

Chapter 1

Introduction

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Music is an integral part of the human experience. Most of us listen to music on a daily basis, either actively by choice or passively as we are exposed to music in locations where we travel, work, and relax. Some are even involved in the production of music, either as a source of recreation or as professionals. The acts of consuming or producing music are deeply meaningful to many people—they tell us a great deal about who we are, the culture in which we are embedded, and the values to which we adhere. Considering the importance that is placed on music in most cultures, it should come as no surprise that music is a legitimate topic of academic inquiry. Yet, when those of us who are engaged in research on music discuss our work, let's say in some social setting such as the proverbial cocktail party, quite a few eyebrows are raised. Sometimes that raised eyebrow indicates the opinion that music, especially popular music, has merely amusement and entertainment value and is, therefore, not worthy of further contemplation, at least of an academic nature. But more often the interest that is generated and expressed by others is genuine. That is, the endeavor of analyzing the importance and meaning of music has relevance for a lot of people beyond a small group of researchers. In any case, we are lucky to be able to think and write about music as part of our job description. As the editors of this volume we can probably speak for all the contributors, when we say that we feel strongly about the music of which we write, and hopefully that passion will be evident throughout the book as you read it.

This is a book about music and geography. The two are intimately connected and that is why, first and foremost, the volume is written from a spatial perspective. You can see in the biographical sketches of the authors that 17 of 19 who have contributed to this book are academic geographers. However, the connection between music, space, and place is interdisciplinary in nature, and the methodologies utilized by music geographers overlap to a substantial degree with approaches in sociology, cultural studies, communication, ethnomusicology, and other related disciplines. We believe, therefore, that this book will be useful to people both inside and outside geography.

This edited volume contains new research in the field of music geography. We focus especially on contemporary popular music with case studies from multiple locations around the world—the United States, the Caribbean, Canada, Australia, and Great Britain. There is an emphasis on the United States; about half of the chapters deal with aspects of American music geography. Most of the contributors are from, or living in, the United States and know its music best.

The aim of the book is to interpret the meaning of music as it pertains to spaces and places. Popular music, in this sense, is a cultural form that actively produces geographic discourses and can be used to understand broader social relations and trends, including identity, ethnicity, attachment to place, cultural economies, social activism, and politics. In no way, however, can we claim to cover comprehensively the breadth of the discipline of music geography. As an edited volume, the book is limited to the topics chosen by the individual contributors. At the same time, the authors clearly bring multiple perspectives on the relationships among music and geography; perspectives that are eclectic in terms of research methodology and underlying philosophy.

A major reason why we decided to write this book is that there are no recent edited volumes on music geography. It seemed that it was time to collect a series of new essays in a book format. The research in this book is inspired by, and indebted to, music geography and related works that have appeared during the last couple of decades. It is customary in an introduction to position a book by summarizing existing research. However, what follows is not intended to be a general overview of music geography; that has been done elsewhere in article format (Kong 1995), in encyclopedia entries (Bell forthcoming), and in introductions to special topical issues of journals (Carney 1998). Instead, the following overview introduces recent full-length books on popular music that fully or partially employ a spatial perspective. We have done this, not only to give credit to the writings that have inspired us, but also to serve as a guide for the interested reader who wants to know more about music geography.

Perhaps the most important book in contemporary music geography is John Connell and Chris Gibson's (2002) *Sound Tracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place*. As the first thorough exploration of the "new" cultural geography of popular music, it is a contemporary milestone that synthesizes existing knowledge on music and geography. It not only examines general connections between music, place, and cultural identity, but it also offers detailed perspectives on scenes, the relationship between the local and the global, and traditional geographic areas of investigation such as migration and mobility in a musical context. Given the prominent status of *Sound Tracks*, we are pleased to offer a new essay by John Connell and Chris Gibson—"Ambient Australia: Music, Meditation, and Tourist Places" in Chapter 5.

The term "identity" appears in the subtitle of *Sound Tracks*, and in fact a series of books investigates how different forms of identity are shaped by a combination of music and geographic factors. An important avenue of research is how cultural identities are formed within increasingly global cultural flows. Mark Slobin's (1993) *Subcultural Sounds* explores how musical subcultures are central to such identity formation in multiethnic Western societies. Andy Bennett's (2000) *Popular Music and Youth Culture: Music Identity and Place* contains research on the construction of young people's identity in relation to music and locality mainly from an ethnographic and sociological point of view. It investigates how music plays a role in the day-to-day lives of primarily European youth. Similarly, Martin

Stokes's (1997) *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place* examines how music is important in the making of identity and ethnicity. Stokes especially focuses on the role of music when regional and national identities are shaped, "postmodern" identity, the media, and evocations of place in music. Unlike *Sound, Society and the Geography of Popular Music*, Stokes's anthropologic perspective does not focus strongly on contemporary popular music. More recently Whiteley et al. have investigated the places and spaces where music is made and listened to in *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity* (2004). Discourses on identity and nationhood are explored; this time via case studies in Africa, Europe, Oceania and Caribbean. The authors provide perspectives on how music helps to communicate a shared feeling of kinship among diasporas and how rap and hip hop bring a sense of identity to minority groups, and how the music becomes a form of resistance to marginalization.

Other books have investigated distinctly geographic features of popular music. The concept of "scenes," for example, has been scrutinized. Scenes can be defined as locations where clusters of the production (artists and the music industry) and consumption (fans) of music come together to create distinct musical forms. Andy Bennett and Richard Peterson (2004) investigate music scenes and identify three archetypes—local, translocal, and virtual scenes—and provide several case studies in support of these distinctions. Some chapters in *Sound, Society and the Geography of Popular Music* further explore the changing concept of scenes as it moves away from being purely a local phenomenon to incorporating translocal and virtual elements in an increasingly interconnected world.

In Holly Kruse's (2003) *Site and Sound: Understanding Independent Music Scenes*, local "indie" scenes are investigated, especially in and around the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. The author explores the cultural and economic practices of local scenes and their dialectic relationship with the musical "mainstream" and the music industry. Kruse is also a contributor to *Sound, Society and the Geography of Popular Music* (Chapter 12), where she expands on her previously published research to explore the impact of the Internet revolution on aforementioned scenes.

Several books have been dedicated to case studies on specific scenes. Sara Cohen (1991) discusses the rock culture of Liverpool and how local bands work hard to make it. Another city that is strongly defined as a center of contemporary popular music is Manchester, which has been the object of a book-length treatment in Dave Haslam's (2000) *Manchester, England: The Story of a Pop Cult City*. In the United States, Barry Shanks's (1994) *Dissonant Identities*, which focused on Austin, Texas is perhaps the most significant case study of an American local scene.

Sometimes scenes are associated with a particular genre of music. The place-based nature of several genres is investigated in this book. In a previous text, Murray Forman (2002) looked at the discourse of rap and hip hop, and how it constructs spaces, both metaphoric and concrete, such as "ghetto," "the 'hood," and the "inner city." These spaces, as socio-spatial symbols, provide especially

African-Americans with an identity both on an individual and a collective level, and they have become central to hip hop authenticity. David Knight (2006) also investigates a particular music genre—classical music—and the cultural and physical landscapes that are portrayed in the music. The research in his *Landscapes and Music: Space, Place, and Time in the World's Great Music* deviates, of course, from *Sound, Society and the Geography of Popular Music* as it emphasizes classical rather than contemporary popular music. In a US context, George Carney has, for a long time, published *The Sounds of People and Places* that covers writings in American music geography on widely different music genres. The last edition was published in 2003, and, as an anthology, it primarily contained previously published articles.

A related approach is to study the music of a particular artist. For example, the greatest pop band of all time has been subjected to a geographic analysis in Robert Kruse's (2005) *A Cultural Geography of the Beatles: Representing Landscapes as Musical Texts*. Robert Kruse is also a contributor to our book, where he builds on his previous research by examining the spatial practices of John Lennon and Yoko Ono (see Chapter 2).

Other books have connected music with traditional themes in geography. Chris Gibson and John Connell recently (2004) investigated the relationship between a central area of study in geography—tourism—and how it is related to music. Although not a geographer, Adam Krims frequently utilizes the concepts of place and space when bringing together musical and urban change in *Music and Urban Geography* (2007). Krims maps not only how cities are represented in music, but also how urbanization shape new forms and functions of music.

Lastly, we need to mention an edited text by geographers Andrew Leyshon, David Matless, and George Revill, *The Place of Music* (1998), which contributed to the study of popular music from a contemporary cultural geographic perspective. *The Place of Music* is perhaps the publication that resembles *Sound, Society and the Geography of Popular Music* most closely, although it has a more distinct British emphasis.

This overview of existing publications offers a glimpse into the wide variety of perspectives and approaches that exist in music geography. We hope this edited book on the geography of popular music, written largely by geographers, will be a welcome addition. The different chapters in *Sound, Society and the Geography of Popular Music*, building and expanding on much of this research, are also varied in character with different theoretical points of departure and different thematic content in different geographic settings. The chapters are interrelated in multiple ways, but we have chosen to present the chapters organized into six themes with two or three chapters under each theme.

The first theme (“Music, Space, and Activism”) concerns the social activism of specific artists; not only how they use their music, but also various forms of media, to create “spaces of peace” (the media events of John Lennon and Yoko Ono) or “spaces of resistance” (the anti-capitalist stance of Billy Bragg).

The second theme is called “Tourism and Landscapes of Music” and emphasizes places that take on specific meanings in a sacred or quasi-religious fashion for the people who visit them. These can be pilgrimage landscapes where fans visually articulate discourses about heritage (Elvis’s Graceland), or the intersection between vernacular or ethnic cultures and the global tourism industry (in Australia) where the cultural politics of representation associated with “ambient” music have the capacity to transform places both discursively and materially.

The third theme (“Mapping Musical Texts”) utilizes textual or semiotic methods to analyze the memorialization of, and the meaning attached to, places as they are represented in music and lyrics. These linkages between physical landscapes, music and lyrics, and the popular perceptions of landscape are investigated in both California and the Caribbean heartland of reggae.

The fourth part of the book (“Place in Music/Music in Place”) looks at the relationship between specific artists or forms of music and the places from which they originate. In Havana, Cuba, the music embedded in the cityscape can be spatialized through maps and tours. Los Angeles is seen by some commentators as the quintessential postmodern metropolis, a cultural trend that is also reflected in the music of the Red Hot Chili Peppers. And, lastly, the national identity of Canada is reflected in the music and lyrics of the Ontario-based band the Rheostatics.

The fifth theme is called “Local Music in a Connected World” and it explores the geographic unevenness in both the production and consumption of music. On the consumption side, despite globalization and cultural homogenization trends, different local musical preference patterns still exist, such as in the case of Newfoundland, Canada, where Newfoundlanders both at home and in the diaspora connect with their homeland via local music over the Internet. Scenes in various locations, such as the alternative rock scene in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois and other large cities and college towns have also been transformed through communication technologies where now translocality may be as important as traditional proximity when explaining the existence and function of local scenes.

The sixth and final focus (“The Geography of Genres”) includes case studies that examine geographic perspectives on specific musical styles—hip hop, techno, and contemporary Christian pop music. In the cases of hip hop and techno, the origin of these styles is reinterpreted applying new theories and perspectives, while contemporary Christian music is approached spatially for the first time in this volume.

By organizing the chapters in this manner, we have highlighted some of the connections that exist between them; however, there are multiple connecting points as the reader will discover. In order to learn more about the individual chapters, preceding each of the six themes are introductions that we encourage the reader to turn to.

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