



# Play it Again: Cover Songs in Popular Music

Edited by George Plasketes, Auburn University, USA

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Covering—the musical practice of one artist recording or performing another composer's song—has always been an attribute of popular music. In 2009, the internet database Second Hand Songs estimated that there are 40,000 songs with at least one cover version. Some of the more common variations of this "appropriationist" method of musical quotation include traditional forms such as patriotic anthems, religious hymns such as Amazing Grace, Muzak's instrumental interpretations, Christmas classics, and children's songs. Novelty and comedy collections from parodists such as Weird Al Yankovic also align in the cover category, as does the "larcenous art" of sampling, and technological variations in dance remixes and mash-ups. Film and television soundtracks and advertisers increasingly rely on versions of familiar pop tunes to assist in marketing their narratives and products. The cover phenomenon in popular culture may be viewed as a postmodern manifestation in music as artists revisit, reinterpret and re-examine a significant cross section of musical styles, periods, genres, individual records, and other artists and their catalogues of works. The cover complex, with its multiple variations, issues, contexts, and re-contextualizations comprises an important and rich popular culture text. These re-recordings represent artifacts which embody artistic, social, cultural, historical, commercial, biographical, and novel meanings. Through homage, allusion, apprenticeship, and parody, among other modes, these diverse musical quotations express, preserve, and distribute popular culture, popular music and their intersecting historical narratives. Play it Again represents the first collection of critical perspectives on the many facets of cover songs in popular music.

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## About the Editor

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