surrounding performance and improvisation in order to develop a more critical and "generous" orientations to an "impermanent and interdependent world" (170).

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Five Years Ahead of My Time: Garage Rock from the 1950s to the Present

By Seth Bovey. London: Reaktion Books, 2019.

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Garage rock holds a special place in rock lore. Rock history as a whole has frequently been viewed through the prism of garage rock: the energy of its teenage participants becomes emblematic of rock's rebellious attitude, its amateurish "underground" aesthetic is seen as resistant to the corrupting forces of commercialism, and its stripped-down aesthetic is portrayed as a sort of musical essence. This narrative is deserving of both deeper exploration and more disruption. Seth Bovey's *Five Years Ahead of My Time: Garage Rock from the 1950s to the Present* takes up the challenge of telling the story of garage rock from its roots to its present-day incarnations and revivals.

Chronologically and geographically, Bovey's book surveys a lot of ground, including bands active anywhere between the 1950s and the 2010s. Although he focuses primarily on regions of the United States and England, Bovey also shows garage rock as a global phenomenon. He begins by tracing the importance of instrumental performance to the rock and roll of the late 1950s into the early 1960s. Rock records without vocals were growing in popularity at that time, and certain subgenres such as surf relied on instrumental effects and prowess. Bovey points to the influence of guitarists including Duane Eddy, Link Wray, and Dick Dale as he describes burgeoning garage rock scenes in the Pacific Northwest, Southern California, and the Upper Midwest. The bands and records that come up in this discussion range from relatively famous—like Paul Revere and the Raiders or the Kingsmen and their notorious "Louie Louie"—to those perhaps best known to aficionados, like the Fireballs or Mike Waggoner and the Bops.

The core of the book focuses on the impact of the British Invasion worldwide. The success of the Beatles was sort of the "big bang" for the phenomenon of garage rock: teens all over the world formed bands with wide-ranging consequences. Bovey's chapter on the mid-1960s sets out to create a loose taxonomy of what he views as the primary "branches" of garage rock at mid-decade, which are categorized largely based on musical influences: British-style R&B, folk rock, sixties garage punk, all-girl garage groups, and garage psych. He goes on to devote a chapter to how widespread garage rock became, surveying bands active in Latin America, Europe, Asia, Australia, and Oceania. Each section is necessarily brief—and there are some omissions, such as the stories emerging since the end of the Cold War about rock behind the Iron Curtain—but particularly for fans trained on the US- and UK-centric narratives of rock history, this summary may yield some good discoveries.[1]

Bovey concludes that the "golden age" of garage rock ended in the late 1960s. By then, those who were teenagers at mid-decade were entering adulthood and the sounds of psychedelia—which Bovey

[1]See, for example, the documentary directed by Jim Brown, *Free to Rock: How Rock & Roll Brought Down the Wall* (Pottstown, PA: MVD Visual, 2017); Timothy W. Ryback, *Rock around the Bloc: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); and—too recent for Bovey's publication—András Simonyi, *Rocking Toward a Free World: When the Stratocaster Beat the Kalashnikov* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2019).

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characterizes as "more ponderous songs filled with meaningless guitar solos" (90)—displaced the do-it-yourself aesthetic of bands reacting to the British Invasion. The last three chapters—together about half the length of the first three—focus on how garage rock was sustained and revived from the 1970s onward. Bovey looks at the role of music critics in buoying underground, proto-punk rock scenes through the 1970s and in creating influential compilation albums, and then he turns to younger bands like the Mummies and the White Stripes who are interpreting the concept of garage rock for new audiences. The book ends with a rather pessimistic view of garage rock's future in the United States—one that is perhaps a bit unsympathetic given rock and roll's own origins in resistance to the music and interests of prior generations: "It appears that most young Americans would rather look at their phones than watch a band," Bovey writes, "and the ones who do care about music listen to hip-hop, contemporary country, or *American Idol*-style pop; they have no more interest in rock 'n' roll than they would in the weather patterns on Saturn" (174).

Compared to his chronological and geographic scope, Bovey's theoretical range in this book is relatively narrow. It seems that his aim was less to theorize about garage rock and more to include as many bands and styles across sixty years as possible; his notes and bibliography engage most heavily with sources that work in a similarly encyclopedic fashion, such as *Allmusic.com*; Peter Blecha's *Sonic Boom: The History of Northwest Rock from "Louie Louie" to "Smells Like Teen Spirit"*; and Vernon Joyson's *Fuzz, Acid and Flowers: a Comprehensive Guide to American Garage, Psychedelic and Hippie Rock*.[2] As with the term "rock and roll" itself, however, there is no singular way of defining "garage rock"—particularly once we get away from certain mid-1960s bands that often receive this label.[3] The book's architecture does not create space for Bovey to really dig into his own working definition of the broader social and musical phenomenon, and readers will generally need to work backward from examples and from the somewhat more specific descriptions he lends to various substyles. This approach does occasionally raise questions about who is included in the narrative and why. Rock scholarship is increasingly reaching a point where it reflects upon and critiques the development of a mostly white, mostly male canon.[4] Bovey's subjects are mostly young white men, but his analysis has limited engagement with the broader conversations happening since at least the 1990s about race and gender in rock. This leaves a few sections of the book feeling underdeveloped.

The section on all-girl garage bands from the sixties (80–83) included welcome examples of bands not often mentioned in rock histories. It is potentially problematic, however, that this section appears in a chapter primarily dedicated to describing substyles of garage rock. With a few exceptions mainly found in the chapter on contemporary music, the women musicians mentioned in the book are relegated to these four pages instead of appearing alongside their geographic or sonic peers. Presented without explanation, this organization makes it possible to read Bovey as saying that garage rock is by definition performed by men, with women's participation creating a marked subcategory. In terms of finding musical commonalities between women's bands, Bovey offers only that their playing—with a few noted exceptions—"tends to be less forceful and more rudimentary than that of their male counter-parts" (81). Arguments such as these would have benefitted from more supporting analysis.

[2]Peter Blecha, *Sonic Boom: The History of Northwest Rock, from "Louie Louie" to "Smells Like Teen Spirit"* (New York: Backbeat Books, 2009); Vernon Joyson, *Fuzz, Acid and Flowers: A Comprehensive Guide to American Garage, Psychedelic and Hippie Rock (1964–1975)* (Telford: Borderline, 2004).

[3]See Eric James Abbey, *Garage Rock and Its Roots: Musical Rebels and the Drive for Individuality* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006). This text does not come up in Bovey's book, but it essentially takes the opposite tactic: devoting chapters to theorizing garage rock but sticking to a more limited range of examples.

[4]For just a few of many examples of scholarship on rock history narratives, see: Daphne A. Brooks, "The Write to Rock: Racial Mythologies, Feminist Theory, and the Pleasures of Rock Music Criticism," *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 12, no. 1 (2008): 54–62; Norma Coates, "Teenyboppers, Groupies, and Other Grotesques: Girls and Women and Rock Culture in the 1960s and Early 1970s," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 15, no. 1 (2003): 65–94; Jack Hamilton, *Just around Midnight: Rock and Roll and the Racial Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016); Maureen Mahon, "Listening for Willie Mae 'Big Mama' Thornton's Voice: The Sound of Race and Gender Transgressions in Rock and Roll," *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 15, no. 1 (2011): 1–17; and the essays in Sheila Whiteley ed., *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

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The fact that "garage rock" as defined by the examples in this book is largely performed by white musicians also remains somewhat underexamined. Bovey clearly expresses that black music was important to white garage rockers, but this understanding combines with his efforts to show that white bands made musical innovations in ways that can reinforce a hegemonic narrative that other scholars are currently working to complicate. Certain statements left me reflecting on Roshanak Kheshti's observation that the way rock is described can rely on a "division of labor that once again relegates women and people of color to the role of producing the raw materials that are to be refined by those imagined to be more socially and politically capable."[5] "In the case of the Beatles," writes Bovey, for example, "their music was most influenced by Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly and the Crickets and Carl Perkins, while their vocal style was distilled from the singing of Little Richard, the Shirelles, the Drifters and the Miracles. With great facility, the Beatles digested these raw materials and worked them into highly original and inventive songs that appealed to a very large audience" (61). Bovey believes that it would not be correct to view garage musicians as "mere revivalists or purists" of R&B because they were not directly copying it, but that instead we should think of them as striving to "capture the primal energies of an earlier form of rock 'n' roll" because they put their own spin on the music (22). White musicians finding "authenticity" in and through black music and then later being heard as authentic themselves, however, have a lot to do with the whitening of rock history. "Rock and roll became white in large part because of stories people told themselves about it," Jack Hamilton reminds us, "stories that have come to structure the way we listen to an entire era of sound."[6]

Five Years Ahead of My Time is not the book for those looking for critique of those whitewashed stories that built rock. It is a book that for the most part takes the dominant narrative and seeks to give it the broadest treatment that 177 pages will allow. Bovey provides numerous examples to work outward from, and hopefully his work will inspire further conversation about garage rock and its relationship to rock writ large.

Leah Branstetter, PhD, is a music historian specializing in rock and roll. She currently runs *Women in Rock and Roll's First Wave* (womeninrockproject.org), a web project dedicated to preserving the stories of women rockers in the 1950s and early 1960s. She is also active as an educator and has contributed to education initiatives for the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Steven Van Zandt's Rock and Roll Forever Foundation.

[5]Roshanak Kheshti, "Musical Miscegenation and the Logic of Rock and Roll: Homosocial Desire and Racial Productivity in 'A Paler Shade of White,'" *American Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (December 31, 2008): 1037–55, https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.0.0040, 1050.

[6]Jack Hamilton, *Just around Midnight*, 7.

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