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Reviews

Norman Kelley, Editor. *R&B: Rhythm & Business: The Political Economy of Black Music*. New York: Akasic Press, 2002

<https://doi.org/10.25101/3.6>

This is a collection of articles about black music and the music industry. As often happens in collections, the quality of the articles varies considerably. Some of the articles are a bit dated, because they go back as much as fifteen years. Because many of them were previously published, the quality of the editing, if there was any, also varies. For example, in Stephen Calt's article on J. Mayo Williams and Paramount Records, he twice mentions that Paramount "race" artists didn't get royalties because they were paid flat fees, and then he goes on to explain how Paramount cheated the artists out of royalties through fraudulent bookkeeping.

One of the most interesting articles is Michael Roberts' "Papa's Got a Brand-New Bag: Big Music's Post-Fordist Regime and the Role of Independent Music Labels." The author points out that a number of independent labels that are partially owned by the majors avoid their union responsibilities, and do not pay union scale, or contribute to the AFM Special Payment Fund or the Music Performance Trust Fund. Since the author wrote the article, Zomba Records, the leading culprit in this behavior, has been purchased by BMG. Since it is now a wholly-owned company, I presume that it will have to operate under union working conditions. My only criticism of this article is that the author doesn't mention the lower-budget recording agreements that have enabled the union to organize a good part of the gospel music and Tejano music markets. The chart that describes all of the "independent" companies that are partially or entirely controlled by the majors is worth the price of the book.

Several of the articles refer to the Harvard Report on Black Music commissioned by Sony in 1972. Unfortunately the report is not reprinted here. The editor doesn't disclose whether this is because he could not obtain permission to reprint the document, or that he simply chose not to do so.

Danny Goldberg's analysis of large and medium size record labels gives the reader an excellent perspective on how major labels operate, and rap advocate Wendy Day offers a provocative and useful view of recording contracts. Day maintains that so-called form contracts, as presented in vari-

ous music industry texts, are simply broad generalizations that don't reflect the actual shape of contracts.

Some barely relevant material concludes the book, including an article on salsa, and the well-known Courtney Love letter to recording artists. With better editing, this would have been a great book. As it is, it will constitute a useful reference work for teachers and students in music business programs.

Dick Weissman

Jay R. Howard & John M. Streck. *Apostles of Rock: The Splintered Worlds of Contemporary Christian Music*. Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1999

<https://doi.org/10.25101/3.7>

Howard and Streck's excellent book describes the various themes of contemporary Christian music, and places them in the context of the contemporary music business. The authors identify three philosophical camps that define the various styles in the music, and give examples of artists who work in these styles.

The separational artists see music as a religious mission. The world consists of good and evil, and the artist's role is to totally identify with the good. The emphasis necessarily needs to be not on the music, or success, but on doing good works. Sometimes the lyrics contain relatively obscure evangelical references that would bewilder an average secular audience. The integrational artist seeks mainstream success as a fundamental goal, because he or she wants to spread a religious message to as many people as possible. Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith, with their extensive crossover successes are the trailblazers in this ideology. Finally the transformational artist sees the blending of music and religious ideology as a complex matter, something that must be transmuted into an artistic experience. The focus here is on the heart, and the transformational artists are somewhat scornful of crossover successes, or the sort of lyrical efforts that are laden with religious stereotypes or clichés.

It is the transformational artists who have the most difficult time finding an audience, because their work is too abstract for many of the fans of contemporary Christian music, and too obscure for the general public. Moreover their willingness to refer to depressing situations and difficult

personal issues is off-putting to Christian radio stations, and to record companies. The authors cite a number of examples of record company attempts to get transformational artists to adopt a more middle-of-the-road commercial approach to recording. Some of these artists have even deliberately produced dumbed down work for the marketplace, much as some of their contemporaries in pop music are wont to do.

As Christian music has assumed increasing popularity, it is gratifying to see a book that takes a serious view of what the music means, and how it is being merchandised.

Dick Weissman

DICK WEISSMAN has written eight published books about the music business. He taught for twelve years in the Music and Entertainment Studies Program at the University of Colorado at Denver, and now teaches short-term classes and seminars at the University of Denver and other schools.

Money For Nothing: Behind The Business Of Music. Video Running Time: 48 minutes (plus 30 additional minutes of interviews on DVD). Kembrew McLeod, Producer. Sut Jhally, Executive Producer. Northampton, Massachusetts: Media Education Foundation, 2001

<https://doi.org/10.25101/3.8>

In my years teaching about the Music Business, I have often noticed that students listen more intently to guest speakers from the industry than their everyday instructors. This is particularly amusing (or galling) when the visitors say the same things teachers do. At least learners finally hear the message. This new (2001) video goes those moments one better, bringing music stars into the classroom to talk about the business. Narrator Thurston Moore, Chuck D, Ani DiFranco, Michael Franti, Kathleen Hanna, and Ian McKaye all share their perspectives. They are supplemented by journalists Dave Marsh and Shirley Halperin, and academics Reebee Garofalo and Robert McChesney. The words are well complemented by images taken from commercials, music videos, and MTV, as well as original graphics. The show ends with an onscreen statement that the use of these materials is protected by the Fair Use clause of the Copyright Act of 1976; no permissions were acquired. This alone should be sufficiently re-

freshing to earn its sophisticated presentation educational screenings throughout this field.

Money For Nothing provides substantial factual information about the structure, ownership, and dynamics of the contemporary music industry, which is used as a foundation for economic and ethical critique. The five major labels, their eighty percent plus market share, and the power that provides are detailed early. As the information is presented, graphics scroll by showing the many labels owned by each major corporation. Michael Franti explains the economics of recoupment of expenses from artist royalties in plain terms (how multi-million sellers can remain in debt to their labels). Dave Marsh explains that artists who do not agree to large upfront production costs (for videos, etc.) can be labeled “uncooperative” and lose promotional efforts by their labels. He also details how the nature of monopoly power provides the majors with little incentive to create abundant choice of product in the marketplace. Chuck D bemoans the fact that the labels are “run by business people, not creative people...who have no attachment to the Art.” The video is at its best when the creatives remind the audience that there is much more to music, even popular music, than commerce. They prod viewers into seeing how the reality of the business limits artists’ opportunities to release their music on a level playing field where consumers have a reasonable expectation of finding the most interesting releases that become available.

After describing the role of the labels, discussion moves on to four gatekeepers in the marketplace: Radio, TV, Touring, and Retail. Narrator Moore reminds the audience of the ongoing impact of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, a law Chuck D feels is unconstitutional, which lifted all ownership restrictions on radio stations in America. With one company owning more than a thousand stations now, Moore decries the “uniformity of music played,” and McChesney, of the University of Illinois details a “fully commercialized system” of legal “payola” and access to shortened playlists driven by corporate promises of promotional support. Moving on to (M)TV, Moore refers to the cable music network as a “centralized national marketing system,” which McChesney views as a twenty-four hour a day infomercial. Kathleen Hanna is especially articulate in this section about how MTV is, in effect, more about building good, youthful consumers, than providing opportunities to hear new and varied choices of music and encouraging listeners to exercise their critical abilities.

The section on touring speaks briefly about the impact of consolidation of ownership, going into detail about Pearl Jam's failed challenge to TicketMaster's dominance of the computer ticketing business. But, it already needs updating with regard to the consolidation of ownership of concert promotion and production companies by SFX Entertainment, and their subsequent sale to Clear Channel, the dominant corporation in American radio. Turning to retail, what Chuck D calls "the final frontier for delivery of art to the people," the theme of consolidation of ownership rises again. Wal-Mart's 9% share of the national market is mentioned, and Best Buy's acquisition of Musicland, Sam Goody, Media Play and more is represented graphically. Garofalo makes plain the power the retailers have exercised in getting album art changed, songs removed or re-titled, and lyrics masked in the name of sales, without consultation with the recording artists. After discussion of consolidation of ownership at this level is completed, the view widens to the ownership of these companies by corporate conglomerates. The evolution of the practice of cross-media marketing or "synergy" among companies sharing ownership is discussed, beginning with Robert Stigwood's strategies for "Saturday Night Fever," through AOL/Time Warner's formation of the girl-group "Eden's Crush" on its WB talent search show "PopStars," and how the corporation promoted them online, in their magazines, and on financial news shows. Thurston Moore observes, "The standard relationship between production and marketing has been turned on its head. Now the marketing comes first, before there's even a band."

From here, discussion moves on to the use of songs in commercials as a marketing strategy, mentioning Moby's over 800 licenses for the music on his disc "Play." McChesney calls such practices a hyper-commercialization of culture that was previously viewed as an "outrageous practice," and "an affront to the sanctity of music." Michael Franti says he's had "several of my favorite songs ruined...by commercial association," and Dave Marsh, mentioning the Nike ad featuring the Beatles' song "Revolution," says it has even defiled the idea of revolution.

The last section of the video discusses alternatives, like indie labels, independent distribution, and online marketing. Narrator Moore suggests there is "nothing inherently fixed" about the existing major label dominated system. Ian McKaye, operator of twenty year-old Dischord Records says, "I have a lot of contempt for the record industry. I don't particularly want to be a part of it any more than I have to... To exist independent of the mainstream is a political feat, in my opinion." McChesney concurs, saying

of the majors, “They’re not interested in the ideas behind the music, they’re not interested in the spirit that moves the music, the passion. They’re just interested in making money. They have no regard for the music otherwise. It mocks the music, and demeans the culture.”

Nothing in my job description requires me to be a cheerleader for the industry. I believe we serve our students best when we knock the stars from their eyes without extinguishing their passion for music. This video serves that purpose. It provides factual background about the industry from those who know it best and a persuasive critique about how it could be better. *Money For Nothing* strikes no false notes, and many powerfully educative ones, all in the timeframe of the shortest college class period. It cannot hurt our students to be reminded that there is a higher virtue in music than its ability to sell multi-millions of units.

Paul D. Fischer

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Recent Books

compiled by

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<https://doi.org/10.25101/3.9>

Below is a brief list of recently published books that should be of interest to those who study, teach, or work in the music industry.

- Barnet, Richard D. and Larry L. Burriss. *Controversies of the Music Industry*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001.
- Braheny, John. *The Craft and Business of Songwriting*, 2nd edition. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest, 2001.
- Cherin, Mel, as told to Gabriel Rotello. *My life and the Paradise Garage: Keep On Dancing*. New York: 24 Hours For Life, Inc., 2000.
- Collette, Buddy with Steven Isoardi. *Jazz Generations: A life in American music and Society*. New York: Continuum, 2001. (We do not usually recommend autobiographies, but this book contains a good deal of interesting material about the desegregation of the musician's union and the business of studio recording.)
- Ferrari, Marc. *Rock Stardom 101: A Rock Star's Guide to Survival and Success in the Music Business*. New York: Allworth Press, 2002.
- Fisher, Jeffrey. *Profiting From Your Music and Sound Project Studio*. New York: Allworth Press, 2001.
- Jermance, Frank and Dick Weissman. *Navigating the Music Business: Current Issues & Business Models*. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2003.
- Kalmar, Veronika. *Local Launch: A Guide to Independent Record Promoters and Distributors*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2002.
- Kellogg, John P. *Take Care of Your Music Business: The Legal and Business Aspects You Need to Know to Grow in the Music Industry*. Bushkill, Pennsylvania: PJ Kelly & Associates, 2000.
- Krims, Adam. *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Lornell, Kip and Charles J. Stephenson, Jr. *The Beat: Go-Go's Fusion of Funk and Hip-Hop*. New York: Billboard Books, 2001.
- McLeod, Douglas and Kimberly Ransom. *House Concerts: A Guide for*

- Musicians and Hosts*. Austin: Wordworks Publishing, 1999.
- Mitchell, Tony, Editor. *Global House: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the World*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2001.
- Moser, David. J. *Music Copyright for the New Millennium*. Vallejo: Pro Music Press, 2002.
- Napier-Bell, Simon. *Black Vinyl: White Powder*. London: Ebury Press, 2002.
- Negativeland. *Fair Use: The Story of the Letter U and the Numeral 2*. Concord, Calif.: 1995.
- Quint, Randle and Bill Evans. *Making Money Making Music: The Musician's Guide to Cover Gigs*. San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2002.
- Rappaport, Diane Sward, Editor. *The Music Business Primer*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003.
- Rodgers, Mark. *Guardian of the Gods: An Inside Look at the Dangerous Business of Music*. Chicago: Monkey Boy Media, 1999.
- San Miguel, Guadalupe, Jr. *Tex-Mex Music in the Twentieth Century*. College Station: Texas A&M International University, 2002.
- Taylor, Timothy D. *Stranger Sounds: Music, Technology and Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Tenaille, Frank. *Music is the Weapon of the Future: Fifty Years of African Popular Music*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2002.
- Thall, Peter M. *What They'll Never Tell You About The Music Business: The Myths, The Secrets, The Lies (& a Few Truths)*. New York: Billboard Books, 2002.
- Wald, Elijah. *Narcorrido: A Journey Into the Music of Drugs, Guns and Guerrillas*. New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 2001.
- Weissman, Dick. *The Music Business: Career Opportunities and Self Defense*, 3rd revised edition. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2003.

The *MEIEA Journal* is published annually by the Music & Entertainment Industry Educators Association (MEIEA) in order to increase public awareness of the music industry and to foster music business education.

The *MEIEA Journal* provides a scholarly analysis of technological, legal, historical, educational and business trends within the music industry and is designed as a resource for anyone currently involved or interested in the music industry. Topics include issues that affect music industry education and the music industry such as curriculum design, pedagogy, technological innovation, intellectual property matters, industry-related legislation, arts administration, industry analysis, and historical perspectives. The *MEIEA Journal* is distributed to members of MEIEA, universities, libraries, and individuals concerned with the music industry and music business education.

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