

gambit than the sampler or computer). It also forgets that Tin Pan Alley songwriters produced reams upon reams of forgotten dreck on those pianos. A reference to Irving Berlin's reminder that only a half dozen or so of the thousands of songs published in a given year actually sell well (Tick 2008, p. 380) would have made for a refreshing bit of deprecatory awareness.

There is one other concern with *The American Song Book* that cannot be overlooked. The book's historical range is obviously limited by copyright considerations. Since anything published before 1922 is unambiguously in the public domain, the book plays it safe and omits publication of later repertoire. Yet the cover material and introduction insinuate that the authors will cover the whole of the Tin Pan Alley era by referencing performers including Frank Sinatra, Rod Stewart and Bob Dylan. The respective 'Great American Song Books' of these singers are suffused with repertoire from the 1920s to the 1940s that are necessarily absent from this collection. Rather than explaining this limitation with a perfectly defensible statement of copyright limitations, though, the conclusion doubles down by claiming that the book ends where it does because the rise of jazz and recording technology marks the denouement of Tin Pan Alley! The burdensome restrictions of US copyright laws, especially in regards to sheet music long out of print, surely introduced frustrating constraints into the project: no discussion of Johnny Mercer or Cole Porter, no printing of 'God Bless America', 'Cheek to Cheek', 'Summertime', 'My Funny Valentine' and many others. Avoiding discussing logistical limitations by sublimating them into a dubious historical narrative, though, is problematic.

The utility of *The American Song Book: The Tin Pan Alley Era* ultimately depends on the reader's purposes. For general readers passionate about this repertoire, this book is an engaging and accessible introduction into the genre's early history that provides interesting information about old and new favorites alike. For teachers of American popular music and American music courses, this book's scores are illuminative primary sources that can enrich classroom discussion and allow for pedagogical engagement with a wider reportorial range. Scholars of Tin Pan Alley music will certainly welcome a collection of original scores in such a clean format, but the book's lack of engagement with contemporary scholarship may inhibit its usefulness as compared with pre-existing reference materials.

David K. Blake

Crane School of Music, State University of New York at Potsdam  
[david.kenneth.blake@gmail.com](mailto:david.kenneth.blake@gmail.com)

## Reference

Tick J. (ed.) 2008. *Music in the USA: A Documentary Companion* (New York, Oxford University Press)

***Folk Song in England*. By Steve Roud with contributions by Julia Bishop. London: Faber and Faber, 2017. 764 pp. ISBN 0571309712  
 doi:10.1017/S0261143018000296**

I think you might be forgiven for wondering if Steve Roud was partly in the business of rewriting Bert Lloyd (Lloyd and Vaughan Williams 1959 and Lloyd 1967), first in Roud's *New Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* (2012) and now in *Folk Song in England*. Indeed,

the differences of approach taken by both experts is instructive. Lloyd, materialist and socialist as he was, is fundamentally a constructor of narrative. Roud, encyclopaedist extraordinaire – see for example the exhaustive, alphabetised guide (Roud 2003) – is fundamentally a presenter of documented facts. While I would argue that both books and approaches are of their time, that does not entirely account for them.

Roud's book is organised in four parts. A short introduction lays out some basic definitions, but with a clear historical and historicising focus. This is followed by two chapters which chart the history of song collecting and study, and a third which looks at collecting the music (contributed by Roud's collaborator Julia Bishop, it is disappointing that the music gets almost as peremptory coverage as Lloyd gave it). Eight extended chapters then survey what we know of songs century by century, against a background of other vernacular musics of those centuries, and a final eight chapters discuss specific topics (religious singing, worksong, dialect, tradition, etc.). The century-by-century grouping is admittedly no more than an organising principle, but it works well enough. Throughout, the emphasis is on the activities (and some of the biography) of named individuals, whether writers, performers, collectors, commentators, etc. I find the book to be less concerned with *folk song* (whatever that is, as one seems bound to say) than with the individuals who in some way have contributed to its presence. The book's documentation is rigorous, with the material properly left to interpret itself; there's none of Lloyd's romanticism, apparent empathy or wishful thinking here, and the result is dutifully prosaic. There are naturally strengths in this approach, of course. In the coverage of West Gallery bands, for example (pp. 506ff.), Roud is zealously even-handed, and the impression left with the reader is not one of being enticed towards a particular partisan viewpoint. The same can be said for coverage of other potential controversies, while Roud warns of the dangers of over-interpretation: 'what we have here is a classic example of a fairly widespread tendency for ... "folk song", to be used to support a wider social theory without detailed analysis of knowledge of the song evidence itself. This is not to deny the potential for song to function in oppositional scenarios ... but this does not permit an assumption that it is always used in this way' (p. 544). It is unfortunate, then, that the evidence for function and use is comparatively sparse.

There are weaknesses in Roud's approach too, though. A reader unfamiliar with the tradition might wonder whether this was music which was ever performed, or at least how that was done, for such details are not amenable to capture in verbal texts, and Roud is careful not to speculate. We do finally (i.e. at the very end of the book, where insignificant matters are normally covered) get two chapters on the mechanics of 'the tradition' and 'the music' (the latter by Julia Bishop) which do briefly address matters of performance, but a balance is markedly absent. It does not, then, present a fully rounded picture. Accurate reflection of the balance of existing documentation is not the same as accurate presentation of the balance of what matters to users, either then or now.

Other than the occasional admonition (such as quoted above), the book is largely an exercise in marshalling the historical evidence for the existence and social function of folk song. As such there is *little* to argue with, and as a result there is – little to *argue* with. That is unusual for an academic book, certainly, but then Roud's tome is aimed at the more general audience, for all its size. It seems to me odd that such an objectivising stance, and the rather dry, scholarly tone, is aimed at a mass readership, while the historical controversies are given no great weight and the author himself seems frequently transparent.

In all, and my nit-picking notwithstanding, this certainly represents a worthwhile endeavour. This is a book which will take its place beside Harker, Boyes, Lloyd, Gammon and the rest, provided one does not expect too much from it. The publisher's blurb ends with the description of 'an absorbing and impeccably researched account that gives sonorous voice to England's musical past'. For absorbing writing, I think I'll stick with Lloyd and Boyes, while the sonority of voice finds no place here. However, as a reminder of the importance, execution and ordering of exhaustive research covering such a large temporal span, I can imagine few competitors.

Allan F. Moore

Independent Researcher

[popularmusic@allanfmoore.org.uk](mailto:popularmusic@allanfmoore.org.uk)

## References

- Lloyd, A.L. 1967. *Folk Song in England* (London, Lawrence and Wishart)  
 Lloyd, A.L., and Vaughan Williams, R. 1959. *The Penguin Book of English Folksongs* (Harmondsworth, Penguin)  
 Roud, S. 2003. *The Penguin Guide to the Superstitions of Britain and Ireland* (London, Penguin)

***On Becoming a Rock Musician.* By H. Stith Bennett. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017, 2nd edn. 263 pp. ISBN 978-0-231-18285-0  
 doi:10.1017/S0261143018000302**

First published in 1980 (the year before the formation of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music), this book can in retrospect be seen as something an early ethnography of popular musicians. As such it acts as an important precursor to works by the likes of Ruth Finnegan (1989) and Sara Cohen (1991), which sought to capture the career paths of local popular musicians. However, being the first does not, of course, necessarily mean being the best and while it is good to see the book back in print, its overall contribution to the field is rather mixed.

The new edition includes a Foreword by Howard Becker, to whom Bennett is obviously in debt (and he is hardly alone there), as Becker supervised the dissertation on which the book is based. Becker summarises Bennett's case as being 'that the kind of pop music that began in the 1950s or 1960s . . . inaugurated a distinctly new direction in Western music, and did so by bypassing the lengthy history of music stored, taught, and transmitted by written notation, replacing it with an aural "notation" derived from recorded studio music' (p. vii). Indeed this is perhaps Bennett's major contribution – to illustrate that for (most) popular musicians music is learned from records (and fellow musicians) rather than via teachers and dots on pages. As he notes 'rock music is *learned* to a much greater extent than it is ever *taught*' (p. 3, emphasis in original) and he suggests that as a result of this musicians in the 'copy bands' – on which he focuses – develop what he terms 'recording consciousness'.

This is a book about being a *particular* sort of musician at a *particular* time and (mostly) in a *particular* place. The work is based in interviews carried out in Colorado between 1970 and 1972 and other work in Washington, California, Missouri and Provence. The work undertaken just as 'rock' was seeking to distinguish itself from 'pop' and the ideological gymnastics this entailed are sometimes on display here.