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H-France Review Vol. 11 (September 2011), No. 213

Hugh Dauncey and Philippe Le Guern, eds., *Stereo: Comparative Perspectives on the Sociological Study of Popular Music in France and Britain*. Surrey and Burlington, Vt: Ashgate, 2011. xvi + 281 pp. Notes, bibliography and index. \$114.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-1-4094-0568-9.

Review by Jonathyne Briggs, Indiana University Northwest.

The study of popular music remains a frontier of French cultural history, as film and literature have previously received the lion's share of scholarly interest. More recently, however, French popular music has garnered attention from within and outside of France. Dauncey and Le Guern survey the growing body of literature with this collection of essays, which was originally published in French in 2008. A sequel of sorts to the 2003 collection on French popular music by Dauncey and Cannon, *Stereo* takes instead a comparative and somewhat historiographic approach, contextualizing the work done by French scholars on French popular music alongside that of British scholars investigating British popular music.[1] This comparative approach reveals striking differences in the approaches between the British and French, especially in terms of how these academics conceptualize popular music and the extent to which the French take into account aspects seemingly incidental to the British. These essays, which alternate between examinations of French and British popular music, suggest that the French have begun to take popular music seriously and in doing so offer important nuances to its study.

Dauncey's and Le Guern's introduction outlines the contributions of both British and French academics to the study of popular music in their respective countries. Certainly, the British have a more celebrated history of scholarship concerning popular music, dating from the 1970s and the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham. As the editors observe, the Birmingham School was deeply influenced by French sociologist Roland Barthes' conception of semiotics, and scholars such as Dick Hebdige and Stuart Hall applied French structuralism to their studies of the relationship between youth subcultures and popular music. The cultural studies within France, however, did not develop along a similar path, due to the primacy of Pierre Bourdieu's work and the notions of cultural legitimacy that permeated French academia. Although the serious study of popular music was not generally accepted among French scholars, a number of important works, including Paul Yonnet's pioneering *Jeux, modes et masses* and a collection by Patrick Mignon and Antoine Hennion from the early 1990s, illustrated the influence of British cultural studies in France. [2] Of greater import for the new generation of French scholars discussed in *Stereo* is the work of American sociologist of art Howard Becker, and the influence of his *Art Worlds* looms over the chapters concerning French popular music [3]. As a result, the work done in France during the 1990s and the 2000s show a divergence of interests concerning the object of study concerning popular music, a divergence rich in significance for Anglophone scholars.

The comparative approach of the collection provides a wonderful juxtaposition of the different research interests of French and British academics. A telling starting point is charted in G r me Guilbert's and Philippe Le Guern's chapter that outlines the difficulty in terminology concerning popular music in France. While Anglophone scholars have become comfortable using broad meta-categories as pop and rock music, French scholars have opted instead for the term *les musiques amplifi es*, which obscures the

fragmentation into different disciplines that has defined the study of popular music in France, or even *la musique actuelle*, which conflates all of the subgenres of popular music. Aspects of popular music, such as jazz and *chanson*, have received attention but as discrete genres, whereas rock, rap, and pop (*variétés* in France) are often subsumed into a single object of study. This approach reveals a distinction in French academic circles compared to British (and American) scholars who tend to examine discrete genres. Moreover, the term *les musiques amplifiées* suggests the role of technology in changing musical performance and reception, a concern that is central in much of the French scholarship and surprisingly absent in Anglophone scholarship.

The collection examines these differences by taking a series of topics—government intervention, the music economy, the role of the media, and the meaning of local music scenes—and investigating them within each national context. Surprisingly, there are many examples of overlap between the British and French examples in terms of government policies concerning popular music. David Looseley's work points out how the tradition of *dirigisme* in France operated within the realm of culture, eventually leading to the state's support of popular music production and dissemination after 1981.<sup>[4]</sup> Philippe Teillet's chapter outlines the continued transformation of state policy, especially with the passing of the Pelchat Amendment in 1994. Teillet concludes that the intervention of the state has not brought much international recognition to French artists but instead has been mainly a success at local and provincial levels (p. 72). As Martin Cloonan illustrates in his chapter, British policy tends to follow a similar path, defined by local initiatives under the Labour Party during its absence from national power during the 1980s and early 1990s (pp. 45-46). Perhaps because of the international recognition of British pop music, local initiatives are the area where the government can still play a major role. However, unlike the French case, the national government remains willing to use popular music, especially rock music, as a symbol of political power, as was the case with the relationship between Tony Blair's New Labour, Britpop, and Cool Britannia in the 1990s. With the ascendance of New Labour, the British government has played a greater role in popular music, although this role tends to be pragmatic rather than the more ideological approach of the French Ministry of Culture (p. 57). The differences between these two responses illustrate the different values placed on popular music in relation to national politics despite similarities in political practice.

Another important comparison is concerning the role of the media and the meaning of popular music in Britain and France. In Hervé Glevarec's chapter on French media, he introduces the important work of sociologist Antoine Hennion on the role of mediation in musical meaning. Hennion's work emphasizes the importance of negotiation and networking in establishing cultural interpretations, which are the product of interactions between producers, consumers, and intermediaries, including critics and broadcasters.<sup>[5]</sup> Glevarec sees the creation of radio formats in France during the 1980s in France as critical to the diversification of popular music styles, which echoes the debate over cultural democracy in France (p. 133). The British case again maybe more familiar to Anglophone listeners (the British Broadcasting Company remains an institution despite its initial rejection of popular music in the 1960s) and J. Mark Percival's chapter on the British media and popular music includes television. This was also an important aspect of music mediation in France but, unfortunately, French programs such as "Age tender et tête de bois" or the specials of Maritie and Gilbert Carpentier from the 1970s (referenced in the introduction) receive little attention in the collection.

This shortcoming perhaps underscores the role of *Stereo* primarily as a general introduction to the work of French scholarship on popular music rather than an exhaustive attempt to examine the comparative histories of popular music on both sides of the Channel. While the British examples do offer strong comparative points, it is the chapters on French popular music that reveal the valuable contributions of French scholars such as Le Guern, Glevarec, and Fabien Hein to the broader discussion of popular music. What the British chapters do well is to emphasize the different intellectual trajectory of French scholars. Although the chapters on France lack the narrative structure and depth of more recent works by Barbara Lebrun and Chris Tinker, they succeed in highlighting areas of future study and perhaps

more importantly identifying potential shortcomings in applying models from British cultural studies to the French case.[6] Furthermore, the extensive bibliography illustrates the vast corpus of recent literature concerning popular music, suggesting that the French contribution to popular music studies will only increase in the coming years.

#### LIST OF ESSAYS

Hugh Dauncey and Philippe Le Guern, "Tops of the Pops, or Gilbert and Maritie Carpentier? Way of Doing and Thinking Popular Music in Britain and France"

Simon Frith, "Writing the History of Popular Music"

Gérôme Guibert and Philippe Le Guern, "Charting the History of Amplified Musics in France"

Martin Cloonan, "Popular Music Policy in the UK"

Philippe Teillet, "Cultural Policies and Popular/Contemporary/Amplified Musics in France"

Mike Jones, "The UK Music Economy"

Dominique Sagot-Duvaurox, "The Economics of Music in France"

J. Mark Percival, "Mediation of Popular Music in the UK"

Hervé Glevarec, "Music and the Media in France: The Sociological Viewpoint"

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Philippe Le Guern, "Music Audiences, Cultural Hierarchies and State Interventionism: A Typically French Model?"

Josie Robson, "Is it Different for Girls? Unpacking Sheffield's 'Scene'"

Gérôme Guibert, "Local Music Scenes in France: Definitions, Stakes, Particularities"

#### NOTES

[1] Hugh Dauncey and Steve Cannon (eds.), *Popular Music in France from Chanson to Techno: Culture, Identity and Society* (Aldershot and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003).

[2] Paul Yonnet, *Jeux, modes et masses. La société française et le moderne, 1945-1985* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985) and Patrick Mignon and Antoine Hennion (eds.), *Rock, De l'histoire au mythe* (Paris: Anthropos, 1991).

[3] Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1982).

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[4] David Looseley, *The Politics of Fun: Cultural Policy and Debate in Contemporary France* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1995). See also Looseley, *Popular Music in Contemporary France: Authenticity, Politics, Debate* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003).

[5] Antoine Hennion, *La Passion musicale. Une sociologie de la médiation* (Paris: Métailié, 1993).

[6] Barbara Lebrun, *Protest Music in France: Production, Identity and Audiences* (Aldershot and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2009) and Chris Tinker, *Georges Brassens and Jacques Brel: Personal and Social Narratives in Post-war Chanson* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005).

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ISSN 1553-9172