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## Reviews

**Adam Caress. *The Day Alternative Music Died: Dylan, Zeppelin, Punk, Glam, Alt, Majors, Indies, and the Struggle between Art and Money for the Soul of Rock*. Montreat, North Carolina: New Troy Books, 2015.**

Many books have been written about alternative rock and culture in recent years. Popular among them is Michael Azerrad's, *Our Band Could Be Your Life: Scenes from the American Indie Underground, 1981-1991*, which provides a vivid and entertaining glimpse into the artists, era, and music. Another is *Slanted and Enchanted: The Evolution of Indie Culture* in which Kaya Oakes explores the influence of indie art and culture on mainstream society. While both of these books and others written about alternative rock and culture can contribute to a music industry curriculum, no other single volume rivals this new work by Adam Caress both in terms of its weight as an important work of music history, and in what it reveals to students of the music business.

Much more than a genre survey, *The Day Alternative Music Died* skillfully places us at a unique vantage point where the tension between art and commerce is brightly illuminated. To accomplish this requires a comprehensive exploration of the topic, encompassing the cultural atmosphere, the musical landscape, as well as the commercial environment. Caress succeeds in delivering this, and does so with compelling narrative.

He begins by stating that prior to the mid-1960s, rock and roll was not considered to be a serious art form, even by those creating it. Caress lays this foundation to point to the importance of beginning his story in 1964.

...prior to that, there was no tension in rock between the aspirations to substantive artistry and commercial success. Before 1965, none of the major figures in rock—from Elvis to Chuck Berry to The Beatles—aspired to create substantive art; they all aspired to be commercially popular entertainers.

He contends that from this period forward, artistic and commercial aspirations have lived in tension, alternately influencing rock music. More

importantly, he states:

...what has made rock a uniquely important musical genre has been its potential to be both artistically substantive and commercially popular at the same time. Or to put it another way: rock music has had both the potential to have something to say and the potential for what it has to say to be heard by the masses.

Indeed when Bob Dylan's *Like a Rolling Stone* climbed to number two on the *Billboard* singles chart it signaled something entirely new. It was a marriage of art and commerce, both artistically significant and commercially successful. Nevertheless, it was a short-lived marriage, replaced by the more purely commercial rock of the 70s and early 80s as rock became fully mainstream. Caress contends that this set the stage for the emergence of a group of musicians that, while diverse, were connected to each other by a subculture at odds with the majority. What they created was music that was an alternative to what was repeated through every rock FM daypart.

From this vantage point Caress helps us see that, much like Dylan a quarter century before, Nirvana's *Smells Like Teen Spirit* launched something from the relative underground into popular culture. From here he shines light on what can be a corrosive effect of commerce on creativity. At the same time, he deftly examines both the myth and reality of Nirvana and contemporaries like Pearl Jam with an eye for historical and cultural accuracy rather than falling prey to common misconceptions and stereotypes.

Caress often brings unique and unexpected insight. For example, as he brings us to the emergence of grunge in the early 90s, he describes the relative isolation that both artists and fans in Seattle and Portland had experienced during that period, cut off from the rest of the American music scene in a variety of ways. Not least among them that major tours often skipped these cities. Caress makes the argument that this musical quarantine helped till the soil for the growth of a new, unexpected, and truly different kind of music.

That kind of detail results in a book that covers a lot of ground, so much that it ultimately struggles to support its own weight. Though most every paragraph of this work will be of interest to a serious music indus-

try student, the narrative pace and focus would be much improved with a shortened volume. There can always be too much of a good thing, and that is the case with this book. A more focused volume, edited for instructional use would be valuable.

Though the book's weaknesses are far outnumbered by its strengths, it is also worth noting that at times Caress' dismissiveness toward certain artists can be a bit off-putting. For example, in the chapter titled "Geffen, Zeppelin, KISS, and Mainstream Rock's Commercial Sellout" he writes, "The Eagles aren't generally considered a leading example of artistic aspirations in rock..."

While it's true the overwhelming commercial success of the Eagles tainted them in the eyes of some critics, for many of us old enough to have lived through the 70s they were an artistic oasis in what felt at the time like a disco and yacht rock desert. I would always rather see an author present that kind of analysis as a personal judgment rather than proclaim the matter as somehow authoritatively settled without referencing a substantial number of sources.

Caress concludes his work by pointing out that his concern is not commercialism itself:

...contemporary critics will quickly point out that even the most artistically respected rock artists, like Bob Dylan, for instance, have always created their music with an eye towards its commercial potential. Indeed, the story of rock—and this book—is nothing if not a story about the intermingling of artistic and commercial aspirations. But I don't think the overlap between artistic and commercial aspirations in rock music means that art and commercial product are one and the same... That's not to say there isn't a time and place for the kind of entertainment-oriented music that typifies commercial pop music; I'm as much a sucker for a killer hook or infectious dance beat as the next guy. But to the extent that our culture comes to view art and commercial product as one and the same, it limits our openness to the transcendent possibilities which are unique to the experience of art.

This is an important observation, one of many that contribute to

making this book well worth reading and a valuable addition to a music business curriculum.

Kevin Auman

**KEVIN AUMAN** is Chair of Music and Music Business Program Director at Montreat College in Montreat, North Carolina. Born into a family of entrepreneurs, Auman started his first business in the early days of microcomputing with his brother and best friend at the age of eighteen after his first year of college. A musician and composer from an early age, music ultimately became integrated with business. Over nearly thirty years Auman has held a wide variety of roles in the music and broadcast media industries including recording engineer, studio partner and manager, concert promoter, broadcast production director, broadcast music director, and many others. In 1999 he was recruited as a professional to develop the Music Business program at Montreat College. In 2014 he developed a unique partnership with Echo Mountain Recording, a world-class recording studio in Asheville, North Carolina, where Montreat College students study audio production in a successful commercial studio with engineers, producers, and musicians at the top of their craft. Auman holds a BA from Montreat-Anderson College and an MA from The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.



**Sixty Year Old Shoes:  
Remembering Carl Perkins and *Blue Suede Shoes***

**Carl Perkins and Ron Rendleman. *Disciple in Blue Suede Shoes*.  
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978.**

**Carl Perkins and David McGee. *Go, Cat, Go!: The Life and Times of  
Carl Perkins, the King of Rockabilly*. New York: Hyperion, 1996.**

**Stephanie Bennett (Producer) and Tom Gutteridge (Director). *Carl  
Perkins and Friends – Blue Suede Shoes: A Rockabilly Session  
(DVD)*. London: Snapper Music, 1986. [www.snappermusic.com](http://www.snappermusic.com).**

**Jørgen de Mylius (Producer). *Carl Perkins: Rock ‘n’ Roll Legend  
(DVD)*. West Long Beach, New Jersey: Kultur International  
Films, 2001. [www.kultur.com](http://www.kultur.com).**

To the pop music aficionado, there are certain songs that are canon, that are anthems, that are part of the pop culture fabric. *Blue Suede Shoes* by Carl Perkins (1932-1998) is one of those songs. Recorded in December of 1955, and released on January 1, 1956, the song will mark its sixtieth anniversary in 2016. Written on a brown paper sack in Perkins' rent-subsidized apartment in Jackson, Tennessee, *Blue Suede Shoes* went on to become Sun Records' first million-selling record, as well as the first single to top the pop, country, and rhythm and blues charts. But that's not all. Perkins' biographer, David McGee, explained in a personal e-mail (June 16, 2015) that,

*Blue Suede Shoes* captured the energy and the optimistic fervor of post-war America and of an emerging teen culture replete with its own slang, fashions and symbols. No other early rock 'n' roll song spoke so directly to the new dawn in American popular culture and to its pride in having some distinguishing, colorful symbol to call its own—blue suede shoes.”

The song has since been inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame

(1986), ranked 95<sup>th</sup> on *Rolling Stone's* (2004) list of “The Greatest Songs of all Time,” and added to the Library of Congress National Recording Registry (2006). Perkins, himself, was in the second class of inductees for the Rock and Roll of Fame (1987).

As popular as *Blue Suede Shoes* may be, the composer, Carl Perkins, might be less known (most people seem to associate Elvis Presley with the song). There are two books solely about him, and two particular DVDs that can shed light on the man and his music.

Published in 1978 by Zondervan—a world-leading provider of Christian communications—*Disciple in Blue Suede Shoes* is Perkins’ autobiographical telling of his spiritual journey. The book begins with two touching forwards—one by his daughter, Debbie Perkins-Swift, and the other by his former labelmate and lifelong friend, Johnny Cash. These forwards set the tone for the rest of the book. At 146 pages, the book includes information about his upbringing in Lake County, Tennessee, and other familiar stories in Perkins’ lore, including the story regarding the inspiration for *Blue Suede Shoes*, an account of his infamous car accident that nearly killed him and his career, and meeting the Beatles. The focus of the book, though, is Perkins’ telling of his struggles with alcohol and how his faith helped him overcome that temptation. Readers who are spiritually minded may appreciate how he discusses the influence of his family, his local church and its minister, and even how Johnny Cash played a role in encouraging Perkins to put down the bottle and pick up the Bible.

At more than twice the pages of *Disciple in Blue Suede Shoes*, Perkins’ biography with David McGee, *Go, Cat, Go!: The Life and Times of Carl Perkins, the King of Rockabilly*, presents many of the same stories in the previous book, but with more detail. McGee supplements the accounts with historical details, vivid word pictures, and in a somewhat unusual format for a biography, McGee “...constructed ‘The Voice of Carl Perkins’ sections as a way for Carl, in the first person, to step outside the linear chronology...” and speak directly to events that shaped him. The biography includes the eighteen years of Perkins’ life since *Disciple in Blue Suede Shoes* with accounts of performing with his sons, recording projects, reactions to the deaths of his labelmates (Presley, Orbison), and settling a prolonged royalty dispute with Sam Phillips.

One particular telling is that of Perkins’ involvement with the formation of the Exchange Club Carl Perkins Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse. Reacting to a local news story about a young boy who died as a

result of domestic abuse, Perkins sought a way to aid abused children. Through a series of local contacts, as well as his extended network, he came in contact with the Exchange Clubs of America, a Toledo, Ohio-based civic organization. Through Perkins' initiation and participation the Jackson Exchange Club was soon open. It was the first facility of its kind in Tennessee solely dedicated to abused children, and only the fourth in the whole country. For many years thereafter, Perkins would donate his time and talent to a local telethon and help raise funds for the Center.

Throughout the book, McGee's writing style allows his accountings, and Perkins' observations, to flow naturally. Stories don't ramble, nor are they severely edited. Space is allowed for the reader to experience Perkins' observations through his folksy vocabulary. His insight may seem home-spun, but he was a man who knew what he was talking about. The biography also includes many personal pictures, only one of which is duplicated from *Disciple in Blue Suede Shoes*. In addition, a thorough discography assembled by the author and Jim Bailey is included.

Though the books were released eighteen years apart, Perkins is consistent as to what he feels is most important—family. “Success is a man who has got, as I've had, a woman for over forty years... [and] four kids who were never ashamed that Carl Perkins was their daddy... As I look around the [dinner] table, I am always reminded by the faces I see that this is what life is all about. This is what Carl Perkins is all about. Family.”

Both books will give the reader ample details and descriptions to form mental images of Carl Perkins and the events in his life. To see the man in action, *Carl Perkins and Friends – Blue Suede Shoes: A Rockabilly Session* is the only commercially-released concert performance in his career, and *Carl Perkins: Rock 'n' Roll Legend* is his only commercially-released documentary.

*Carl Perkins and Friends* is a television special celebrating the thirtieth-anniversary of *Blue Suede Shoes*. It was filmed in London and aired in the U.S. on Cinemax. Perhaps at the peak of his skills, Perkins stands erect over his pupils; virile, square-jawed, and barrel-chested he leads his apprentices through a romping set. Among the guest performers are a who's-who of artists whom Perkins had influenced, including Dave Edmunds, Lee Rocker, Slim Jim Phantom, Eric Clapton, Ringo Starr (reprising *Honey Don't*), Rosanne Cash, and coming out of semi-retirement, George Harrison. Collectively, the ensemble supports Perkins as they tear through his catalog of songs. Within the program is a segment where Per-



kins and Harrison sit, talk, and pick. Harrison asks Perkins to play a Les Paul number, and you can see Harrison's genuine admiration and respect as he watches his friend and mentor do his thing. It's as if they are the only two people in the room. The program concludes with an inspiring performance of *Blue Suede Shoes*, after which an encore ensues of the same song. As the band tags the ending, Perkins—humble and self-effacing—begins to speak from the heart. He thinks the cameras are not rolling, and with tears welling in his eyes, he professes that in the thirty years he has performed *Blue Suede Shoes* he enjoyed it no more than performing it with his friends at that moment. Knowing where Mr. Perkins came from (read the books), and the heights he achieved, this moment will put a lump in your throat.

*Carl Perkins and Friends* is truly a great performance that captured lightning in a bottle and positively represents his legacy. However, unlike most of his Sun labelmates, he has yet to be the subject of a thorough documentary. So far, the only commercially-released documentary is *Carl Perkins: Rock 'n' Roll Legend*. At a mere thirty minutes, Perkins is interviewed at Sun Studios. A raconteur with a superb memory for details, he explains his beginnings at Sun Records, how *Blue Suede Shoes* came to be, and his interaction with his labelmates, as well as the Beatles.

Coupled together, these DVDs show what an accomplished performer Perkins was, as well as provide a firsthand account from one of rock's pioneers about the history of Sun Records and Rockabilly music. It's ironic—or sad, depending on how you look at it—to note that while Perkins is such an American music icon, both of these video projects were produced by European companies.

In January of 2016, hep-cats around the world will celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of *Blue Suede Shoes*. In April of 2016, Mr. Perkins would have been 84 years old. He was a humble and talented man who was able to write “that one song” that changed his life. Would he have been as well known had he not written *Blue Suede Shoes*? We'll never know, but read the books and watch the DVDs and you may just find that regardless of whether he had written *Blue Suede Shoes* or not, he was a person you might like to have had as a friend. On the last page of Perkins' biography he states, “And if they want to jitterbug at my funeral to *Blue Suede Shoes*, I might just raise up and say, ‘Go, Cat, Go!’” Mr. Perkins has been gone since 1998, but as we rock and roll into 2016, be listening...

Mark Crawford

**MARK CRAWFORD** is the Coordinator of Commercial Music at Tennessee State University. He serves as the advisor for Commercial Music majors, places interns, maintains a rapport with the music industry, and teaches within the Commercial Music core. He taught previously for eight years at Freed-Hardeman University. Dr. Crawford's completed degrees include the Master of Music from Austin Peay University, the Doctorate of Education and Master of Education degrees from Vanderbilt University, and the Bachelor of Science in Instrumental Music Education (K-12) and an Associate of Science degrees from Freed-Hardeman University.



His musical experiences include writing and co-producing five independent music projects; performing at Opryland, and Fiesta, Texas theme parks; three appearances on TNN's *You Can Be A Star*; three-time first place winner for the West Tennessee Songwriters' Association songwriting contest; past member of the Nashville Community Orchestra, the Jackson, Tennessee Community Band, and the Jackson Community Jazz Band.

In 2008, he composed a tribute song honoring the tenth anniversary of the passing of singer/songwriter/musician, Carl Perkins. The song was produced and recorded with family members and close friends of Perkins. The song was released as a single in West Tennessee, and the proceeds went to the Carl Perkins Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse.

**Eric Weisbard. *Top 40 Democracy: The Rival Mainstreams of American Music*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014.  
[www.press.uchicago.edu](http://www.press.uchicago.edu).**

Where were you when you heard that song? If you grew up listening to top 40 radio, the chances are when you hear the music, even many years later, you're transported back to a time and place that you associate with those songs.

That's the magic of pop music and top 40 radio. The mainstream music that we heard on the radio when we were young remains a part of

our lives; arguably it reflects our outlook on life. There can be no doubt that since its inception in the 1950s, top 40 radio has left an indelible mark upon multiple generations of our society. But this mainstream music flows in different and sometimes divergent channels.

In his book, *Top 40 Democracy: The Rival Mainstreams of American Music*, Eric Weisbard examines this phenomenon by focusing on the careers of pop music artists, a record company, and a radio station spanning the final three quarters of the twentieth century.

Weisbard argues that format radio—specifically the top 40 formats—created multiple mainstreams resulting in overlapping cultural centers. He notes that the object of these formats was to keep the listeners tuned in by playing music that would “stir feeling” and “strike a chord that would resonate more with repeat exposure” thereby connecting listeners as a group. He adds that:

“Hound Dog”, “Will You Love Me Tomorrow”, “Dream On”, “He Stopped Loving Her Today”, “Say My Name”... each of these hits from different decades, for those who had the radio on, still generate emotional allegiances. The objective of formats was to garner ads and sell records, but a flow of songs and banter had to be shaped and polished, an audience had to be defined. Formats did not just sell music—they normalized it. Formats did not just sell products—they touted categories of consumers. (p. 2)

One of Weisbard’s goals in this book is to try to make us think differently about the impact of the radio-safe pop music that dominated the airwaves for so long. He argues that even much-reviled pop music often reflects the social and cultural concerns of the day. By way of evidence he sites music reflecting the countercultural 1960s and 70s, the MTV generation of the 1980s, grunge and gangsta of the 1990s and the millennium, as well as new country. He hopes to convince readers who dismiss mainstream pop as not serious music, that there is more to the format than may appear on the surface (p. 3).

To accomplish this goal, the author focuses on five radio friendly musical styles: Rhythm and Blues (R&B), Country, Middle of the Road (MOR), Top 40, and Rock. He also includes a chapter entitled “This Generation’s Radio” that explores the music formats for the first decade of the

twenty-first century

Before launching into the heart of the book however, Weisbard provides a very helpful introduction that details a brief history of music formatting that begins in the 1920s. He links the popularity of jukeboxes in the 1930s to the eventual creation of the top 40 radio format. That is, a finite number of records being played over and over again. The format came into its own with the advent of rock 'n' roll in the 1950s.

Also in this introduction is a very informative discussion separating formats from the genres in music. Weisbard explains the difference between the two in this way:

Formats let music occupy a niche in capitalism and...connect music to other show business realms as well. Genres are different. Ordinary people don't probably identify with formats but some do identify with genres. One can have a hit song that goes "I was born country"; probably not "I was born adult contemporary"...Music genres, more inherently ideological, chafe at formats, with their centrist, commercial disposition." (p. 3)

Weisbard then proceeds to the heart of the book. He chooses five musical genres and artists who performed in those genres. He tells their stories and how they navigated their chosen genre through the evolving radio formats of their time. He begins with the Isley Brothers, whose brand of rhythm and blues began in the early days of rock 'n' roll with hits like *Shout* and *Twist and Shout* and continued to make records until 2010.

The author chooses to tell the story of Dolly Parton to illustrate growth and evolution in the country genre. Parton is able to remain true to her genre while adapting her music to evolving radio formats, thereby broadening her fan base beyond that of traditional country.

To illustrate the middle-of-the-road format, or MOR, Weisbard chooses the instrumental genre and showcases early 1960s trumpeter Herb Alpert. Alpert found success with his band the Tijuana Brass playing a decidedly American and very pop oriented faux Mexican-styled music. With Jerry Moss, Alpert went on to form A&M Records and continued turning out soft pop music from his stable of artists that included The Carpenters, Amy Grant, and The Captain & Tennille.

The most comprehensive profile, however, is that of Elton John,

whom Weisbard chooses to represent the top 40 format—now called Contemporary Hits Radio (CHR). He refers to the music represented by John, as “pop modernity” (p. 157). John’s genre was based in rock, but he soon gravitated to a much lighter and more pop-based form, at times embracing the “glam” genre. His music had great mass appeal, and as one of the first openly gay performers in the rock pop genre, to many, he became a symbol of gay men’s liberation (p. 158). His story too is one of evolution. Though he remained true to his music, his style changed over the years to accommodate changes in radio formats. So much so, where he once received airplay on the rock-leaning top 40 stations his later work would be more comfortable nestled in an MOR format.

The fifth genre addressed in this book is rock—more specifically Album Oriented Rock or AOR. In the late 1970s, top 40 or CHR radio was declining in popularity as a radio format. In its place AOR began to gain ground, especially on FM stations. As a format, AOR seemed to be “truer to the music” than its top 40 predecessor. Weisbard tells the story of WMMS, a radio station known as “The Buzzard” located in Cleveland, Ohio. In its heyday, WMMS appealed to men between the ages of 18 and 34 (p. 195) and played a brand of blue-collar heartland rock, broke for commercials less often, and claimed to play only music that station programmers knew their audience wanted to hear (p. 208).

But WMMS fell victim to several factors, including the changing nature of the radio broadcasting business. Eventually the station was sold to Clear Channel Communications and WMMS took its place among the more impersonal, nationally programmed and formatted stations. Weisbard asks the reader whether the rise of the “mega-chain” owners killed the AOR format or whether advertisers simply learned to make “active rock” profitable. He concludes:

...[F]ormats for all their shifts and subdivisions, are proven enduring institutions: the plate tectonics of sonic capitalism. What makes radio work is a sound that locks in, a sound that can take the form of a record for station promo, a singer or a DJ for a talking personality cut from the same cloth who plays no music whatsoever. (p. 237)

*Top 40 Democracy: The Rival Mainstreams of American Music* concludes with a chapter called “This Generation’s Radio.” As you might ex-

pect, this generation's radio is the internet. Written in the same vein as the introduction to this book, the final chapter treats the reader to a brief history of the music industry since 2000. The ground covered includes the demise of the record industry, the decline of terrestrial radio, the rise of the MP3 player, and brief references to streaming services like Spotify and Pandora. The author wisely stops his analysis in 2010, noting that it is only this first decade of the twenty-first century that provides enough distance in time to allow us any historical perspective with which to make reliable observations.

For this reviewer the introduction and this final chapter contain the most important and intriguing information about the impact and future of mainstream music formatting in the United States. The artist and radio station profiles, while interesting reads in and of themselves, sometimes drift away from the stated purpose of the book. While these profiles are certainly necessary to support the author's arguments, the stories might have benefited from just a bit more judicious editing. Does the author achieve his goal of making us think differently about mainstream music? This reviewer believes that he does.

*Top 40 Democracy: The Rival Mainstreams of American Music* is a well-written and thought-provoking book that anyone who studies the music industry or the media will find to be a most useful addition to his or her library. It would also be an excellent supplementary textbook in classes studying the music industry, broadcasting, or popular culture.

Kenneth Creech

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**Robert King. *Music Business: The Secret To Successfully Making It In the Music Industry*. Amazon Digital Services, 2015.**

When it comes to succeeding as an artist in the music industry, there's plenty of written advice to be found. Much of it has been documented in everything from blog posts to lengthy books, some of which are utilized in formal courses, workshops, and seminars. But just as with books and articles that outline diet plans, investment strategies, ideal relationships, and other common goals, there's no one solution and there never will be. The "secret" will always, in reality, elude us.

Much like many of those other writings that purport to have *the* solution for readers, Robert King's e-book, *Music Business: The Secret To Successfully Making It In the Music Industry*, issues a tall enough order in its title alone. Unfortunately, though, there is not much ground broken here beyond any other text on the subject. While helpful tips abound within, the search for the consummate recipe for success will have to continue. This text might be a good start, but it falls short of its lofty promise.

Credentials are vital to the promotion of any material representing itself as a helpful handbook. Unfortunately, there is no outline of Mr. King's specific experience in the music industry, or a biography of any sort. There are comments that suggest a vast resume. He mentions that he has "...over 25 years experience in music distribution," for instance. While it is clear the author is knowledgeable from the terms and definitions he uses, and the stories he shares, there's not a lot of evidence of contemporary thought leadership in his book.

The music industry is indeed complex when one considers the various sectors and how they interact. From the very creation of music to the moment when artists and/or songwriters might consider their careers to be "successful", much can happen and plenty of other people are involved in the process. One strength of Mr. King's e-book is that it covers all aspects of the industry. In terms of providing a solid basis, it is well-rounded in its coverage of the most essential tools for the aspiring musician. There could be a better balance to the material, though, in terms of the time spent on a topic versus its relevance in 2015. For example, a good percentage of the text covers digital downloads and how to sell CDs online. Both of those configurations have been declining in sales in recent years, yet there is very little mention of even the existence of music streaming or the companies that support it. The section titled "Playing Live As Much As Possible"



is extremely short compared to the two sections devoted to getting one's music on iTunes. When one considers the proportion of revenue generated from selling recorded music versus performing live this would seem to be an imbalance.

*Music Business: The Secret To Successfully Making It In the Music Industry* is a very easy read in that it is written in first person in a way that makes it seem almost as if it's a transcription of a conversation or lecture. At the same time, it can be difficult at times because the writing is in need of serious editing; perhaps an essential step in the publishing process was overlooked. Regardless of the cause, the grammar here is clearly sub-standard.

One other area of opportunity involves substantiation. There are no direct quotes from other experts, no specific examples citing particular individuals who have experienced success or failure based on the advice being put forth, and no specific dollar figures to back up assertions. In fact, there are no footnotes, endnotes, or any other types of citation. Specific references, even informally, would have been helpful. For example, the suggestion that developing artists should accept any opportunity to perform live, whether paid or not, could have been supported with examples of established stars who successfully took that approach on their paths. For that matter, even a hypothetical outline of the dollar figures involved in such a scenario would have provided a better argument for the strategy.

With the advent of the internet and the vastly reduced barriers to entry, virtually anyone can record and distribute music, regardless of level of talent and experience. It could be argued that writing and publishing a book of significant length, even if it's only in electronic form isn't necessarily comparable. Either way, a good deal of knowledge on the topic is absolutely necessary before an author can put pen to paper or finger to computer keyboard. While it does not contain the "secret" it promises, and it is not clear what credentials the author possesses in order to put it forth, *Music Business: The Secret To Successfully Making It In the Music Industry* is at least a primer for the very beginning of an artist's journey. As an e-book, it's simple and highly portable reading material and handy food for thought, despite its shortcomings. Consider it to be only a good starting point.

Storm Gloor



**STORM GLOOR** is an associate professor in the Music and Entertainment Industry Studies department of the College of Arts and Media at the University of Colorado Denver. He teaches courses in music marketing, the future of the music business, and is the faculty advisor for the College's internships. He has also managed the award-winning student-run record label, CAM Records. In 2010 he was the recipient of the College's Excellence in Teaching award and is currently a Faculty Fellow in the Center for Faculty Development.



Professor Gloor worked in the music industry for fourteen years and holds an MBA degree with a Marketing concentration. He is currently vice president of the Music and Entertainment Industry Educators Association (MEIEA) and a member of the Denver Music Task Force. He has presented at numerous events and programs, including SXSW.edu, the Future of Music Summit, South By Southwest, the Underground Music Showcase, the Denver Music Summit, and an Ed-Media world conference.

**Damien Chazelle (Director and Writer). *Whiplash* (Feature Film).  
Los Angeles: Bold Films, 2014.**

Words such as “intense,” “provocative,” and “extreme” seem appropriate descriptors for the cinematic and musical experience that is Damien Chazelle’s *Whiplash*. Moments of the film are a sensory assault, and the effect is punctuated by a dramatic conclusion that pushes the boundaries of what music and film can do when fused together. The level of critical acclaim for the film attests to its ability to affect audiences on a deep, visceral level. J.K. Simmons’ portrayal of jazz conductor Terence Fletcher is particularly compelling, and it earned him an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor. The film also won Academy Awards for Best Film Edit-

ing and Best Sound Mixing, and it was a nominee for Best Picture.

The plot of the film follows Andrew Neiman, portrayed by Miles Teller, as he follows his dream of becoming “one of the great” jazz drummers. This dream leads him to the Shaffer Conservatory, where he eventually falls under the tutelage of Fletcher in the school’s premiere jazz ensemble. Fletcher is known for his commitment to excellence at any cost, and his peculiar teaching philosophy is often demonstrated through verbally and physically abusive behavior toward his students. Neiman becomes a particular focus of Fletcher’s ire, but as the story progresses it becomes clear that, rather than the result of a defect in Neiman’s personality, this behavior is evidence of the potential Fletcher sees in him.

Eventually, Fletcher’s value system is imprinted upon Neiman. The young man withdraws from relationships with his father and girlfriend as he increasingly comes to view them as distractions from the straight and narrow path that leads to greatness. Neiman pushes himself to the point of exhaustion in practice, and has an emotional breakdown when he is passed over for a part. He ultimately loses all regard for his own safety as he is involved in a car accident and leaves the scene without medical attention in an effort to make it to a gig on time. This incident culminates in disciplinary action being taken against Fletcher, and in Neiman withdrawing from the program as well as from pursuing music for a time.

*Whiplash* is ultimately a meditation on the nature of creativity, and musical creativity in particular. It employs the familiar trope of the eccentric genius that must sacrifice all to achieve greatness. In its especially dramatic portrayal, there are moments in the film that seem to suggest that emotional pain equals greatness, and Neiman is intent upon following this reasoning as a kind of formula that will guarantee the success he seeks. This raises the question of whether or not this kind of single-minded dedication is, in fact, the very essence of creativity itself, and if musical excellence truly requires the emotional instability portrayed in Neiman’s character.

Much of the research into the social and emotional needs of gifted and creative individuals suggests otherwise. According to Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, individuals who are highly intelligent in one area tend to lack perception in others. While Neiman clearly demonstrates superior musical intelligence, his intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence are lacking. He is unable to relate to close friends and family, and distances himself from his own needs as well. Perhaps it is Fletcher’s own

prodigious level of musical intelligence that blinds him to the needs of his students. But while the popular understanding of musical genius may imply that such emotional disregard is a prerequisite for true greatness, the theory of multiple intelligences finds that with a holistic curriculum gifted and creative students can excel relationally and technically in their disciplines.

While there is certainly a degree of nuance, or at least ambiguity, in its portrayal of the creative process, because the film stops short of condemning Fletcher's actions it can be read as tacitly condoning them. The final scene is particularly ambiguous, as Neiman's gaze at Fletcher after his triumphant solo can be read as either a search for approval or a look of defiance. Yet, either reading implies that it was Fletcher, and the instructional philosophy he represents, that brought Neiman to this point. Music and entertainment industry educators deal with the pervasiveness of the "eccentric genius" myth on a daily basis. It informs the worldview of many of our students, and often the more driven they are the more it seems they have bought into the notion that to achieve greatness anything—be it relationships, physical health, or mental wellbeing—may be required as a sacrifice. For those educators tempted to use this film in the classroom, make sure to do so responsibly by inviting discussion about the nature of creativity and the creative process into the dialogue.

*Whiplash* has much to say about the creative process, but its comment relies heavily on the stereotypical myth of the eccentric genius, and in doing so it serves to propagate this myth. In the classroom, it is the educator's job to help deconstruct the romanticism attached to being a dysfunctional human being, and to care for the social and emotional needs of the gifted students we are privileged to teach. The use of this film as an instructional tool can become an excellent point of departure from which to begin a discussion about the true nature of creativity, but only when guided by instructors who are determined to place their student's character development above the development of their talent.

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**Jacques Attali. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.**

Jacques Attali's *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* opens with an ambitious program, the critique of two and a half millennia of Western knowledge. While this initial statement is perhaps more symbolic than substantive, *Noise* does undertake a significant historical revision of the last three hundred years of Western music. In doing so, it contributes some of the most innovative and important theoretical advances to date in twentieth-century musical scholarship.

The central premise of the book is that music is *prophetic*. Attali finds the political economy of the western world in the twentieth century to be the natural outcome of its political rationale and political structures in the nineteenth century. In and of itself this is not a groundbreaking assertion, but the true innovation of Attali's work comes in finding nineteenth-century European political theory contained, in nascent form, within the structural codes of eighteenth-century Western European music. In Attali's view, music's "styles and economic organization are ahead of the rest of society because it explores, much faster than material reality can, the entire range of possibilities in a given code" (p. 11). Thus, music announces a society that is to come, heralding the political, economic, and cultural order of succeeding generations.

Students of cultural Marxism will immediately notice the novelty, blasphemous or revolutionary depending on one's point-of-view, of Attali's claim. *Noise* is, at its heart, a reversal of the orthodox reading of Marx's base/superstructure model. By situating music as annunciatory of political economy, Attali is rejecting the economic determinism and reflection theory inherent in much critical cultural work. This theoretical claim is the essential innovation of the book, and, if taken seriously, it demands a substantial revisiting of long-held assumptions in musical and cultural studies.

Attali identifies four epochs in the history of Western music: ritual, representation, repetition, and composition. He finds that the ritual function of music in channeling society's noise and violence eventually gave way to the age of representation as music's financial model transitioned from patronage to a free market system. Yet music retained its necessity for social cohesion and its prophetic qualities as it announced the com-

modification of the immaterial, the logic of harmony and exchange, and the symbolic abstraction of The Scientific Revolution and The Enlightenment.

The epoch of representation ultimately descended into that of repetition. In the case of music this was ushered in by the advent of sound recording, and this is a double irony for Attali. Not only was sound recording initially envisioned as a way to preserve the representative function of music, recording itself was only made possible by the technological advances of the political economy that music prophesied into being. In the current, repetitive epoch, Attali theorizes that as the economy of music expands it will ultimately collapse upon itself, for as supply approaches functional infinity the industry will necessarily become more concerned with the production of demand than with the value of its product. An ominous prophecy indeed if one is to take the collapse of the music industry in recent years as a harbinger of things to come in the wider economy.

Yet there is hope. In the final epoch of composition, Attali theorizes that requisite preconditions such as technological diffusion, universal access, tolerance of differences, and individual autonomy may lead to an economic structure in which value is re-ascribed into the experience of music rather than in its ownership. This is emblematic for Attali of an ideal economy in which the goal is not the eradication of lack but the realization of fulfillment in the act of living. Such a goal seems no less ambitious than a critique of the sum of Western knowledge.

Attali's reversal of the base/superstructure model places him outside of orthodox Marxist scholarship. The tendency to read his conceptualization of political economy as classically Marxian must be balanced with his de-emphasis on economic class as central to the study of music and culture (p. 45). His synthesis of history and theory is also indicative of a movement beyond structuralist Marxisms. This work does belong to the cultural Marxism discourse, but ultimately Attali arrives at an altogether different conclusion. Additionally, he is heavily influenced by the work of Adorno and Serres, as well as by postmodernists such as Baudrillard and Lyotard in his assertion that the nature of reality has fundamentally changed in the rise of a repetitive, mass-mediated society (p. 133).

Though it makes no pretense of conducting a comprehensive survey of Western music history, Attali's intimate knowledge of primary source material, particularly related to the history of French copyright law, make this work a useful resource for like-minded historians. Its primary utility



though is found in its theoretical contributions to the study of the music industry. The extent to which Attali develops his conceptualization of music as prophetic, at first glance hyperbolic, is arguably vindicated by the unfolding of popular music history since *Noise's* original publication in 1977. Punk rock and hip-hop, both embryonic at the time, illustrate key tenets of his theoretical economy of composition such as the centrality of individual participation and the creation of meaningful relationships between the musician and the listener. His theorizing is further supported in the recent popularity of crowdfunding, itself made possible by the economy of repetition's ultimate achievement: the internet. Crowdfunding holds significant promise for the decentralization of power in the industries surrounding creative works while supporting viable business models that allow content creators to earn a living wage.

*Noise* is necessarily dense in style, at times inconsistent in its use of Marxist theory, and perhaps underdeveloped in its conclusion. Still, it is more accessible than Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, and more coherent than Goodman's *Sonic Warfare*, and thus *Noise* remains the foundational theoretical text for scholars of the music industry thirty years after its English language translation. Attali's metaphorical comparison of music to cartography (pp. 57, 159) seems apt, and for those in search of an ontological theory that legitimates music as an agent of social change *Noise* is an excellent point of departure.

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**Fred Goodman. *Allen Klein: The Man Who Bailed Out The Beatles, Made the Stones and Transformed Rock & Roll*. City: New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015. [www.hmhco.com](http://www.hmhco.com).**

For the dedicated Beatles aficionado, the name Allen Klein may still rankle forty-five years after the legendary quartet's acrimonious breakup made world headlines. Identified by many at that time as the man who broke up the Fab Four, this biography of the hard-charging, risk-taking music manager paints a much more detailed and nuanced picture of Klein's life and work in an effort to clarify an important chapter in popular music history. It largely succeeds in this effort.

Author Fred Goodman, a past editor at *Rolling Stone*, is no stranger to writing about the complex relationships between artists and managers, having detailed the backstage dealings of Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen with their respective managers in one of his previous books, *Mansion on the Hill*. Likely for this reason, Klein's heirs invited Goodman to be the first researcher to access the archival materials they preserved along with pertinent records from Klein's management firm, ABKCO, which is still an important player in today's business.

While Goodman provides a general overview of the arc of his subject's life and career, it is through a number of key episodes that the author explains Klein's revolutionary approach to advising and managing the business and financial affairs of his clients. Of the hundreds of deals Klein brokered, Goodman carefully selected a small batch of examples that provide the reader with a tightly focused profile of the legendary manager. When Klein met and wooed Sam Cooke to become his first high profile client, Goodman explains that Klein realized the strategic value represented by a self-contained artist such as Cooke, who could write, produce, and perform his own songs. Klein maneuvered RCA Records into agreeing to sign Cooke's renewal deal with a new entity, Tracey, Ltd., a holding company that would own the rights to Cooke's performances and masters. Tracey would record and press Cooke's albums, while RCA gained exclusive rights to purchase, market and, distribute these record-



ings. Importantly, RCA paid Tracey nearly a dollar for each album, roughly four times the then-standard rate. Goodman's detailed account of how Klein masterfully negotiated the deal, as well as the long-term benefits to the artist of maintaining control of songs and masters explicitly shows that Klein had established a new model for record deals.

According to the author, Klein's financial impact with the Rolling Stones was even more impressive than with Cooke. In 1965, he was introduced to the band's mercurial manager, Andrew Loog Oldham, as the man to get what the Stones deserved from Decca Records. Oldham was so impressed with Klein's reputation he agreed to pay him for his services with a twenty-five percent cut of the management fees the Stones were obligated to pay Oldham. In essence, at the start of their relationship, the band didn't have to pay Klein a penny to have him improve their earnings. Klein's first negotiations with Decca to renew the Stones' contract resulted in a total advance over the next three years of \$2.6 million, quite a sum for a band that had never received a substantial advance. Goodman's portrait of Klein evolves as a savvy manager who not only teaches band manager Oldham how to improve the band's income, but also reveals Klein's bravado as he bests the stiff upper lip, three-piece-suited Decca executives in a tense, face-to-face showdown with the band silently watching nearby.

Klein's relationship with the Stones became much more complicated when he advised them to assign their rights to manufacture records in the U.S. to ABKCO, in order to reduce their tax liabilities. Here, Goodman excels not only at explaining the rationale for such a decision, but in revealing just how much clout Klein had achieved as the top financial guru advising artists. At the time, this arrangement solved the band's tax problems, but over the long haul, this key strategy came to be seen as underhanded by the Stones and some other Klein artists, Goodman reveals. ABKCO would manufacture records and sell them for approximately 25% of retail price to the U.S. label, then pay out the necessary royalties, manufacturing costs, and incidentals. This left Klein with a tidy remainder on each album, which he pocketed. This spread, between the actual costs and the price realized by ABKCO for discs sold to the label, made Klein a very wealthy man.

Goodman writes, "On the surface, this didn't appear to harm the artists; they got whatever royalties they had been promised, and it was always a good deal more than they'd received before meeting Allen Klein." Goodman however points out that Klein offered his service as a business

manager, who normally has a fiduciary duty to do his best at all times to enrich and preserve his client's earnings. Instead, his participation at a level that often exceeded how much the artists themselves were making, cast a shadow over his impressive handling of the record industry.

Goodman's assessment is spot on, and provides the context for why Klein's reputation was soon under fire from some of his artists. He also details that even though the Stones terminated their relationship with Klein in 1970, the manager had adeptly insinuated himself into their future by putting in place a deal with Decca's U.S. subsidiary, London Records, giving it the right to distribute the band's iconic early catalog from 1965-1970 "in perpetuity," with ABKCO as the exclusive middleman in control of all manufacturing. Such detailed reporting shows the reader how Klein looked out for himself first in nearly every deal he engineered.

This sleight of hand trick of having ABKCO take control of masters for U.S. release, while certainly a legal option, played out in similar fashion, but in a much more dramatic and highly publicized manner when Klein finally achieved one of his lifelong dreams: to handle the business of The Beatles. Arguably, the most popular musical group in history, the band lost its business direction after the death of their manager, Brian Epstein, and found themselves surrounded by a host of well-meaning advisors and assistants, who were largely ineffectual. In 1968, the group announced the formation of Apple, a self-described "dream factory" to promote the group's music, ideas, products, and image. They had a clothing store, spent lavishly to build a recording facility, and signed a range of artists they hoped would hit big. Unfortunately, without a strategic plan, Apple was burning through money at a record rate and there was little real income to support the risky venture. No matter how big The Beatles may have seemed, cash flow was essential to sustain any business, and theirs was terrible. The world was stunned when John Lennon told a reporter, "[Apple] has been pie in the sky from the start. . .if it carries on like this, all of us will be broke in six months." With their finances on life support, John Lennon took the advice of a friend and reached out to Allen Klein who wowed Lennon and Yoko Ono with his hard driving approach. Equally persuasive was the fact that Klein had researched Lennon and Ono to the extent that he served them a macrobiotic vegetarian meal and made no move to discuss business at their first meeting. Goodman's skill at retelling the story of this important meeting helps the readers feel they are watching as the drama unfolds. Klein and Lennon, both outspoken, opinionated

leaders used to winning, hit it off from the start, the author explains. After an entire night spent chatting, early the next morning, Lennon signed a letter that Yoko typed up informing the band's label, publisher, accounting firm, and Epstein's holding company that he had hired Allen Klein to "look into [my] financial affairs" and instructed them to afford Klein any help that he required. At this point in the narrative, Goodman has wrought a finely detailed portrait of Klein, who the reader now comes to see as a complex person capable of simultaneously wooing the most noted celebrity in the world while willingly entering a totally dysfunctional business on the verge of collapse. Through it all, Klein kept his eyes on the ultimate prize: control of the Beatles' income and assets.

Goodman goes on to carefully explain that at this point, Paul McCartney had arrived at the same conclusion as John Lennon—that the band needed more competent business counsel, but Paul chose to park his business with his soon-to-be in-laws, attorney Lee Eastman and his lawyer son, John. Klein tried to woo McCartney to no avail, but Ringo Starr and George Harrison joined with Lennon and gave Klein the green light to handle their own affairs. Klein worked his usual magic and as the author explains, Klein soon had dramatically improved the band's financial position. Goodman explicitly states that Klein was living out his dream, firmly in control of the band's immediate business dealings, and documents just how he delivered the results they longed for.

Unable to challenge their U.K. contract with EMI, he got the label to instead allow him to renegotiate the band's U.S. deal with Capitol (who had been paying them forty cents per album). As he had with the Stones, the author details how Klein's savvy negotiations yielded dramatically improved terms providing the band 56 cents album royalty for the first 500,000 sold and 72 cents for any sold above that number. Solo albums would generate a staggering \$2.00 per album artist royalty. Even McCartney was ecstatic and all four members gladly signed the new deal. Demonstrating Klein's acumen even further, Goodman explains Klein had offered Capitol Yoko Ono and Lennon's *Live Peace in Toronto* album as one that would count against the group's delivery requirement—Capitol scoffed at the project, releasing it as a solo album that promptly sold 750,000 copies resulting in an immediate \$1.5 million payout that confirmed to Lennon he definitely had the right business manager. Similarly, the combination film and soundtrack release that Klein orchestrated for *Let It Be* earned the band more than \$6 million in its first thirty days of release, due to the new

terms negotiated by Klein. Goodman's narrative argues that this string of victories, which rescued the Beatles from financial ruin, may have been the manager's most notable achievement on behalf of any artist.

Soon after *Let It Be* took its course, McCartney found he was unable to stomach Klein handling his affairs. The author situates McCartney's grievances as indicative of the rifts between the band members, which had become too great to mend. McCartney surprised his bandmates and brought suit in British court to dissolve the long-standing partnership that represented the band as a business entity. On the surface, the case looked as if it would be an open and shut affair. Seventy-five percent of the partners were perfectly happy with the current arrangement and McCartney's complaint was not grounds to dissolve the partnership agreement according to British law. Continuing his insightful analysis of Klein's personality, and how this influenced his decision-making, Goodman shows how the manager's hubris led him to suffer his greatest public defeat when the other three Beatles, supported by Klein, battled McCartney.

Klein, not actually a party named in the litigation, let his ego take over and completely misread the key issue under dispute. Goodman leads the reader skillfully through the entire pre-trial strategy sessions and then on to the trial itself. Hoping to prove his genius as "the manager that saved The Beatles," Klein voluntarily provided the court with a massive 142-paragraph affidavit detailing every aspect of his work and accomplishments for the group. This gave McCartney's legal team the ammunition it desperately needed to change the tide in the case and allowed them to paint Klein as an out-of-control, irresponsible, egomaniacal risk taker, ill suited to be the fiduciary steward of the group's finances. The new strategy worked brilliantly and led to a victory for McCartney. The court appointed a receiver to handle all of The Beatles business pertaining to their work and rights under that name. Klein was left as a sort of sub-manager, reliant on the receiver's decisions going forward to advise John, Ringo, and George. Goodman paints this as the most stunning defeat of Klein's career, resulting in an ever more nuanced perception of the title character by the reader.

Goodman uses the three concluding chapters of the book to demonstrate that Klein never bounced all the way back from this defeat, although he was still able to leverage the masters he remained in control of, especially those of the Stones and Sam Cooke. However, he now faced a more informed and suspicious music industry that seemed to continuously ques-

tion his motivations and methods. Deals were tougher to finesse, and opponents read up on his tactics and were on high alert for potential conflicts of interest such as the one Klein engineered in his dealings with the Rolling Stones. Goodman reveals Klein's continued struggles as the U.S. government piled on, finally censuring him for a minor lapse in his tax filings. He publicly hit bottom when he was found guilty of filing a misleading tax return and sentenced to a fine and sixty days in Federal prison. Klein tried to put a positive spin on the sentence characterizing it as an enforced vacation but Goodman's analysis astutely shows that the high-flying manager was clearly stung by the jail sentence. Showing the adaptability of a survivor, he regaled inmates and jailers with his music business insider stories. He ordered movies to be delivered to show regularly to the inmates, and once again as he had with John Lennon, mounted another charm offensive to an audience at least as tough as his industry peers.

While Klein's reputation was certainly tarnished by his dismissal by The Beatles and Rolling Stones, the greatest blow was that he had become known for shady dealings that put him firmly in control of his artist's creative output. Still, Klein did prove to be the main game changer as to how artists, managers, and labels interacted and contracted one another's services and goods. The author should be applauded for the rigor and insight he offers, and while a lesser writer might easily have been star-struck by Klein's powerful, charismatic personality in the retelling of this tale, Goodman remains objective throughout the key episodes, and skillfully pauses at key points to provide the necessary context for why the manager's decisions hurt his reputation so badly.

For any music industry educator, the ethical issues that are at the heart of the Klein biography will make for thought provoking discussions between students, educators, and scholars of the music industry should the book be the basis for an assignment. While the book takes a largely historical perspective, its themes and episodes should resonate in today's tech-oriented music world where high profile music companies sometimes reward their founders before ever making a dollar of profit. Ultimately, author Fred Goodman challenges readers to grapple with the dilemma of how to balance self interest with the fiduciary responsibility to one's clients. In doing so, he underlines the belief that one's reputation is ultimately far more valuable than money. The lessons found in this book are ones that anyone laboring in the music business would be wise to remember.

Keith Hatschek

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A third edition of the music career text was published in January 2015. He contributes monthly music industry commentary for the blog, *Echoes-Insights for Independent Artists*. Among his research interests are music industry curriculum and pedagogy, student-led music businesses, recording and music technology, and the life and work of jazz pianist, Dave Brubeck. He has presented a number of conference papers and public lectures at jazz festivals about Brubeck's role in Cold War jazz diplomacy, the Civil Rights movement, and musicians' collaborative efforts to address segregation in mid-twentieth-century United States.

**Stephen Witt. *How Music Got Free: The End of an Industry, the Turn of the Century, and the Patient Zero of Piracy*. New York: Viking/Penguin Random House, 2015. [www.penguinrandomhouse.com](http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com)**

If you're wondering how or why consumers switched their allegiance from CDs to downloading to streaming within a fifteen-year period, Stephen Witt's *How Music Got Free* supplies the answers. Witt follows the lives of three people, Karlheinz Brandenburg, team leader of the inventors of the MP3 format, Doug Morris, former Chairman of the Universal Music Group and current Chairman of Sony Music, and Dell Glover, a one-time floor manager of a CD manufacturing plant in North Carolina. The book traces the origins of digital music, its rise as a major force of piracy, and the evolution of how the major music distributors dealt with the devasta-

tion left in its wake.

Computer software researcher Karlheinz Brandenburg was the leader of “Germany’s answer to Bell Labs,” the Fraunhofer Society (p. 12). Brandenburg has been credited with the invention of the MP3, but Witt writes that the format almost didn’t receive widespread recognition. A Philips-led consortium of scientists and private interests chose the MP2 as the major digital format for consumer adoption in 1995. Witt’s book describes that even though the MP2 was a format of lower quality, the politics of science overtook superior innovation. Had it not been for a series of lucky breaks for Brandenburg and his team, breaks that proved to be extremely unlucky for the recorded music industry, the MP3 might eventually have been relegated to the scrap heap along with Sony’s Betamax.

But, unfortunately for the music industry, the MP3 did prevail. In its wake came Napster, scores of online sites, and hundreds of computer enthusiasts like Dell Glover, who helped make it easy for consumers worldwide to download the entire history of recorded music—for free. In 1996, Glover worked on the floor of a PolyGram Records-owned manufacturing plant called Kings Mountain. Glover developed a system to smuggle unreleased music out of the plant. Thanks to new, fast internet technology, he was able to illegally “leak” more unreleased popular music online than anyone else in the world for the next decade.

Through a friend at the Kings Mountain plant, Glover was introduced to a shadowy, online network of individuals, all working under pseudonyms, who were enthusiastic about making albums and movies available before they were available in stores. This network was called The Scene. Dell Glover quickly became one of most important members of RNS, a top group that was part of The Scene. Witt explores the Dell Glover story in great detail. If you play the imaginary movie of *How Music Got Free* in your head, it would probably spend most of its time following this one man.

The author does an admirable job showing the mistakes the music industry made as The Scene discovered the MP3 and its possibilities as a mechanism for easy (and illegal) online file sharing. While this helped the MP3 ultimately win the format war, industry executives at first turned a deaf ear to the cataclysmic changes taking place. Business was too good. CDs were still selling at a historic pace. We learn from Stephen Witt’s history lesson that there is always somebody, somewhere, trying to create change. By the time the music industry, and its leaders like Doug Morris,



opened their eyes to the massive online illegal file sharing, the revolution was too far advanced to stop.

The major label groups were led by executives like Morris, Chairman and CEO of the Universal Music Group, who was not a techie. He and his colleagues reacted slowly and badly to the new form of piracy enabled by the MP3. Napster, a popular peer-to-peer file-sharing service born as a result of the MP3, was sued by the labels and ceased operation. Multiple pirate sites sprung up in its place. The RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America), a music industry trade group representing the business interests of the labels, received criticism for suing consumers deemed to be top users of illegal file trading. Universal and Sony created Pressplay, an online retailer that failed. Years passed, jobs were lost, and revenues plunged. After an ill-fated interview with *Wired* magazine, Morris was considered by the press and public as a “clueless relic of an earlier age” (p. 227).

Down but not out, Morris soon experienced his own stroke of luck. While watching YouTube videos with his grandson, Morris saw that there was money to be made by sharing a percentage of ad revenue from the accompanying advertisements. This became the genesis for Vevo, one of the first successful companies that came out of the music industry in this new digital age. Morris had discovered a valuable revenue stream and helped transform the music industry from one that had spent the last decade playing defense.

What is to be learned? There is a singular thread throughout the book, a cautionary lesson that each of the Karlheinz Brandenburg, Dell Glover, and Doug Morris stories share. No matter the level of success one achieves through hard work (both legal and, in Glover’s case, illegal), there is always someone or something trying to upend that success. For Brandenburg, it was Philips and, later on, the RIAA. For Morris, it was a technology that revolutionized a complacent industry and its antiquated business models. For Glover, it was the FBI.

Stephen Witt’s *How Music Got Free* is a valuable read for anyone interested in today’s music industry. The subjects Witt covers are important. Both educators and students should read the book in order to gain a full understanding of this fifteen-year period in the music industry.

David Philp



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He runs the Music Biz 101 website for the William Paterson University Music Management and Popular Music Studies programs and co-hosts with Dr. Stephen Marcone “Music Biz 101 & More,” a weekly radio show on WPSC: Brave New Radio. The podcast is available on iTunes, SoundCloud, and Stitcher.com.

Philp teaches about music royalty streams, social media, and entrepreneurship. He is also the music director at the Wayne United Methodist Church and Chief Organizer Guy of YouChoose Music, a live music events production company that raises oodles of big dollars for great non-profits. He has one wife and two children, all of whom are left-handed.