

content of the interviews, prompting a re-evaluation of its moral and political implications.<sup>4</sup>

Taken together, the two DVDs illustrate how minimalism continues to develop as a musical style. SLEE's performance of *In C* allows the work to retain a bit of its legendary fringe status even as it updates its sensibility for a new, younger audience. *Phase to Face* demonstrates how widespread minimalism's presence has become in the mainstream of concert music. The videos, then, can facilitate discussion on important aspects of the reception of minimalism. For instance, one can argue that the image of Reich's minimalism functions as the salvation of the concert music tradition or claim instead that it has become simply another new-music party line that has silenced much variety in contemporary music and, in that sense, actually limited the concert music tradition. More hopefully, one can argue that SLEE's emphasis of minimalism's underground roots—which for the ensemble embrace both hip hop and the dissonance of noise for its own sake—points toward the growth of a more pluralistic and vital new music tradition.

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Paul Simon. *Graceland: 25th Anniversary Edition. Under African Skies: Paul Simon's Graceland Journey*. Joe Berlinger, director. Legacy 88691914712, CD and DVD.

Ever since his days as songwriter of the folk-rock duo Simon and Garfunkel in the mid-1960s, Paul Simon's music has pervaded the American pop soundscape. Simon's most celebrated work, the 1986 album *Graceland*, however, drew as much on African popular styles as it did on American sources. In late 1984, Simon heard a cassette of South African instrumental pop. Enamored of the music, he wished to record in South Africa; however, a cultural boycott against apartheid was in effect at the time. Concluding that recording would not violate the boycott, which he understood (incorrectly) as aimed exclusively at the Sun City resort, Simon and his entourage traveled to South Africa to record primarily instrumental tracks, collaborating with a variety of musicians. In subsequent sessions in the United States and London, the recordings were overdubbed with melodies, lyrics, and additional instrumental parts. The resulting combination of musicians and traditions helped sell more than five million copies of *Graceland* and win the 1986 Grammy award for Album of the Year; it also generated enormous controversy, raising concerns about cultural appropriation and colonialism.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Amy Wlodarski, "The Testimonial Aesthetics of *Different Trains*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 63/1 (2010): 99–141.

<sup>1</sup> These controversies have received extensive treatment in scholarly and popular presses. The most important inquiries include Veit Erlmann, *Music, Modernity, and the Global Imagination: South*

The history and controversy surrounding the landmark release is the subject of Joseph Berlinger's documentary, *Under African Skies: Paul Simon's Graceland Journey*. Issued on DVD in 2011, it was paired with the reissued album as *Graceland: 25th Anniversary Edition*. I will discuss the CD and DVD in turn.

*Graceland* has been reissued at least three times on CD: in 1997, 2004, and 2011. The 2011 remastering sounds excellent, and compared to a vinyl release from 1986, it has slightly more reverb on the lead vocals, and clearer, more prominent instrumental parts.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the eleven songs from the original record, this CD contains six bonus tracks, three of which have never been released: two instrumental demos (that would gain vocals later) and a nine-minute interview in which Simon discusses the title track, explaining some of his lyric choices and how he incorporated other musicians' ideas. The two demo tracks, collectively called "The Ovation Studio Recordings," were recorded in Johannesburg in 1985 and remastered in 2011. Comparing these two demos of "You Can Call Me Al," and "Crazy Love, Vol. 2" with the album versions affords insight into the compositional process. The "Crazy Love" demo sounds like a skeletal version of the song, using some of the same instrumental parts, including the bass and arpeggiated guitar. The final song repeats certain chord progressions, employs much more reverb and additional overdubbed parts, and omits other instrumental parts. In contrast, the demo of "You Can Call Me Al" is vastly different from the released song, presumably because it was re-recorded in its entirety in New York. Most of its instrumental parts were re-orchestrated, and the finished song's lyrics and melody impose a much clearer formal structure. Taken alongside the three bonus tracks previously released on a 2004 reissue, these demo recordings illustrate some of the recording considerations that the participating musicians discuss in the video.

Berlinger's documentary interweaves two chronologies: one shows the events leading up to a 2011 reunion concert at SABC Studios in Johannesburg, and the other revisits the original conception, recording, release, and reception of *Graceland*. A conversation between Simon and Dali Tambo, son of famed anti-apartheid activist Oliver Tambo, frames the film. Tambo and musician Jerry Dammers co-founded Artists Against Apartheid, a UK-based group that specifically targeted entertainers.<sup>3</sup> Because this group forcefully denounced Simon and *Graceland* during the mid-1980s, the meeting between Simon and Tambo serves as a locus of conflict.

The DVD's greatest strengths are the rehearsals and performances, the interviews with African musicians involved in *Graceland*, and the bonus features. Of the eleven songs on the album, excerpts from nine appear on the DVD. Most are shown in rehearsal footage from 2011, often interspersed with participant interviews or

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*Africa and the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Charles Hamm, "Graceland Revisited," *Popular Music* 8/3 (1989): 299–304; Louise Meintjes, "Paul Simon's *Graceland*, South Africa, and the Mediation of Musical Meaning," *Ethnomusicology* 34/1 (1990): 37–73; and Timothy Taylor, "The Voracious Muse: Contemporary Cross-Cultural Borrowings, Culture, and Postmodernism" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Paul Simon, *Graceland*, Warner Brothers 25447-1, 1986, LP.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Drewett, "The Cultural Boycott Against Apartheid South Africa: A Case of Defensible Censorship?" in *Popular Music Censorship in Africa*, eds. Michael Drewett and Martin Cloonan, (London: Ashgate, 2006), 27.

archival performances. Segments often feature run-throughs with the full band, and a few scenes show musicians working out arrangements. The excellent camera work includes many close-up shots, which allow the viewer to focus on individual layers of the texture. Music lovers will enjoy watching the players interact, both on- and off-stage; these are world-class performers who display obvious mutual respect and joy in playing.

The DVD's bonus features consist of three music videos, a performance from *Saturday Night Live*, and five extended interviews. The extended interviews greatly add to the package's value. Of these five interviewees, only actor Whoopi Goldberg did not participate directly in *Graceland*; she is included because she filmed in South Africa in the early nineties and experienced similar criticism to that of Simon. Each of the other four interviewees (singer and activist Harry Belafonte, trumpeter/flugelhornist Hugh Masakela, guitarist Ray Phiri, and saxophonist Barney Rachabane) recounts suffering from South African discrimination. These four men do not avoid criticizing Simon, but each believes in Simon's good intentions, and feels that *Graceland* ultimately had more positive than negative impact.

Another strength is the film's acknowledgement of (some of) the controversy that surrounded *Graceland*. Neither the director nor the protagonist shies away from the difficult topic of race. Although Simon repeatedly insists that he treated the musicians as equals, he also admits that he initially bought into the dominant South African racist ideology. Giving an example of the country's racial tension, he describes recording with the Boyoyo Boys, the group on the cassette that inspired Simon's initial fascination with South African music. Simon was frustrated that the sessions were going poorly, and a white recording engineer told him that the Boyoyo Boys' incompetence exemplified blacks' inferiority. Only upon subsequently working with better musicians did Simon recognize this explanation as racist. Although he later came to see the engineer's prejudice, the story does not show Simon in a particularly flattering light.

The film's weaknesses result from something of an identity crisis. It is not clear if it is a serious documentary that digs into difficult issues or a celebration of a beloved album. Although it does address race, much remains unexamined, and the controversy is investigated unevenly. For example, new footage of rock critic Jon Pareles, interspersed with images of contemporaneous print articles, seems to imply that he disapproved of Simon during the late eighties. Perusal of his *New York Times* articles that mention *Graceland* shows this to be false.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, viewers learn nothing of Steve Berlin's vehement allegation that Simon stole music from the band Los Lobos.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the *Graceland* track Los Lobos played on, "All Around the World or the Myth of Fingerprints," is absent from the documentary. Also curiously absent are Good Rockin' Dopsie and the Twisters (and the song that

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Jon Pareles, "Concert: Simon's Graceland," *New York Times*, 27 April 1987; "South African Pop Breaks Out," *New York Times*, 8 February 1987; and "How African Rock Won the West, and on the Way Was Westernized," *New York Times*, 8 November 1989.

<sup>5</sup> See Marshall Ward's interview "Viva Los Lobos! (Interview with Steve Berlin)," *Rock Cellar Magazine*, <http://www.rockcellarmagazine.com/2012/07/17/viva-los-lobos-interview-with-steve-berlin>.

they played on, “That Was Your Mother”) and Linda Ronstadt, who sang on the original “Under African Skies.”

Other drawbacks of the documentary include the inconsistent nature of the talking head scenes and something of a gender imbalance. The latter is a minor quibble—backing vocalist Sonti Mndebele is the only female musician in the film, but Berlinger had few opportunities to include women, since most *Graceland* participants were men. More troublesome is the uneven quality of the interviews, which fall into three categories: (1) musicians who took part in the *Graceland* album and/or the 1987 tour; (2) other industry professionals directly or indirectly involved; and (3) uninvolved celebrities. The interviews with *Graceland* musicians provide compelling viewing. Many of these musicians recall their existence under apartheid, and seem genuinely to have relished working on *Graceland*. To a person, they agree in retrospect with the goals of the cultural boycott, but not with its blanket application. The interviews with other participants give valuable context about musical or logistical decisions. The other interviews, however, feel superfluous. The most gratuitous is Ezra Koenig of Vampire Weekend. Sitting with his silent bandmates on a couch, the popular young musician explains his childhood love of *Graceland*. The interview seems to have been included to make the film, and album, more hip.

This video has more pedagogical than scholarly utility. The scholar concerned with issues of colonialism and appropriation, Simon’s compositional process, or rock composition in general is likely already familiar with much of the content, though it is always interesting to hear directly from the music’s creators. Teachers, however, will find this DVD useful. A class studying popular music history or analysis can learn about compositional process; a world music class could be introduced to controversies around colonialism and appropriation; and an African studies class might investigate interrelationships between popular music and politics. There is even something for the ear-training instructor: discussing how he wrote lyrics and melodies to the tracks recorded in Johannesburg, Simon notes that his melodies were not working because he did not attend closely enough to the harmonic rhythm and bass line. For students to hear about successful musicians struggling with problems similar to their own can prove inspirational.

Readers who already own director Jeremy Marre’s *VH1 Classic Albums: Paul Simon Graceland* may wonder how *Under African Skies* compares.<sup>6</sup> Both DVDs cover some of the same ground, but despite its shorter duration (seventy-five vs. 100 minutes), the VH1 film probes the compositional process of certain songs in greater depth. Although *Under African Skies* incorporates some concert footage from Michael Lindsay-Hogg’s concert film *Graceland: The African Concert*, it also contains much material not readily available elsewhere, and Berlinger includes many more interviewees than Marre.<sup>7</sup> Almost everybody in the earlier documentary also

<sup>6</sup> *VH1 Classic Albums: Paul Simon Graceland*, Jeremy Marre, director, Eagle Rock Entertainment EV30100-9, 1997 (reissued 2005).

<sup>7</sup> *Graceland: The African Concert*, Michael Lindsay-Hogg, director, Warner/Reprise Video WRV 38136, 1987 (reissued 1999).

appears here; their interviews reveal how participants' memories change subtly over time.

In sum, this package will make a welcome addition to many a library or personal collection. Admirers of Paul Simon or of the African musicians involved (e.g., Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Bakithi Kumalo) will want to own *Graceland: 25th Anniversary Edition*, as will listeners who wish to upgrade from pre-2004 versions of the album. The sound is excellent, the video of rehearsal footage is compelling, and the interviews—although not groundbreaking—are interesting. Instructors dealing with any of the multitude of topics *Graceland* brings up will find this useful as well, although in-depth study will require scholarly supplementation. Finally, scholars less familiar with *Graceland* and its controversies will find this a useful introduction that may stimulate further study of this significant rock album.

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