

‘Shifting Ground’

A Study Day in Popular Music and
Publishing

Friday 29th January 2010
Oxford Brookes University

Headington Hill Campus
Buckley Building BG10

About the Popular Music Research Unit

The Popular Music Research Unit (PMRU) is the newest research group in the School of Arts and Humanities, founded at the beginning of this academic year 09-10. The unit's membership includes:

Dr Dai Griffiths

Principal Lecturer in Music and an internationally recognised and widely published popular musicologist, Dai was recently made Fellow of the Mannes Institute (New York), and is editorial advisor to three academic journals: *Popular Music*, *Music Analysis*, and *Radical Musicology*. His broad research interests include music analysis and critical musicology as they relate to popular music, and historical and theoretical topics in popular music and popular song. He has undertaken extensive examinations of Welsh popular music, and of the artists Radiohead and Elvis Costello.

Jan Butler

Lecturer in Popular Music, editorial manager for the journal *twentieth century music*, and member of IASPM and ASARP, Jan's research has been funded by the Society of Music Analysis and the AHRC. Her immediate research area is authenticity in 1960s American rock music, and she has recently completed an extensive study of The Beach Boys. Her other research interests include analysis of popular music production, music journalism and criticism, the music industry and its marketing, and popular music in film.

Lisa Busby

Early Career Fellow in Popular Music whose practice-led research has been performed and broadcast internationally, Lisa has won awards from the PRSF and AHRC. She is a composer and performer whose research as a practitioner deliberately challenges notions of discipline specific categorisation and dissemination. Specific areas of interest include the place of popular music in arts interdisciplinarity and its interaction with other media and disciplines, issues in contemporary electronic music, exploring and expanding the precedents of popular song form, uncovering new methodologies and frameworks for collaborative practice, and handmade and self published music packaging, zines, artists books and other forms of edition.

The PMRU was established to build on existing departmental strengths in the field. The outputs of the music department in the area of Popular Music were defined as 'world leading' by the RAE in 2008, and the goal of this new unit is to continue to produce outputs of an internationally recognised calibre but also a wider spectrum of research outputs (to incorporate for the first time practice-led outputs for example).

This new unit will provide a forum to investigate both contemporary and historical issues in the field of Popular Music. This can and does incorporate both traditionally disseminated textual research and practice-led research, touching on areas of musical analysis, critical musicology, performance, and composition and songwriting.

Given its connections to popular culture, the field of Popular Music is an inherently interdisciplinary one with strong links to film, poetry, art and design, and publishing. As such this unit is keen to develop links and build fruitful collaborative relationships with artists, academics and industry in other disciplines.

About our keynote speaker

Barney Hoskyns co-founded and editorially directs online music-journalism library Rock's Backpages (www.rocksbackpages.com). He has authored several books including *Across the Great Divide* (1993), *Waiting for the Sun* (1996), *Hotel California* (2006) and the Tom Waits biography *Lowside of the Road* (2009). Formerly US correspondent for *MOJO*, he currently contributes to *Uncut*, *The Observer* and other publications. He lives in southwest London.

About our panel

Dave Newton has had a varied career in music, in Oxford and beyond. From humble beginnings working behind the singles counter at the local Our Price store in 1987, he went on to set up a local music paper and a live music club night at the Jericho Tavern here in Oxford. Dave went on to manage Ride and continues to handle all the band's ongoing affairs, and also currently manages former lead singer/guitarist Mark Gardener.

In 1995 Dave set up a local music office in Oxford out of which Shifty Disco Records was born in 1997. The label has just celebrated its 13th anniversary with Dave now as the only original team member still involved. Current bands on the label include King Of Spain, My Device, The Race and Seagull Strange. Other businesses that have evolved out of this music office environment over recent years include online shop OxfordMusic.Net and grass-roots e-ticket company WeGotTickets.com - both of which Dave is a Director.

Bruce McClure co-founded Seed Records in 2000 with electronic music duo Posthuman and the aim of supporting a burgeoning electronic scene in London. In these early days Seed were well known for their tube station parties, 'UnderLondonground', as well as a variety of other notorious events in novel venues, most recently the Coronet Cinema. All Seed events did, and continue to, strive to showcase lesser known acts alongside more established ones.

In 2010 he now solely runs the label and continues to champion independent new music from a variety of electronic genres, in the broadest sense, letting his ears be the judge. If he likes it, he puts it out regardless of commercial viability and prides himself on achieving national press and airplay for his acts despite limited budgets. Recent output from the label includes Antoni Maiovvi (Germany), Eyes (US) and Sleeps in Oysters (UK). He has been an advocate of the digital musical revolution and social networking since its earliest days and continues to keep abreast of its development. To pay the bills he works in PR by day, employed by, amongst others, Dolby.

Laurence Colbert, in his own words, 'first got into music production in 1986 by crudely overdubbing sounds over my drums using an Amstrad tape-to-tape and a microphone'. After Art School, 1988 – 2001, Laurence was a member of RIDE (Creation Records) and The Animalhouse (BMG), as drummer in both. He has since sessioned as a drummer for Supergrass, Damo Suzuki, and The Jesus and Mary Chain. Still working as a freelance musician Laurence writes, plays, and releases both in a solo capacity and also for Oxford's International Jetsetters, who released an E.P. in the states in 2008, and are about to release a second E.P. in the UK. He is also currently in the final stages of a B.A. in Music at Oxford Brookes.

About our contributing speakers

Marrisa Joseph graduated from the University of Chichester with a BA in English & Creative Writing, and from Oxford Brookes University with the MA in International Publishing. She now works for Osprey Publishing, Oxford.

Mark Duffett has undertaken an MA on the Canadian music industry and a PhD that explored the relationship between Elvis and his fans. Since working for Sony Music, for the last decade Mark Duffett has taught as Senior Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Chester. His published output for journals such as *Popular Music and Society* includes articles on webcasting, heckling, Elvis fandom and gender. He also has a forthcoming chapter about the Sex Pistols interview with Bill Grundy in Ian Inglis's book on *Popular Music and British Television* (Ashgate, 2010).

Jennifer Skellington is an Oxford Brookes graduate at both BA (Music and Education) and MA (Music, History and Culture) level, and is currently studying towards a PhD entitled 'Transforming Music Criticism? An examination of changes in the music journalism in the English broadsheet press 1981 – 1991'. Her research interests include the changing emphases upon different types of music coverage, the shifting fortunes of music genres within the broadsheet arts page hierarchy, the impact of The Wapping Dispute and the political climate of the 1980s upon broadsheet music coverage, styles of broadsheet music writing across all genres and all aspects of broadsheet music journalists' employment conditions, including recruitment, training, employer relations and reward.

Paper Abstracts

Seeing double: Adaptations of novels to musicals and the effect on the US and UK publishing industry

Marrisa Joseph

Novels are increasingly becoming the starting point for media franchises which span the entire entertainment industry. Publishers can use this to their advantage by increasing their book sales through effective author branding, cross media marketing and selling other accompanying books to the adaptation. This paper analyses how publishers can benefit from musicals based on novels, and how the adaptation industry in general aids publishers in the US and the UK. Furthermore it examines how the publishing industry works alongside other entertainment industries. In contrast to the majority of existing research, stage musicals are analysed instead of novel to film adaptations.

The study examines key academic theory on the adaptation industry, cross media marketing, franchising and branding. Examinations of three musicals – Wicked, The Color Purple and Les Misérables – illustrate how cross media franchises promote book sales and also provide a pathway for accompanying spin off material to be published. The analysis of these cases highlighted the different reading habits in the US and the UK. The results from circulated questionnaires highlighted that although many consumers knew about these adaptations, they were less inclined to read the novels they were based on. Interviews with industry professionals, including literary agents and authors, agreed that adaptations are positive, especially for raising the profiles of unknown authors. The research concludes that although musicals can promote novels and increase book sales, they do not have the same ‘pulling power’ as other popular media such as film.

What are the words to the song ‘Midnight Train to Georgia’, as recorded by Gladys Knight and the Pips in 1973?

Dai Griffiths

‘[T]he internet has, at the time of writing, made lyrics massively available: for fans of The Fall the appearance of homepages packed with lyrics was like having a favourite and regular crossword puzzle suddenly and disappointingly supplied with answers.’

This is work in progress that builds on an earlier chapter of mine, from which the above quotation is taken: ‘From Lyric to Anti-Lyric: Analysing the Words in Popular Song’, in Allan F. Moore (ed.), *Analyzing Popular Music* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 39-59.

The immediate background to the paper is a renewed interest on the part of the music-publishing industry in the status of the words to songs as intellectual property. This was prompted by the appearance of online lyric websites: in the days before their proliferation when, for instance, words were included with CD, the issue was invisible.

My approach in the paper is to analyze, with a degree of objectivity, three transcriptions of a single song as heard in a particular recording. Two of the transcriptions are to be found on the web, the third is my own. From this analytical activity, I aim to provide context for these recent developments in online lyric sites, and to raise critical questions.

Locating The 50th Law: Notes on an inter-racial 'bromance'

Mark Duffett

In the last five years genre hybridization in the publishing industry has created a tiny stream of books that cross popular music with philosophy, self-help and advice on business ethics. Rapper 50 Cent and Robert Greene's contribution to this phenomenon in 2009 was a book called *The 50th Law*. The book's title was a play on Greene's highly popular compendium of strategies, *The 48 Laws of Power*. What makes his new book with 50 Cent unique is that it exploits the rapper's 'fearless' image to offer self-development advice for a wider readership. In particular, 50's authenticity is used by a white business writer help to propagate a message of entrepreneurialism that has been widely challenged in other quarters. My discussion will illuminate the cultural context of *The 50th Law* in order explore how it functions as a published intervention in the politics of race, class and gender.

The critic as new cultural intermediary: The rise of the American rock press in the 1960s

Jan Butler

This paper highlights the crucial role of the early rock critic as a determining factor in the definition of rock by considering him/her as an example of a "new cultural intermediary". Although sometimes considered to be a problematic term, exploration of the cultural intermediary can reveal important insights into the relations between cultural and economic processes. This article proposes a return to Bourdieu's use of the term in *Distinction* (1984) in which he describes the rise in the 1960s of the "new cultural intermediary", essentially a critic who treats mass culture with a seriousness previously reserved for higher cultural forms.

A striking example of the new cultural intermediary's role was the rise of the rock critic who formed the basis of the burgeoning rock press in America in the 1960s. This paper explores the role of these critics, investigating how the development of their journalism affected both the reception and the creation of "rock". Through exploration of the contrasting approaches to music journalism and advertising taken in *Billboard*, *Crawdaddy!* and *Rolling Stone*, I shall demonstrate how the rock critics' approach to rock shaped both the definition of rock as a genre and beliefs about its relationship to broader society. Crucially, these ideas about rock were fed back into the industry, affecting discussions in the trade press, the way that rock was advertised, both internally and externally and ultimately, the styles of music that were made. Thus, the rock critics of the 1960s were in a crucial position to determine the future direction of rock and the way that people, both within and without the industry, have come to think about it as a genre.

Popularising and populating the quality press? A quantitative examination of changes in popular music coverage in the English broadsheet press 1981 – 1991.

Jennifer Skellington

Drawing upon findings taken from current PhD research, this paper examines changes in English broadsheet music journalism during the period 1981 to 1991. The paper presents quantitative evidence to substantiate a range of changes in popular music coverage in the broadsheet press, many of which until now have existed only as anecdotal accounts. In particular, the paper examines changes in the nature of popular music articles and illustrates the accretion of coverage through related material including event guides, music charts and pictorial illustration. The paper focuses specifically upon results arising from the analysis of a database containing details of music-related content within The Times, The Guardian, The Independent, The Sunday Times, The Observer and The Independent on Sunday. The paper considers the role of the Thatcher government, the launch of The Independent newspaper and the burgeoning range of broadsheet supplements as stimuli for these changes, and proposes that the period 1981 to 1991 saw broadsheet popular music coverage become increasingly subject to influential commercial and political pressures.