

Ultimately, the sub-text here is a critique of late capitalist economics and cultural value. It is a re-affirmation not only of the power of music as a social force and as a key resource for transforming subjectivities, and of the ethos that 'small is still beautiful', but of the pluralism of small cultural group activity (cultural cohorts) and the efficacy of cultural networks in forging new cultural formations for social and ecological survival. Turino cites the Andean saying 'If you do not give to the earth she will not give to you' (p. 232). As we end the first decade of the twenty-first century in a disparate world of expanding urbanism where the media, governments, financial institutions and corporations have been mutually feeding off each other inspired by ruthless ideologies of power and greed, this book in a sense is a plea for living the world through music in alternative ways, and thereby is itself, for this reader at least, of enormous value.

Jan Fairley

Edinburgh, UK

References

Turino, T. 1993. *Moving Away From Silence* (University of Chicago Press)

Turino, T. 2000. *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe* (University of Chicago Press)

***British Film Music and Film Musicals*. By K.J. Donnelly. Houndmills & New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 222 pp. ISBN 978-1-4039-9673-2 (hb) doi:10.1017/S0261143009990584**

In recent years, much attention has been paid to so-called visual culture. At the same time, the auditive dimension of such *audiovisual* media forms as cinema has passed largely unnoticed. This is particularly odd taken that nowadays movie theatres with, for example, a THX sound reproduction system, constitute a sought-after norm, and that film music composers and sound designers are awarded Oscars and other prizes. At the same time, analytical accounts on the sonorous dimension of cinema culture are written mainly from a rather traditional musicological point of departure and are heavily dominated by the aesthetic considerations of film music. With this in mind, K.J. Donnelly's book *British Film Music and Film Musicals* raises high hopes, not only because of its general topic but also for its local and national emphasis.

In Donnelly's own words, the aim of the book is, 'to provide coverage of some of the rich, engaging and interesting films and music that have been produced by the British cinema' (p. 13). In general, I would argue, Donnelly does what he sets out to do, and in the end the reader is provided with substantial amount of information about the musical phases and products of the British cinema. At the same time it has to be admitted that this goal is indeed ambitious, as combining broad historical outlines and in-depth case studies is by no means an easy task. And here, I would like to return to the key terms explicated by Donnelly as the intended aim of his book.

First, from that key sentence let's examine the word 'coverage'. While the reader is acquainted with various historical forms of music in the British cinema, reaching from Gainsborough melodramas to *Spice World*, a more theoretically solid approach

would have been in order. On many occasions it appears instead that the phenomena in question have been treated in the manner which has suited the author best. It should be acknowledged, however, that in the Introduction Donnelly speculates whether, 'the key is to think of film musicals less in relation to general cinematic traditions than in relation to the music industry and popular music traditions' (p. 6). Indeed, Donnelly's most insightful thoughts deal with the relationship between aesthetic solutions and the context of commercial industrial production. In this respect, his account is an appropriate reminder of the usefulness of a cultural materialist point of departure, as the separation of the aesthetic from the industrial is more the outcome of analytical paradigms than empirical fact.

Donnelly's theoretical thinness nevertheless becomes blatantly obvious when he is dealing, for example, with so-called classical film scores (p. 72). Here, he is giving credit primarily to Kathryn Kalinak, who in her 1992 book *Settling the Score* deals extensively with mainstream Hollywood non-diegetic (i.e. 'background') scores. The 'classical' model was, however, introduced in detail by Claudia Gorbman half a decade earlier in *Unheard Melodies* (1987) – which for Donnelly serves mainly as a second-hand source of film composers' quotes. Furthermore, Donnelly's account is based on a rather unproblematised version of the history of popular music, where rock 'n' roll represents a taken-for-granted, 'authentic' form of cultural rebellion that through, for example, films starring Cliff Richard, becomes 'recuperat[ed] into the established structures of mainstream show business' (p. 150) regardless of its apparent commercial background in the first place. In addition, the 'myths' of the 1960s are reinforced by reserving one chapter for *A Hard Day's Night* – The Beatles film, that is – and labelling it 'The Musical Revolution', while reminding the reader of the 'astonishing attempt' constituted by *Absolute Beginners*, 'to reinvent British music culture through bypassing the dominant popular cultural heritage of the protean 1960s and The Beatles' (p. 177).

The second key term from the book's aim to address is 'some'. In other words, it would serve the reader better if the criteria of selection of the various analysed films were explicated. This is quite simply a matter of credibility: taken that there are only 'a handful of exceptions' when it comes to the 'musical dimension' included in films (p. 2), it seems hardly plausible that one single scholar would have seen and heard all the remaining ones. Yet to Donnelly's credit it must be mentioned that he provides the reader with a succinct definition of 'British' cinema, grounded reasonably in the production context rather than vague ideas of 'national pride, consensus and unity' (p. 7).

The third, fourth and fifth key words from Donnelly's book are 'rich', 'engaging' and 'interesting'. In the final analysis, these are empty words and tell more about the writer than the objects to which they are attached. In other words, it is virtually impossible to escape from the idea that there is a set mission behind the treatment of the topic, which can be reduced to Donnelly's plea to challenge the contention of the history of British cinema as 'one of unparalleled mediocrity' (p. 1). Here one can also turn back to the theoretical backbone of the study, as quite understandably, what is 'rich, engaging and interesting' depends to a great extent on approach.

Nevertheless, *British Film Music and Film Musicals* constitutes a valuable addition to the analytical literature on music in films, especially for its emphasis on the relations between aesthetics and the production contexts. Equally important is the explicit challenge towards the hegemony of mainstream Hollywood cinema

– although it might very well be worth addressing the global if not post-colonial/neo-imperial aspects of British cinema more carefully. This is implicitly connected to the fact that the English language – in its ‘unbroken’ form or not – is, for the time being, the most widespread of linguistic form of academic communication in the world, which causes obvious challenges for native English-speaking writers. This inspires consideration of two additional subjects: explication of the target audience and acceptance of diverse non-native critiques (such as this one). Regarding the former requirement, Donnelly’s account remains rather obscure. With respect to the latter, one can only wait. In both cases, however, *British Film Music and Film Musicals* can function as a fruitful provocation, inasmuch as it provides us with evidence of the dynamics and tensions of the global and the national – or the local, if you so wish – of film music.

Antti-Ville Kärjä

University of Turku, Finland

References

Kalinak, K. 1992. *Settling The Score, Music and The Classical Hollywood Film* (University of Wisconsin Press)
Gorbman, C. 1987. *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Indiana University Press)

***The Words and Music of Neil Young*. By Ken Bielen. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008. 177 pp. ISBN: 978-0-275-9902-5**

***The Words and Music of Patti Smith*. By Joe Tarr. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008. 149 pp. ISBN: 978-0-275-99411-2
doi:10.1017/S0261143009990596**

Ever since Bob Dylan electrified topical folk music in the 1960s, sparking renewed topical explorations in R&B, rock, pop, and more, the singer-songwriter has become a locus of high expectations in popular music. More autonomous and less collaborative than content creation in other electronic media, topical song-writing has brought undiluted political, ethnic, gendered, working-class and otherwise Othered voices to audiences of millions. In fast-paced cultures where change is a constant (anthropologist Margaret Mead called them prefigurative, The Clash said ‘the future is unwritten’), recording artists with perceptive and expressive abilities beyond the norm share important anticipatory views of where we may be going. At the peak of their abilities, singer-songwriters make manifest the value and importance of popular communication as culture and as a site of meaning-making.

Enter the Praeger Singer-Songwriter Collection (or Series), edited by James E. Perone, who has also authored nearly half its titles. The stated intention is for each book to proceed chronologically through its subject’s recorded output, serving at least in part as a listening guide to that artist’s body of work. In his series introduction, Perone cautions that due to the range of subjects and variety of authors, the nature of the books will differ. And differ they do. In terms of making a judgement about the series, one of Perone’s books probably should have been included. This review endeavours to articulate this reader’s impressions of the volumes about Patti Smith and Neil Young, neither authored by Perone. A common denominator is that both authors are deeply familiar with the musical output of their subjects,