from a discography and a list of listening examples in addition to the list of CD tracks, which is provided.

These points aside, *American Popular Music: From Minstrelsy to MTV* is a tremendous accomplishment. A vast array of styles and contexts are skillfully brought together in a coherent and thoroughly readable narrative, and the authors' delight in their subject matter is palpable on every page. For the student, teacher, or general reader interested in pop, this book unquestionably becomes the definitive survey text.

—Daniel Sonenberg  
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## Capturing Sound and Making Beats (continued)

compares the epicurean pleasure producers get from a good sample to that of “a wine connoisseur savoring a fine vintage” (p. 144).

Schloss is clearly aware that not all readers will welcome an approach that would seem to return to the explicit and implicit values of the “old musicology,” and he acknowledges the gendered framework of the largely male club of producers and even the competing tendencies toward hipness and nerdishness (p. 16) inherent in many of the activities that define a deejay, in particular the obsessive record collecting. The resemblance to the “great man” approach is balanced by his insistence of placing aesthetic concerns in the context of a study of the ethical and moral code of the producers. Many of the rules, such as the prohibition of sampling other hip-hop records or something that has already been sampled (except in cases of self-conscious homage, parody, or extensive reworking), have to do with avoiding practices that would make it too easy, and thus undercut the elements of skill, technique, and knowledge that are most valued in the community.

Despite the book's subtitle, Schloss does not discuss individual compositions in detail, and while he describes the basic technique of building up a composition from the addition and subtraction of layers, his real interest is the factors that go into making the basic “beat.” Though he does employ graphic means of illustrating techniques of chopping up a sample, he rejects the use of transcriptions on the grounds that they may potentially violate producers' secrecy about sources, and because of their deficiency in capturing the sonic qualities of most interest to producers (p. 13). A unifying theme in many of the chapters is the central importance to producers of the aesthetic quality of the sample, thus leading

Schloss to challenge interpretations of sampling in terms of postmodern pastiche. He also questions those that would read ironic intention into the use of samples from unlikely sources such as Hall and Oates or Grand Funk Railroad, writing “producers are not particularly concerned with using samples to make social, political, or historical points” (p. 146).

Because the book is largely about sound, a CD with sample tracks or a companion web page would have been very useful since much of the music discussed will not be readily available to readers. While he does discuss some details of the actual gear producers use, as well as the ramifications of effects such as rhythmic “quantization,” it would also have been helpful to have included a more extensive exploration of the actual characteristics of the hardware and software and the ways in which these capabilities and limitations have helped to create the aesthetic of sample-based hip-hop.

He describes the creation of beats from samples as “serving to ‘Africanize’ musical material by reorganizing melodic material in accordance with specific African preferences such as cyclic motion, call and response, repetition and variation, and ‘groove’” (p. 138). The notion of an African American “compositional aesthetic” (p. 33) or “cultural outlook” (p. 200) is a central, if undertheorized, aspect of Schloss's argument, particularly in the context of the degree to which he argues that the community of producers is “race blind.” In his interview transcriptions, he intentionally does not identify the race of the speaker, arguing that the “rules of hip-hop are African American but one need not be African American to understand or follow them” (p. 10), and even more strongly, “all other producers—regardless of race—make African American hip-hop” (p. 9).

In the introduction, Schloss confronts the issue of race by describing his own background as a white Jewish American (p. 9ff.), and at several points in the book he does try to establish what he means by “African American expressive styles” from the perspective of signifying (p. 159ff.), the groove (p. 138ff.), and the work of pioneering deejays (p. 31ff.). But such definitions do not fully answer questions about how the limits of hip-hop are determined. While he does establish that being “race blind” is a feature of the community of producers he studies, there are obviously major issues that need to be further pursued about the implications of these attitudes in a society where not all members have the same options of adopting cultural personae. He also justifies not dealing with race by arguing against the existence of a “white or Latino style of hip-hop production” (p. 9), but as the growing literature on hip-hop around the world suggests, the genre does seem to have the capacity of developing many different dialects.

As these books by Katz and Schloss demonstrate, a focus on technological and scientific innovations can be a powerful tool for understanding the interrelationships of music to its social and cultural contexts. Recent publications by Paul Theberge, Timothy Taylor, and Georgina Born, along with an explosion of related literature in fields, are showing how much we are shaped by the tools we use, just as we are finding ever new ways to use them.

—Joseph Auner  
Stony Brook University

## Henry Flynt (continued)

figures like Flynt can expand to engage larger social structures, and to offer broader insights on how the history of cultural practices is written.

—Benjamin Piekut  
Columbia University

*Editors' note: For more information about Henry Flynt and his music, visit <[www.henryflynt.org](http://www.henryflynt.org)>.*

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Henry Flynt, interview with author, 2 November 2004.

<sup>2</sup> For the following biographical passages, I am relying on Flynt, interviews with author, 2 November 2004, 8 December 2004, and 1 April 2005. Also see Alan Licht, "The Raga 'n' Roll Years," *The Wire* (October 2004), 26-29; and Ian Nagoski, "That High, Dronesome Sound," *Signal to Noise* (Winter 2002), 50-53.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Charters, *The Country Blues* (Rinehart, 1959).

<sup>4</sup> Flynt, interview with author, 2 November 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Examples can be found on *New American Ethnic Music*, vols. 1-3, Recorded CDs 003, 006, and 007; *Back Porch Hillbilly Blues*, vols. 1 and 2, Locust Music CDs 14 and 16; and *Graduation and Other New Country and Blues Music*, Ampersand ampere8.

<sup>6</sup> Many of these songs were collected, mastered, and released in 2004 as the album *I Don't Wanna* (Locust Music CD 39).

<sup>7</sup> One track, "You Are My Everlovin,'" had been released on a cassette in the 1980s. *Henry Flynt*, Edition Hundertmark, Köln, 1986.

<sup>8</sup> The text was published in full in Flynt, *Blueprint for a Higher Civilization* (Multhipla Edizioni, 1975).

<sup>9</sup> Flynt, "On Superior Obscurity" (unpublished manuscript in author's possession, 1979), 5.

<sup>10</sup> See n. 3.

<sup>11</sup> An image of the concert announcement appears on Flynt's website: [http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/artwork\\_images/43.jpg](http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/artwork_images/43.jpg).

<sup>12</sup> See Flynt, "Essay: Concept Art," in *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, ed. La Monte Young (La Monte Young and Jackson Mac Low, 1963), and Flynt, "La Monte Young in New York, 1960-1962," in *Sound and Light: La Monte Young Marian Zazeela*, eds. William Duckworth and Richard Fleming, 44-97 (Bucknell University Press, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> This chronology remains a bit hazy. Flynt recalls the trip occurring in May 1962, but *Workers World* published nothing on this subject until 25 May 1963, when the paper ran a story called "I Saw the Birth of Freedom in Greensboro, N.C." by "Charles Henry." (Many of the paper's writers adopted pseudonyms; in 1964, Flynt wrote under the name "Henry Stone.") It seems most likely that Flynt visited Greensboro in May 1963 after leaving Boston and before moving to New York City permanently.

<sup>14</sup> "WLIB: Opinions. Fwanyanga Mulkita, Zambia's U.N. representative, and Henry Flynt, author of 'Behind the Crisis Over Zimbabwe,' discuss the racial crisis in South Africa." "Radio: Today's Leading Events," *New York Times* (3 July 1966), 50.

<sup>15</sup> Harold Schonberg, "Music: Stockhausen's 'Originale' Given at Judson," *New York Times* (9 September 1964), 46. Flynt, *Communists Must Give Revolutionary Leadership in Culture* (Worldwide Publishers, 1965).

<sup>16</sup> Flynt, interview by Kenneth Goldsmith, WFMU, East Orange, N.J., 26 February 2004.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Flynt, interview with author, 2 November 2004.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Cardew's polemic *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism* was published in 1974, also the year he joined the radical rock/folk group People's Liberation Music. The British composer apparently was aware of Flynt's early anti-art activities—in *Blueprint for a Higher Civilization*, Flynt quotes a postcard from the English composer, dated 7 June 1963: "Dear Mr. Flynt, ...Since I may be depending on organized culture for my loot & livelihood I can wish you only a limited success in your movement..." Flynt, *Blueprint*, 73.

<sup>21</sup> This list would span generations, and include Henry Cowell, John Cage, Lou Harrison, La Monte Young, and Pauline Oliveros, to name a few.

<sup>22</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Columbia University Press, 1983), 81.

## Hip-Hop's Jamaican Accent (continued)

consistent end rhymes, and stuttered singing. He borrows the same melody that KRS-One borrowed from Yellowman, and throws in some Jamaican slang for good measure—e.g., "Lord have mercy," "Follow me nuh." Ironically, "Definition" takes hip-hop soul-searching as its subject as it centrally employs a sample of BDP's "Remix For P Is Free" which happens to contain the same sample that BDP selectively appropriated from Jamaica's heavily versioned "Mad Mad" riddim.<sup>10</sup> Riddim, like *beat* in hip-hop parlance, is Jamaican shorthand for a singer's or DJ's musical accompaniment in a particular song, which may include a distinctive bassline, drum beat, and/or other recognizable musical figures. Such layered allusion, however, stops for many listeners at *Criminal Minded* precisely because BDP's accented album has attained a canonical status, a fact which almost by default commits KRS-One's voluminous borrowings from dancehall songs directly to hip-hop's vocabulary since the majority of listeners at this point lack acquaintance with the Jamaican originals.

On Mos Def's solo album, *Black on Both Sides* (1999), nearly every track reveals another way that Jamaican language, music, or culture texture life in Brooklyn. On a song called "Hip-hop" the rapper makes his linguistic strategies explicit, "Used to speak the King's English," he admits, "but caught a rash on my lips, so now I chat just like dis." Tellingly, the alternative to the King's English is not simply figured here as African American vernacular speech but as patois-inflected slang, evoked by the use of the Jamaican-associated term "chat" and the pronunciation of *this* as *dis*—which, of course, is a pronunciation shared by African American and Caribbean dialects, an overlap that would not be lost on a native Brooklynite. Mos Def's polyglot style renders Brooklyn in what he calls a "native tongue," which includes, in addition to some mellifluous Spanish, the idioms of thirty years of hip-hop and thirty years of reggae. With no shortage of subtlety, Mos Def portrays a place where hip-hop and reggae, and African Americans and West Indians, reside in intimacy. While his music's form gives shape to the transnational black society in which he resides, its content calls for "all black people to be free."<sup>11</sup> Mos Def maps out an intensely local place in his music, but a local place that is always already familiar with the foreign, where things Jamaican are more mundane than exotic, and where race matters more than national origin. Mos Def's fluid figuration of a hybrid Brooklyn, which is nonetheless "black on both sides," articulates a sense of nation and belonging that surpasses earlier and narrower conceptions of community. He makes hip-hop's Jamaican accent clear, at least long enough to call for a rewind, where repeat listenings reveal new worlds of meaning, creating community by revising race.

Hearing hip-hop's Jamaican accent and noting its shifts and slurs over time demonstrate that music mediates social relations as it draws and re-draws the lines of community. We can see, and hear, how different conceptions of blackness articulate with, and disarticulate from, each other in different contexts at different times, as well as how hip-hop's racial politics have been informed by "foreign" notions of blackness as much as by mainstream American racial ideologies. The audible transformation of New York's soundscape reflects new social circumstances as it gives voice to new patterns of identification, negotiation, and assimilation. The

## Singing Ives (continued)

musical record can thus enhance our understanding of the historical record, supplementing a dominant narrative that proceeds all too neatly and tends to obscure conflicts as well as connections.

—Wayne Marshall  
University of Wisconsin, Madison

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jeff Chang's *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-hop Generation* (St. Martin's Press, 2005) proves the exception to this pattern and signals a growing awareness of the centrality of Caribbean music and migrants to the history of hip-hop.

<sup>2</sup> See Rachel L. Swarns, "'African-American' Becomes a Term for Debate," *New York Times*, 29 August 2004, for a discussion about the ambivalence and hostility about foreign-born blacks (or their U.S.-born children) claiming the title "African American."

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, 72.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 68, 72.

<sup>5</sup> Orlando Patterson, personal communication, Fall 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Mary C. Waters, *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities* (Russell Sage Foundation, 1999), 36.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>8</sup> Liner notes, Yellowman, *Look How Me Sexy: Reggae Anthology* (VP Records, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Deborah Thomas, *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica* (Duke University Press, 2004), 14.

<sup>10</sup> For more about the "Mad Mad" riddim, see my paper "Mad Mad Migrations," presented at the conference Caribbean Soundscapes, New Orleans (November 2004), available at <<http://www.wayneandwax.com/academic/mad-mad-paper.html>>.

<sup>11</sup> "Umi Says," *Black on Both Sides* (Rawkus, 1999).

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## For the Record

In the Fall 2004 issue of the *Newsletter*, our review of Elijah Wald's *Josh White: Society Blues* cited the paperback edition, published by Routledge. The original hardcover edition was published by the University of Massachusetts Press in 2000.

Back page photo of Dinah Washington from the Scott Alan Murphy Collection, <<http://www.devoted.to/oldies>>



The origins of the songs' dates remain unclear as well. In the critical reports, most dates are drawn from James Sinclair's *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Music of Charles Ives*, but others are drawn from the consensually derived dates from the Ives worklist in the latest *Grove*, prepared by J. Peter Burkholder, Sinclair, and myself, which represents the most recent re-examination of Ives's dates. It is unclear what criteria were used in choosing one date over another, and in at least one case the date appears to derive from neither source. For the song "The Children's Hour," Hitchcock offers a date of "?Ca. 1902-07," contradicting both Sinclair's date of 1901 (which maintains Ives's original date for the work) and the *Grove* worklist date of 1912-13 (pp. 393 and 425). In the critical reports, Hitchcock notes that Ives used a Longfellow text including the line "Edith with golden hair," and states that the song "prefigures astonishingly Edith Osborne Ives, adopted in 1916 as the Iveses' daughter, and her blond locks."

One wonders whether Ives indeed anticipated the gender, name, and hair color of his adopted child up to thirteen years before she joined the family (the Iveses met Edith in 1915 and formally adopted her in 1916). The date offered here ("?Ca. 1902-07") assigned to the song perhaps suggests Hitchcock's and Sinclair's reluctance to accept that Ives could have written such an impressionistic but tonally well-behaved work in 1915 or later. The consensual date of 1912-1913 offered in the *Grove* worklist is still probably two to three years too early, but it is within a more likely range of the Iveses' first meeting Edith. Given Ives's tendency to safely compartmentalize his domestic settings from the more explosive modernist works underway at the same time, a more direct connection between "The Children's Hour" and Edith Ives seems clearly defensible.

The co-existing and contradictory dates of "The Children's Hour" highlight the difficulty in assigning any single reliable date to much of Ives's music. For this reason, and perhaps more importantly for the purpose of easy access by performers and scholars, an alphabetical rather than chronological ordering in the volume would have been preferable. While the alphabetical concordance offered in Table 4 (pp. xxiv-xxvi, the first two without page numbers) connects the songs to numbered entries in the Sinclair catalogue, the original *114 Songs* (where relevant), and the current collection, the incorporation of page numbers would have rendered the table more helpful.

Such issues aside, one of the many accomplishments of Hitchcock's edition is its potential to spur further reconsiderations of this central portion of Ives's compositional output. This remarkable volume stands to attain the iconic status already enjoyed by Ives's songs themselves. Hitchcock, A-R Editions, and MUSA must be commended for their vision, patience, and commitment in bringing this extraordinary and necessary project to fruition.

—Gayle Sherwood Magee  
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

### Note

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Susan Youens for making the connection between the resettings of Romantic Lieder texts and Ives's later "flower" settings.



*Dinah Washington*

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