

# Reviews

***Banda – Mexican Musical Life Across Borders.* By Helena Simonett. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2001. 373 pp. DOI:10.1017/S0261143004219018**

This book stands alone in its coverage of banda, so almost anything the author could tell us is a novelty. Yet there is no complacency here. Simonett sets about her task with gusto, unleashing a gripping tale of Mexican cowboys, migration, transmigration, and urbanite Mexican-Americans adopting the trappings of cowboys as symbols of identity.

Banda is a regional music originating in the Mexican northwest, mainly the state of Sinaloa. Its name, as you may have guessed, is a metonym for the instrumentation – wind band. Its origins, traced back to the nineteenth century, are humble: street music played at cattle fairs, carnival pageants and fiestas, where the piercing brass and the *tambora* drum became a necessity lest the music might drown in the din of trade and festivity. Waltzes, corridos and *sones sinaloenses* made up the repertoire, which also included more melodious songs, particularly at a later stage, when amplification made a vocal soloist viable and gave rise to ‘technobanda’. From Sinaloa the music travelled north following the massive migratory waves of Mexicans seeking a better life.

In California, the music enjoyed no more mainstream approval than the immigrants themselves, although it is only fair to say that banda’s standing would be barely any higher ‘back home’. For a swelling Mexican-American population, eager to assimilate, it was no skin off their collective nose to cast off a music that even in Mexico would have had the unsavoury whiff of plebeian coarseness. Or so it seemed, until change supervened.

The change in question was a rather delicious paradox. As Governor Wilson’s administration cracked down on immigration, on the convenient excuse that the immigrants were to blame for the state’s economic ills, the Mexicans, legal or not, became defiant. The early 1990s saw a surge of interest in their Mexican roots, language, dress and, of course, music. Why it had to be banda, and not the more respectable mariachi, is one of the questions to which Simonett addresses herself with zest, devoting the best part of Chapter 5 to it. The fact is that banda was unfurled as a banner of ethnic pride, and by 1992 a Hispanic radio station, KLAX 97.9 FM, was enjoying the highest audience share of all Californian broadcasters, turning banda into an unprecedented commercial phenomenon. *Billboard* magazine declared 1993 ‘the banda year’, and by 1994 Chicano scholars felt able to proclaim: ‘We are becoming the mainstream’.

Simonett wears her scholarship lightly. She situates herself firmly in the milieu of French and German thinkers on culture and history – Schapp, Ricœur – but most of her quotations, from the likes of Geertz and Pacini Hernández, suggest that North-American ethnomusicology is her immediate habitat. Fortunately she does not

let theory stand between herself and her theme. The book bears out her avowed intention to take a 'hands-on approach, based on direct contact with the people who make it happen' (p. 8). She is, indeed, at her most engaging when she lets her subjects speak, in what must have been skilfully conducted interviews, eliciting a wealth of matter-of-fact critical and narrative statements.

In trying to unravel the tangle of political and economic forces pulling at this genre before and after the Mexican diaspora, Simonett asks an interesting question: Why did mariachi become accepted as the national music of Mexico and not banda? In her search for an answer she paints a vivid portrait of subaltern currents springing from rural sources and of musicians struggling to eke out a living in an unstable, often violent environment, facing the contempt of the establishment ('Why don't you study some *nice* Mexican music such as mariachi?' asked her hosts in Mexico City). Her findings, based on the analyses of, among others, the Mexican thinker Samuel Ramos, suggest that the nationalisation of mariachi was a manufactured exercise in image-making, based on a whitewashed, 'for export' version of what Mexican identity is or should be. Banda, on the other hand, gathered strength over decades of official rejection, pressing upwards from below and, following a boomerang trajectory after its success in the United States, irrupted on the Mexican consciousness proudly proclaiming its *sangre de indio* (an Indian's blood, title of a banda hit). Underlying this narrative seethes the politics of racial and social oppression – white Mexican boss over humble mestizo, Anglo establishment over immigrant, and a glimpse of the ultimate vindication of the oppressed.

The main weakness in this study is its lack of engagement with the music. Lucid in her discussion of social process, thorough in her pursuit of historical detail, tireless in the piecing together of evidence substantiating her narrative, Simonett is, on the other hand, not very prodigal in musical information. If you did not know what kind of sound banda makes – or why – after reading this book you will be none the wiser. You will find precious little about tempo, texture, harmony, arrangements or performance idiosyncrasies. She shows no interest in deciphering the musical codes. How did the Cuban clave find its way into this Mexico-Californian brew? (e.g. Banda El Recodo's *Te acuerdas*) Why is a hit like the same band's *Por una mujer casada* so redolent of The Klezmerim's bulgars? To add insult to injury, she quotes lyrics extensively and analyses some of them, implicitly subscribing to the myth that popular music can be studied by looking at the words and not the music – a notion unwittingly discredited in her own interviews, where some subjects are variously dismissive (Victoria) or oblivious (Cristina) to the words of a music they clearly love.

On a more pedestrian level, the book would have benefited from another hand of proofreading, especially where it lapses – almost always unnecessarily – into Spanish. Reservations aside, Simonett's achievement must not be underestimated. This is an absorbing book, full of lucid, unpretentious thinking and transparent in its narrative.

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***Shake Rattle and Rain: Popular Music Making in Manchester 1955–1995.* By C. P. Lee. Hardinge Simpole, 2002. 316 pp. DOI:10.1017/S0261143004229014**

One of the most encouraging developments in Popular Music Studies in recent years has been a concentration on issues of local music-making. In a sense this has been a form of democratisation whereby music-making at the coal face has taken precedence over coverage of stars. The work of Sara Cohen, Ruth Finnegan and others has increased understanding of the daily practice of popular musicians and power relations in the music industry, while John Street and others have illustrated the importance of local government policy and Will Straw has pioneered work on local scenes. In sum, locality has become a key area of investigation.

In such a climate, *Shake, Rattle and Rain* comes as something of a disappointment. What are we to make of a book written by an academic who admits that ‘there is no underlying or central argument in this book’ (p. 249)? Might we not at least expect to be subject to analysis of why Manchester has produced so many successful acts (artistically and commercially)? Instead we are told that the book is not aiming to look at local or regional issues (*ibid.*). The book is about Mancunians, not Manchester. Commentary is almost frowned on as Lee says that he has ‘restricted my interventions to minimum’ (p. 5).

This is because his aim is to ‘allow the voices of musicians to speak for themselves’ (p. 1) and to present an oral history because, argues Lee, ‘In too many cases participants in Popular Music have been deprived of their voices’ (p. 5). This is certainly true and Lee is to be commended for trying to redress the balance. However, while the approach adopted is something of an asset in that we get to hear direct from participants themselves, it is also something of a drawback as broader issues are not fully addressed. While Lee succeeds in letting the musicians’ voices come through, the under-utilisation of critical commentary left this reader wondering what we are meant to make of all this. It might also be worth suggesting that a forty-year history merits more than the fourteen interviews referenced here, three of which are actually with *non*-musicians. In addition, none of the interviewees are women, although Lee does apologise for the absence of women (pp. 8–9).

Another problem is that Lee is trying to please too many different audiences. He seemingly wants to write a populist account without the sort of academic discourse which might alienate the casual reader, yet on occasion he also wants to theorise. Thus we get excursions into ‘Situationist psychogeographics’ (p. 56), assertions about ‘the cultural construction of Oasis’ (p. 10), comments about ‘hegemonic autocracy’ (p. 14) and music being ‘mediated through the dominant bourgeois hegemony’ (p. 20); aside hyperbolic comments about a ‘legendary producer’ (p. 30), a description of Bob Dylan as ‘almost messianic’ (p. 61) as well as ‘the Sex Pistol’s (*sic*) Nashville pub massacre’ and of ‘Pretty Vacant’ as ‘an anthemic rallying cry for the disaffected youth of 70’s Britain’ (p. 129). All this serves to render the text almost schizophrenic at times.

The work is also curiously dated. It is clear that the transition from doctoral thesis to book has been a long process. At one point (p. 59) the book is described as ‘this dissertation’. The interviews are all six years old and Tony Wilson is said to be co-owner of the Hacienda which ‘still promotes live bands’ (p. 202). However, the club actually closed in 1997. This lack of attention to detail is often irritating. It is also strange not to see Dave Haslam’s book *Manchester, England* (2000) referred to at all.

For me, the best and most interesting part of the book is when Lee discusses the Chief Constable of Manchester’s Annual Report of 1964 and the subsequent passing of the Manchester Corporation Act, which contributed to the decimation of the city’s

beat clubs. This sort of forensic analysis is necessary if the real story behind the authorities' reaction to pop 'outrages', such as punk and raves, is ever to be revealed and understood. Here Lee presents an official response as a perceived problem in youth culture and thus provides insight into the views of those who stop popular music in its tracks. However, he also admits that some of the accounts of the actions of local gangsters and others in the book 'are unsubstantiated rumours and hearsay' (p. 67).

Moreover, even this account is not without its hyperbole. Lee appears to be shocked that the authorities should take an interest in illegal activities (such as drug-taking) in clubs. Thus what seems to this reader to have been a fairly dispassionate report by the Chief Constable is described as 'moral outrage' (p. 72). Setting aside the issue of whether one Chief Constable's Report can be said to constitute a moral panic, what is more worrying is that Lee seems to take moral panic theory at face value and does not engage with those critiques of moral panic theory which suggest it undervalues a genuine sense of grievance and/or concern amongst people about the antics of youth. Here the populist in the author wins out over the academic. The latter might have been tempted to ask whether any of the Chief Constable's allegations had any truth in them.

As a long-term participant in the Manchester music scene, Lee is inevitably not as detached as academics generally strive to be (although he usually avoids too many re-iterations of 'I was there'). Passionate about both place and music, any book of this type runs the risk of being accused of giving too little attention to certain acts, but Lee's lack of attention to The Smiths seems to me to have been a major omission, which is presumably due to lack of access to the band. There are also annoying inaccuracies. A Guy Called Gerald is wrongly called A Man Called Gerald, although this is corrected in the list of Manchester Groups at the back of the book. The 1990 rave legislation is also wrongly named. (Lest this seem like nitpicking, see Lee's own comments on Dick Hebdige and his alleged Londoncentric views on punk.)

Yet, there is a great deal to enjoy in this book. As with any decent popular music history it evokes the music itself and so provides a wealth of memories. For example, Lee is very good at showing how seminal live events such as Bob Dylan's appearance at the Free Trade Hall in May 1966 and the Sex Pistols at the Lesser Free Trade Hall in June 1976 provided a catalyst for many musical events in Manchester during later years. Lee's discussions of the activities of the Music Force organisation and *The Hot Flash* and *City Fun* magazines show how a comparatively small number of (often politically motivated) activists can have a major impact on popular music within a given city. Here the words of various participants add to our knowledge of popular music history.

But ultimately I fear that an opportunity to make a major contribution to understanding the local dialectics of popular music-making has been missed. Hopefully when Lee writes the promised update he will let the academic triumph over the populist.

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*Guide to Andalusian Flamenco*. Junta de Andalucía, 2003 [flamenco@andalucia.org, www.andaluciaflamenco.org]. 233 pp. DOI:10.1017/S0021932004

*Duende, a Journey in Search of Flamenco*. By Jason Webster. Doubleday, 2003. 292 pp. DOI:10.1017/S0261143004239010

I read *Duende* in the best circumstances, cover to cover, sick in bed with flu when thoughts of being in Spanish heat were the hallucination I craved. It is such a racy, anecdotal, titillating, thriller-like story of clandestine sex, jealous husbands, car thieves and drug-taking that passing mid-point I started to read more slowly. Yet the title *Duende* was initially off-putting. Occasionally translated as 'soul', it is a cathartic pivotal point in performance, a transcendent moment of perception that can occur when a flamenco musician (singer, guitarist or dancer) sublimates themselves into the complexity of emotion they search to express, taking you out of time with them. It's actually a state of mind, however momentary. The musician needs an instinctive intuitive relationship with the tradition and their emotional imagination and capabilities must be huge. 'Duende' cannot be manufactured, although some flamenco musicians on occasion try theatrically to physically charge themselves there like a method actor. Yet flamenco musicians rarely if ever use the word 'duende' themselves. Its usage seems to have emerged around the time of the 1922 Granada flamenco singing contest organised by intellectuals like Manuel de Falla and Federico Garcia Lorca of the generation of twenty-seven who had an apocalyptic vision of flamenco disappearing as it became more popular and professionalised in the *Café Cantantes*, seeking with the contest to find the unknown people from villages and not the consecrated figures of the times.

So it isn't a taboo to use the work 'duende', but it's not used over-readily by flamenco musicians themselves. 'Duende' is a word used by critics, academics and occasionally the aficionados who follow the scene so closely as to be effectively part of it. They are the ones who best perceive 'duende' and are moved by it. In the 'new flamenco' period of the 1980s, 'duende' became a PR spin word and thus debased and even more avoided.

Webster's use of it to peg his book on does not offend, although it does signal that at root his is an obvious route into this fabulously rich yet often hermetic world. In fact what Webster is searching for is the loss of self that seems to occur to an artist when they achieve 'duende' and as such the title works well: he's perhaps searching for the loss of his British self, indeed almost certainly so. Rather than hang out with the famous (who might have been difficult for a complete novice to approach), Webster seeks the ordinary 'flamenco' people. Unfortunately his approach in bringing them to the page is often reductive: at one level his book is tabloid material, full of people rendered as stereotypes, leaving the impression of vivid cartoons. Some 'characters' are obviously based on real people; others feel two-dimensional fabrications, composites to move the story along.

Indeed the narrative almost obscures the flamenco knowledge inside it. Yet there is real 'insider' material here: facts and informed opinions pattern the text, although perhaps too intermittently. The flamenco underworld of some Madrid gypsies rings true, as does their opportunistic 'use' of Webster, the 'gueri' outsider. However, somehow the meanings of flamenco for those who create it remain elusive. Yet Webster touches on flamenco as a way of life, a way of thinking, a way of being, the only way. It's the way of those who, as singer Jose Mercé once told me, defiantly put their fingers up to



both God and luck and thus carry life's darkest, deepest meanings inside them. Yet despite being a populist, sensational book for that train or plane journey, through Webster's 'rite de passage' one becomes endeared to him: his whole-hearted immersion in the lifestyle may have been self-driven, but he hung in, respected what he found and was accepted for the risks he took. Hopefully *Duende* will attract more people to Spain to hear Europe's most emotional music. Webster tours perhaps?

Which leads me straight to *The Guide to Andalusian Flamenco*, compiled and funded by the Tourist Department of the Andalusian Government, a book also read cover to cover on a long train journey when I was coincidentally planning a trip to Spain and which by the time this review is read I will have tried and tested. A welcome volume, it is again a non-academic book and intended for musical tourists but is tremendously useful for anyone interested in flamenco, Spanish culture and indeed passionate about music. Beginning with a fairly good if brief introduction to the history and origins of flamenco written in rather Latin romantic, florid style, it is structured around seven flamenco routes through flamenco territory to be followed by car, train, bus or on foot, taking you to key places of flamenco history, including where important people were born and hung out, as well as where you can find flamenco today. With beautiful photographs, it is rich with the sights, sounds and smells of the scene over the years. Being familiar with some of this territory, I found it accurate about the places I already know and tantalising for those I do not: Route 1 is that of the '*Bajañí* (guitar), Cádiz and Sevilla'; Route 2 is the 'Route of the (*sic*) creation: the traces of Chacón, Málaga, Granada and Córdoba'; Route 3 is 'Route of Cayetano: the *abandolaos* singing. Córdoba'; Route 4 is that of 'the three-four time. Basic singings (*sic*). Sevilla and Cádiz'; Route 5 is 'Huelva and its *fandangos*', while Route 6 is 'The mining route. Jaén and Almería'. Finally, Route 7 is the 'Route of the great figures. From Sevilla to Málaga'. Each section is liberally illustrated and paints an irresistible picture.

This is followed by a biographical section divided into three – flamenco singing, dancing and flamenco playing. While the lengths of entries are, as with so many reference books, disparate and strangely uneven, some offering slightly extraneous facts suggesting the information has been culled from elsewhere, they certainly cover what anyone trying to get into the genre would want to know. The sections of styles and the glossary are equally useful and in no way superficial: interestingly enough, *duende* is defined thus: 'According to the Real Academia Española de Lengua it is a mysterious and ineffable enchantment of flamenco singing. In this poetic expression the magic, supposed to be intrinsic to flamenco, is mentioned. According to Caballero Bonard, it has a lot to do with Dionysian rites, where a type of collective state of trance is lived' (p. 197). There is also a comprehensive directory which is invaluable for anyone seriously wanting to chase flamenco in Spain if only for pleasure. It is for this reason the book is valuable: it more than ably fulfils what it sets out to do.

Flamenco is still very much an oral tradition and while there are various books published in Spanish, there is as yet no 'bible' in either Spanish or English. The one thing this book lacks is a bibliography; but then, geared as it is to an English-speaking audience, it probably refrains from including one because anything useful is in Spanish. For anyone who knows little about flamenco but loves Spain and wants to know more, this book is a great way in, particularly as it comes with two superb CDs, one with fifty-five tracks, the other with forty-four, specially recorded for the publication. These introduce not just voices but most flamenco forms, using some of the most amazing singers who are inevitably just the tip of the iceberg of those in Spain

today. Like continental menus translated into English, the English translation (by 'Idiomas Babel') particularly of the introduction is quirky in places, but let's not be churlish, one can fathom it out.

The refreshing thing about this book is that it shows the pride and passion of Andalucia for its own music and the huge respect held for those who have continually participated in the life of one of Europe's oldest traditions. Flamenco is perceived by many as one of the most difficult musical forms in terms of accessibility, not merely because of its language and culture but also because of the complexity of its singing styles. As a passionate flamenco follower and flamenco record reviewer for many years, perhaps I'll take my own advice to Webster and provide guided flamenco tours based on this book. Watch this space!

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***Karaoke Nights: An Ethnographic Rhapsody.* By Rob Drew. Atamira Press, 2001. 160 pp. ISBN 0759100470. DOI:10.1017/S0261143004249017**

As ethnographic studies go, Rob Drew's *Karaoke Nights* is almost as much an examination of the author's own fascination with his subject as of the titular form of entertainment itself. This might seem like a weakness in an academic text but, given the often self-reflexive nature of karaoke performances, it turns out to be one of the main strengths of a highly readable book.

Drew's theoretical analysis of karaoke is shot through with autobiographical episodes and social observations which range from the humorous to the poignant but never stray into irrelevance. Whilst his affection for his comrades in karaoke is evident throughout, Drew maintains a tight focus on his role as an ethnographer and deftly provides a simultaneous account of the joys and embarrassments of the rituals of public performance and the perils and pleasures of 'going native'. With refreshing honesty he maps his own involvement with karaoke onto an account of the social mechanics, and cultural contexts, of the phenomenon.

Rather than presenting 'data' as supposedly unreconstructed raw material for theoretical explanation, I try to muster a voice that dramatises the meanings and feelings that run through a typical karaoke night. This means dwelling on the concrete and the particular, using stories to convey some of the processual, improvised quality of events. (pp. 28–9)

Drew's intuitive approach to the phenomenon, however, belies his methodical and thorough dissection of the various styles and motivations of karaoke singers. He takes us through the minefield of ways in which performances can succeed or fail and the techniques that participants use to try and circumvent it. His portraits of 'The Self-Deprecator', 'The Clown' and 'The Improvisor', in Chapter 2, are well-crafted examples of the anecdote as a pivot for a theoretical point rather than a distraction from it. These stories flesh out his central argument about karaoke being a form of both public, and at the same time very personal, expression, as opposed to merely fannish wish fulfilment. Performers not only reveal their vocal limitations but put their cultural preferences and ability to judge their surroundings under scrutiny when they take up the microphone. Whilst Drew does not deny the rhetoric of stardom that

infuses karaoke – professional backing tapes, lights and a central role on stage – he paints a clear picture of the ‘everyday’, but not mundane, examples of mutual support, as well as the rivalries, that pervade karaoke bars. The camaraderie and inclusiveness of the karaoke audience can mitigate technical failures, whereby someone forgets the words or chooses a song in the wrong key, which would doom a professional performance. His qualms about karaoke competitions originate not from those performers who would be unequal to the task of singing on television or in a studio but rather those with a professional gloss who transcend the ‘easy-going, convivial world of karaoke’ and move the goal posts towards the more cut-throat ‘winner-take-all world of pop stardom’ (p. 122). If karaoke, Drew argues, depends upon the trappings of stardom and the output of the big-budget mass media, it uses them to allow people to explore their own potential, both musically and socially.

Drew states his parameters, or chooses his songs, quite specifically, at the outset of the book. It is not a history of karaoke from its inception in Japan, or an overview of its international impact as an industry, but a close-up study of its uses in the bars of the United States. In his assiduous attention to the characters inhabiting this world, he covers not only the performers but the emcees and non-performing members of the audience as well. This nevertheless begs questions about the relationship of the karaoke *industry* to that of the mass media in general. He makes a heartfelt case for the aesthetic and social worth of karaoke and defends it against accusations of mere dilettantism, but does not carry this through into a more detailed examination of the financial negotiations and processes by which some people make their *living* through karaoke. MCs, software manufacturers and certain studio musicians provide points of contact between the amateur and the professional worlds. Although Drew offers a vivid account of the social interaction of emcees and their audiences, and the emotional effect that this can have on the MC, a greater and more detailed description of their technical and financial working practices would help to contextualise the personal and social stories on offer. If many of the MCs are sole-traders, small businesses, or even hobbyists, there is still an industry that surrounds karaoke and it would have been useful to read more about how it interacts with the mass media in general. Similarly, Drew makes basic the valid point about karaoke being a ‘local’ music and compares the budding karaokists to putative rock musicians, but never carries this through to an examination of how karaoke fits into the local music scene in general. Given that his choice of venue is the local bar, a traditional source of income for fledgling bands, it would be interesting to find out what kind of impact it has had on bookings for bands and DJs and their reaction to it.

These are, however, minor caveats. Rob Drew’s book is, as a whole, a satisfying read. His forthright and unapologetic defence of karaoke is nicely offset by an amiable prose style that is as adept and professional as the karaoke performances are rough and ready, but no less honest. By using the tools of cultural theory and old-fashioned story telling, he places the phenomenon of karaoke into the wider context of popular culture and social interaction as well as bringing to life the feelings of those involved. In doing so, he achieves the difficult feat of straddling two stools without falling between them.

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**Louis Prima.** By Garry Boulard. University of Illinois Press, 2002. 192 pp. ISBN 0-252-07090-9. DOI:10.1017/S0261143004259013

Originally published in 1989 as *Just a Gigolo*, this reprint in paperback comes in the wake of a revival of interest in Prima's music, particularly in its 1950s manifestation, in the late 1990s. It is a welcome gathering of the salient biographical details, cogently presented. The critical viewpoint is positive, falling well short of hagiography. However, negative opinions are not quoted directly for the most part and therefore not dealt with as serious contending viewpoints.

Boulard is at his best in painting the social, ethnic and family background to Prima's development in the early decades of the twentieth century. In particular, he highlights an affinity between the black and Sicilian populations of the New Orleans region and points to the shared historical experience, albeit on different continents, of landless agrarian labouring classes. The willingness of Sicilian immigrants to accept the kinds of menial work usually reserved for the black working class led to a degree of ostracism from white society. The shared experience of victimisation (leaving aside the sharp distinction between wage-slavery and actual slavery) was reinforced by shared, pre-industrial assumptions about the role of music and musicians. Both communities saw it as natural to support itinerant musicians and to expect music to provide a form of direct self-expression, rather than as a subscription to social acceptability.

Thus when the youthful Louis (Prima) first heard the not-much-less youthful Louis (Armstrong), his reaction could be subtly different from that of most white musicians who, equally struck by Armstrong's brilliant innovation, nevertheless adopted the jazz life much as an exotic badge of modernism. For Prima, the boldness of Armstrong's self-expression would have been familiar in its intentions: what was new was the extent of its genius. It was a psychological example much closer to home than it could have been for most of white American society.

The psychological roots of this complex character are indicated: the familial encouragement of a drive for success (if not, ultimately, in the hoped-for profession), the dominating relationship with his mother which complicated his relationships with a series of wives – both directly and through his own developed expectations of womanhood, and the contrast between the quiet, introspective, private Louis and the ebullient, spontaneous eruptions of Louis the performer.

While these factors, combined with solid technique and musical awareness, can point towards an explanation of Prima's emergence to popularity and stardom in at least four different decades with four different styles of music, any development of 'Prima Studies' will have to await a companion volume delving deeper into the specific technical and performative factors informing each change of direction.

In the preface to the first edition (and what a pity the University of Illinois Press have suppressed the original title), Boulard explicitly disclaims the objective of producing a 'critical biography', but while this is a perfectly fair initial limitation of objectives, a study of the musical, psychological and social tensions between the demands of musical prowess and popular success might have added significantly to the literature in general, as well as providing some technical ballast for assertions about the stylistic choices and mixtures initiated, or accepted, by Prima at various stages of his career.

The book rather assumes an existing knowledge of Prima's music on the part of the reader, although those who read on will find themselves encouraged to explore his recorded legacy. In this respect, a current discography would have been helpful. In all,

this is a book of valuable biographical detail, providing a basis for further exploration of a complex character whose success was based on real musical ability. While not a leading innovator, Prima was always open to the 'new thing' and his professionalism was ultimately that of an entertainer who loved nothing better than the cultivation of a live audience.

Bill Sweeney

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*Up From The Underground: The Culture of Rock Music in Postsocialist Hungary.* By Anna Szemere. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001. 246 pp. DOI:10.1017/S026114300426901X

As her previous work in the field has blazingly proved, there is no-one better placed to write about rock music within Hungarian culture than Anna Szemere; anyone who is, like me, interested in the history of popular music and attendant cultures in Hungary already has much to thank her for. While her previous work has examined the role of rock under state socialism, this book examines how the meanings and discourses of rock function in the new, free-market economy. Hungarian politics post-1989 demonstrate a rhythmic swing of their own: from the pseudo-Thatcherite free-marketeers under Peter Baross; then back to the reinvented socialists of Gyula Horn (the man who famously cut the wire on Hungary's western borders allowing East Germans to pass in to Austria, thus arguably precipitating the fall of the Berlin Wall and all that followed); then to the centre via the current government with the poster-boy of the post-1989 scene, Viktor Orban as prime minister. This remarkably well-researched book traces the role of rock music throughout these mini-revolutions in Hungarian society, and their meaning for culture, while acknowledging the problems of understanding and writing about such processes and changes while they are still in flux.

Much of the book's strength comes from extensive interviews with musicians from the 'old wave' who made a kind of living under socialism, although best-known Hungarian rock group of that era, Lokomotiv GT, are absent from the book. Szemere also speaks to the younger generation and the entrepreneurs who now exert economic as opposed to ideological pressures on production. Bands like Bizottsag (Committee) and Vagtazo Halotkemek (Galloping Coroners) were perceived as both oppositional and dangerous but also understood as mimetic of western models, the location of their former counter-cultural credentials.

Szemere is particularly strong when she investigates the challenge of change for artists, how they re-define themselves and their task: if you're not in power 'a la Havel', where do you go? It is interesting that some of the older generation of musicians such as Janos Brody and Zsuzsa Kuncz chose to participate in the 'new politics', being unwilling or unable to lay aside the ideological elements which had at least in part driven their work. Szemere finds the younger generation less troubled by this; in a kind of duplication of the schism between 'official' and 'unofficial' musicians under the old system, younger musicians are more interested in issues of commerce and marketability – the competitive elements of the free market – than ideological issues. It's less of a complete, dreamlike tale than those found elsewhere: 'It's not as good a story as Czechoslovakia', commented a student on LMU's Music and Dissent

module, reflecting on the Plastic People of the Universe's journey from enemies of the state to buddies of the president. In Hungary, you have to dig deeper for the stories and Szemere does dig, appropriately, back down into the underground.

As it happens, I was living and working in Budapest at the time research for this book was being conducted, and although I never met the author, I recognise many of the bands, attended their shows, and went to the clubs, that she describes as being new centres of alternative culture; their credibility frequently stemming from their mobility and secrecy. As the book notes, most popular at that time (1993–1996) was 'Tilos az A', (the Hungarian translation of 'Trespassers Will' from *Winnie the Pooh* – revealing the kind of secrecy that was key to the appeal and an understanding of these social spaces). I have happy if slightly fuzzed memories of 'Tilos az A' and likewise a club called 'Crack Jokes' (which Szemere doesn't mention), but which one entered via a hole in a wall, necessitating stooping down before emerging into a cavernous space, an authentic underground, the very image of reclaimed performative social space. And all with cheap drinks!

Post-1989, the mimetic element in Hungarian rock was transformed whilst remaining central to the discourse of indigenous popular music: Beatles/Stones/Dylan models gave way to equally blatantly referenced MTV models with Depeche Mode, Bon Jovi and Anglo-American punk being particularly prevalent. Yet, as Szemere notes, participation within these sub-cultural groups to some extent reconfigures notions of task and identity: this means that a band in Budapest's Eighth District may have more in common with a group rehearsing in Liverpool 8 than they do with the group rehearsing in the flat two doors down. Thus sub-cultural musical communities open up the borders.

This book is so brimful it seems churlish to point out what, in my view, is missing from it, but here goes. In my time in Hungary I noted the very strong influence of MTV on the listening habits of my students and their view of 'homegrown' music, and I'd have like to have heard what musicians and audiences thought about that. Secondly, the book is completely metropolitan in its focus and is actually an investigation of the post-1989 music scene in Budapest rather than Hungary as a whole: there were lively musical scenes outside the capital between 1993 and 1996, at least, and it might have been interesting to examine the tensions between metropolitan and provincial meanings of rock and pop.

For those interested in Hungarian culture, this book is an absolute must. As it also documents a scene in the midst of its own revolution, velvet or otherwise, anyone interested in the theories, methodologies and practices of popular music will find much to provoke thought and debate here. Szemere fearlessly incorporates all the key theories and voices in the popular music studies field and weighs them up against her own expertise and knowledge of her field. She does indeed manage to identify the universal in the local, the overground and the underground.

A postscript: whilst living in Budapest we used to joke that once you could navigate your way around the Budapest Metro system, or underground, you knew that you had really 'arrived' in the city – you had internalised the life of the city, or had been internalised by it – that is, if you understood the underground, you understood the city. In reference to the labyrinthine complexity of the system, we called this 'making the turns'. This book most definitely makes the turns.

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*Living the Jazz Life*. By W. Royal Stokes. Oxford University Press, 2002. 278 pp. £12.99 (pbk). ISBN 0-19-508108-0 (cloth) 0-19-515249-2 (pbk). DOI:10.1017/S0261143004279016

'My objective was only to provide portraits, largely in their own words, of forty or so artists who have played significant roles in the development of the music or who display the potential of doing that and whose personal and professional histories make for interesting . . . reading' (p. x). Thus W. Royal Stokes summarises the aims of this book. He disclaims musicology and defines his method as 'a sort of oral history', but today's musicologists will find much material of interest, particularly in the many passages relating to the early musical experiences of these artists and their early professional lives.

After an initial chapter devoted to 'Musical Families', the narratives are grouped under individual or group instrumental headings, but it becomes clear that a number of themes cross these barriers, just as pianists or drummers refer to the musical influences of saxophonists or vocalists. In fact, Stokes begins the initial chapter: 'A jazz musician's education generally consists of a combination of some, most, or all of the following: listening to records, radio, and live performance; classroom instruction; participation in school bands; private lessons; membership in combos with one's peers while still in school; jam sessions; and on-the-job training with professionals', and the various ways in which these modes of learning are experienced by his subjects are woven to some degree into the fabric of all the interviews.

A comparative study of the development of significant artists in the classical tradition would make a fascinating companion volume, for while many of the activities listed are clearly common to both traditions, the relative significance of each revealed by comparison might yield some insights helpful in the development of music education programmes across the board.

Some striking differences might be the importance of intensive listening, with many repetitions, to particular recorded performances in the 'jazz life': '. . . if I learn it off the record, then I get all the nuance . . . and I can study the soul and the amount of blues feeling and the real, true, organic technique . . .' (Marcus Roberts, p. 102). Listening is here clearly not only a means to the development of technique, but has important functions in developing a sensitivity for artistic empathy. This is linked to the significance of informal self-organised group activity in the development of the jazz artist: '. . . in order to be creative you must also play with other people . . .' (Nat Adderley, p. 13), even where that (most often teenage) activity is orientated towards a different musical style. Formal music-making is often referred to negatively in these narratives, at least where it takes place in the early years. By contrast: 'The four years that I spent with the Thad Jones–Mel Lewis Orchestra is the basis of my musical training. Basically I feel like the whole way I approach music came out of these four years with that band' (Dee Dee Bridgewater, p. 120). The significance of on-the-job training with *professionals* is a consistently expressed factor throughout this book, and is in accord with Stokes' stress on the necessity for the jazz student to have 'exposure to real artists' and the many accounts of the contributors' sometimes strenuous efforts to experience their heroes in live performance.

While the chapter on 'Musical Families' focuses on a number of professional musical dynasties, there is much fascinating material throughout on the different ways in which the jazz traditions are absorbed, sometimes through parental example and sometimes in reaction to it. (A sub-text here is the way in which gospel music

often validates the Afro-American musical style despite the efforts of aspirational parents to guide their young towards more socially prestigious pursuits.) But a common thread seems to be a vividly remembered moment from early childhood, when music has delivered such an intense experience that the adult musician relates his or her subsequent development back to a memory, or image, of that epiphany: 'Across the street from where we lived was the Tabernacle Baptist Church that had a little band. My brother and I used to come from our church and stand outside the Tabernacle Church and listen to the music most of Sunday afternoons when we were little boys because we just liked the feeling – tambourine and trombone and I think they had a blind man playing piano . . . So you put it all together and play what your background tells you to play' (Nat Adderley, p. 11). There are similar, mysteriously touching, reminiscences of this kind from John Stubblefield and Monty Alexander in particular.

There are a number of passages which point to questions of text (whether in its manifestations as score, performance, or even as a range of possibilities within a given style) and authentic expression. Joanne Brackeen's musings about improvisation on her own compositions make a telling point about the distinctive nature of jazz performance: ' . . . memory of music is not a memory. The memory of music is like the memory of 'I am' in a sense . . . like remembering who you are . . . it's not like intellectual memory . . . it's like the way a poet remembers his own poetry as opposed to almost anyone else's' (p. 148).

There is much else to be gleaned about the nature of learning and self-development from this short book, which is rich with detail and sensitively presented.

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