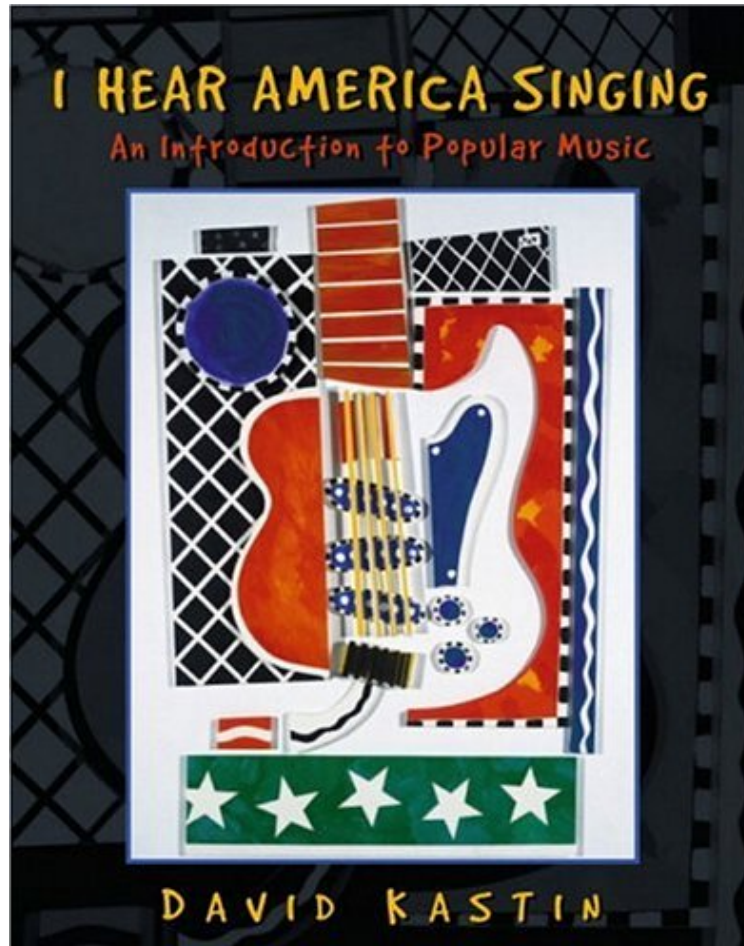


[Free download] I Hear America Singing: An Introduction to Popular Music

I Hear America Singing: An Introduction to Popular Music

David Kestin

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David Kestin : I Hear America Singing: An Introduction to Popular Music before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised I Hear America Singing: An Introduction to Popular Music:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Zhang Zhongquan GOOD!! 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Informative yet a great read. By A Customer David Kestin is currently my teacher at Stuyvesant Highschool. I have nothing but praise for his book and his teaching abilities. The book is great, earning all 5 stars. It sheds interesting facts while always staying on point. A great read for anyone who is interested in American music.

The first edition of American Popular Music introduces the history and influence of American music within the broader context of American culture. It reveals how the history of American music connects to contemporary popular music through specific examples showing how past styles and performers have influenced current musical styles. Presents a balanced, accurate, and comprehensive portrayal of American popular music within a narrative,

conversational style while discussing various musical styles and performers in a larger social and historical context that provides a larger perspective on American cultural history. The book relates the development of each musical genre to its historical period and places individual performers and styles within their larger social or artistic context. It includes numerous excerpts from literary works that reveal the tremendous influence popular music has had on American culture. It also presents over 300 photos and illustrations, including album covers, posters, sheet music illustrations, and song lyrics. An important reference for any reader interested in the history of American popular music.

From the Back Cover *I Hear America Singing: An Introduction to Popular Music* explores the evolution of popular music within the broader context of American social, political, and cultural history. By forging connections between contemporary popular music and its roots in blues, jazz, and traditional folk music, this book offers a compelling portrait of America's rich musical heritage. Tells the story of the major genres of American popular music using an engaging narrative style. Sidebars provide biographical sketches as well as entries on subjects of special interest (such as the minstrel show, Tin Pan Alley, and the griot tradition). Excerpts from works by Jack Kerouac, Sterling A. Brown, Frank O'Hara, Jayne Cortez, and Ralph Ellison, among others, highlight the influence of popular music on American literature and culture. Suggested projects for each chapter encourage an active learning experience. Approximately 125 contemporary and archival photographs reflect the vitality of America's popular music. About the Author David Kastin has over twenty-five years experience as an educator and curriculum specialist. He has used his academic background in American studies and journalism to create innovative programs for institutions such as The American Museum of the Moving Image, New York Newsday, and The American Social History Project. He also has written on music and the media for the Village Voice, Downbeat, and other publications. He currently is teaching an interdisciplinary course in American literature and popular music at Stuyvesant High School in New York City.

Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. THE PAST IS PROLOGUE. . . Nowhere is the truth of this time-honored adage more striking than in the world of American popular music at the dawn of the new millennium. For example, just a few months before the turn of the twenty-first century, Moby (a.k.a. Richard Hall), long one of the leading figures of America's cutting-edge "techno" underground, released his latest dance-oriented collage of sound effects, free-form lyrics, and instrumental riffs. Yet, woven into these aural assemblages made possible by the state-of-the-art technology of digital sampling were soundbites from an assortment of obscure field recordings that preserved the vibrant voices of America's folk cultures. s of Moby's CD (entitled *Play*) often singled out the song "Honey" for special praise. Set off by a propulsive piano vamp and exuberant slide-guitar figures, the heart of the track is a sample of an a cappella vocal by Bessie Jones, a resident of one of the isolated sea islands off the coast of Georgia born during the first decade of the twentieth century. In fact, the traditional play-parry song Moby appropriated for his composition had originally had been recorded on location by the pioneering American folk music collector and archivist, Alan Lomax back in the 1950s. Nor was Moby's the only fusion of technology and tradition to establish itself on the recent pop music landscape. Back in the 1970s, first-generation hip-hop DJs such as Afrika Bambaattaa and Grandmaster Flash had claimed the title "master of records" by cutting and scratching their own multicultural mixes from crate loads of LPs (prompting rap historian David Toop to liken them to "librarians of arcane and unpredicable sound"). A decade later, rap groups such as Public Enemy were drawing on a repository of twenty thousand albums to construct complex sonic collages from the sampled shards of America's recorded history. By the late 1990s, the Billboard charts had become a virtual archive of late-twentieth-century pop music as everything from classic rock (Puff Daddy recycles Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir") to R B ballads (the Fugees' reprise Roberta Flack's "Killing Me Softly") to Broadway show tunes (rapper Jay-Z appropriates the chorus of "Hard Knock Life" from *Annie*) was resurrected on the latest Top Ten. Meanwhile, on critically acclaimed albums such as *Odelay* and *Midnight Vultures*, Beck wedded his surrealistic lyrics to a genre-busting array of samples drawn from folk and bluegrass music, country blues, fifties lounge music, and fusion jazz. So it is that the historian's favorite cliché seems finally to have been turned on its head; for in the realm of contemporary popular music, those who know the past don't just repeat it but reshape it. A number of other windows into American pop music history also opened up during this period. With the advent of the CD, for example, the complete recordings of significant performers of the past (from Robert Johnson to Patsy Cline) were reissued on the new high-tech, rainbowstreaked disks. Soon an avalanche of increasingly elaborate, comprehensive boxed set retrospectives clogged the aisles of local record stores. About the same time, major label marketing strategists (riding a wave of premillennial nostalgia) had begun formulating a spate of all-star tribute albums on which contemporary recording artists covered the classic songs of Woody Guthrie . . . or Curbs Mayfield . . . or Cole Porter . . . or Tammy Wynette. Finally, a flurry of Hollywood movies aimed at the profitable youth audience mined yesterday's hit parade to create today's hip retro soundtracks. Yet to a large extent, all of these recent phenomena only serve to reinforce a more fundamental reality, one that provides the framework for this exploration of America's musical legacy. For while it has continually presented itself in new guises, in every age the popular music of the day has been rooted in days gone by, just as in every generation, pop stars have been inspired by the performers who preceded them. WHAT'S IN A NAME? This book is an outgrowth of a course in American popular music and culture that I have been teaching for

the past ten years. One of the central goals of my curriculum has been to forge connections between the world of contemporary popular music (with which my students are so intensely involved) and the historical foundation of this music (about which so many are entirely unaware). Before going any further, however, it is important to clarify the definition of "popular music" that has provided the framework for that inquiry, whether in the classroom or in these pages. If a word-association experiment had been conducted among the American populace midway through the twentieth century, the phrase popular music would no doubt have elicited an astonishing array of images (diverging dramatically along racial, regional, and generational lines), among them: Frank Sinatra draped over a microphone stand in front of the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra Mambo King Perez Prado's band, launching a thousand dancers with his latest hit, "Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White" Eddy Arnold singing "Bouquet of Roses" from the stage of the Grand Ole Opry Ella Fitzgerald at the Savoy Ballroom The Platters' crooning their sophisticated harmonies Doris Day in Technicolor Just as in earlier eras such a survey might have conjured up names like George M. Cohan, Bert Williams, Sophie Tucker, Jimmie Rodgers, Bessie Smith, Irving Berlin, the Andrews Sisters, or Fats Waller. But for my students and I suspect for most people coming of age during the past half-century the concept of popular music has little meaning outside the context of "rock 'n' roll." While rock has to varying degrees always adopted aspects of traditional pop's musical aesthetic and adapted its finely tuned commercial mechanisms the Big Beat had from the very beginning also derived much of its vitality and authenticity from America's diverse folk traditions. So, whereas this book devotes considerable space to an exploration of rock's evolution, it also seeks to trace its primal sources in Anglo-American ballads, African-American blues and gospel, and in the Spanish tinged Jelly Roll Morton cited as an essential element in his own musical synthesis back at the turn of the twentieth century. Of course, the music Morton claimed to have created jazz is now enshrined in the conventional wisdom as "America's greatest contribution to world culture." It is only fitting, therefore, that jazz get its own comprehensive chapter in any chronicle of our nation's musical history.

FORM AND FUNCTION With the advent of the Internet, a vast reservoir of information on every imaginable subject has become available at the click of a computer key. Since no single volume could hope to match the sheer scope, detail, and currency of the accumulated data poised to stream through cyberspace in the blink of an eye, more than ever before the textbook must provide a conceptual framework that will allow students to create meaning from the chaos of that "content." Therefore, in an effort to help students make sense of America's musical heritage, I have structured each chapter in the text around a central narrative that tells the story of a genre of popular music in the context of our nation's dynamic social and cultural history. In order to preserve the integrity of these accounts, a significant portion of the information in each chapter is contained in supplementary boxes consisting of charts, maps, musical definitions, biographies, literary excerpts, or song lyrics. For example, boxes on such essential song forms as the ballad and blues are each illustrated with traditional examples, as well as by representative works by Woody Guthrie and Bob Dylan. These stand-alone entries also serve as vehicles for important subjects (such as the minstrel show, Tin Pan Alley, and the griot tradition) that fall outside the parameters of the narrative sections. Each chapter ends with an extensive selection of suggested projects (options include research-oriented topics, creative assignments, and "think pieces"). In order to facilitate further inquiry, I have produced a comprehensive bibliography and suggested sound sources for each genre. Here, too, an active learning experience was the primary consideration.

WORDS AND PICTURES While popular music has had an influence on virtually all aspects of our culture, it has exerted a particularly powerful impact on twentieth-century American literature. For this reason, I have secured permission to reprint works by the following writers, all of whom have used music as a subject in their poems, novels, and essays: Ralph Ellison (an excerpt from an essay about blues shouter Jimmy Rushing) Michael Herr (an excerpt from *Dispatches* describing soldiers listening to Jimi Hendrix during the Vietnam War) Sterling A. Brown ("Ma Rainey," a poem about the Mother of the Blues) David Wohjan ("Mystery Train: Janis Joplin Leaves Port Arthur, for Points West, 1964," a poem about the doomed pop star) Jack Kerouac ("Charlie Parker," a poem composed immediately after Bird's death) Jayne Cortez ("I See Chano Pozo," a dynamic poem that captures the spirit of the Cubop legend). In order to mirror the vitality of the music documented in the text, I have also included an array of photographs, as well as other graphic material such as album covers, posters, sheet music illustrations, broadside ballads, advertisements, and movie stills. In all, the book assembles approximately 125 evocative images, representing each musical style and historical era explored in the text.