
The Music That Came After It All

Robert McParland

Felician College

Music in the Post 9/11 World

Ed. Jonathan Ritter and J. Martin Daughtry

New York: Routledge, 2007

Sound travels at 770 miles per hour. On the bright morning of September 11, 2001, when tragedy struck lower Manhattan and Washington, D.C., sounds of shock, grief, and fear reverberated widely and quickly. Media brought the violence close that morning. Wherever we were, it cast us, near and far, as witnesses to a vivid and disturbing spectacle: a harsh disruption of our world. Above where I stood that morning, about five miles from the acrid smoke and dust rising from the collapse of the World Trade Center, a military jet raced low, rocketing noisily toward the city. Like the pulse and sonic trace from that jet, *Music in the Post 9/11 World* presents echoes. It recalls the songs and voices rising from many quarters following the impact of these events and challenges us to think about a world of diverse responses. As an earthquake brings aftershocks, ripples, and rumblings, so the distressing events of September 11, 2001 brought responses across the United States and around the world that registered in music, media, and public consciousness. The disparate essays that comprise this collection study the cultural aftermath, both in and outside the United States, and the global repercussions and interpretations that emerged alongside subsequent conflicts. This volume eloquently sounds reflection on the politics, memorializing, commercializing, and redefining of this significant moment in history. How did popular

music respond to 9/11 and where has it gone since? How much of the response in songs that is recounted in this book was ephemeral? How much has remained with us and remains relevant?

I'm flying back from London on a late flight with Simon and Garfunkel's "Bookends" on the headphones and a copy of *Music in the Post 9/11 World* balanced on the food tray in front of me. I'm coming back home, returning to New York – and there are no twin towers down there. On September 11, 2001 the New York skyline cracked and the world was shattered. Life after life and song after song tumbled forth. So why does it seem now like it is business as usual?

Joey Ramone no longer lingers just inside the door at CBGB's. And Billy Joel is looking a little more like Luciano Pavarotti every day. Maybe I'm just getting older too. But somewhere there must be that cutting edge: that sound, that attitude, that song from the guts that makes it all matter. At the 2008 Rock Hall of Fame inductions, Joel – like the ancient prophet – lamented the industry's passing, as Mellencamp, Madonna, and a shirtless and tenacious Iggy Pop were immortalized in memory. In 2008, a world of I-Tunes and MP3's further nudged CDs aside and made relics of the LP and album cover art. This demands an act of memory. One may thank Martin Scorsese for giving us documentaries of Dylan and the Rolling Stones. In this climate, one might even donate to PBS for sublime nostalgia. Sure, I'll take James Taylor or Tom Petty or Tina Turner on public television. Pop corporate airwaves are giving us Justin Timberlake, ephemeral American Idols, and Hannah Montana. This is radio nowhere. Maybe Joey Ramone's ghost lingers but they've pulled out the mirrors, people have fallen drunk and stoned under the tables; they've torn down CBGB's. Tonight I feel slightly grateful that the Foo Fighters are on Leno.

Music in the Post 9/11 World signals our global context. Just like Paul Simon once did with Brazilian rhythms, South African *mbanqua*, and Peruvian woodwinds. *Graceland* was an introduction for Americans to some of the music that Daughtry and Ritter refer to in their book. It was music I believed could lead to cultural dialogue and musical diversity. Now the plane banks toward Queens and lowers into JFK. I can see *Manhatta*, part of

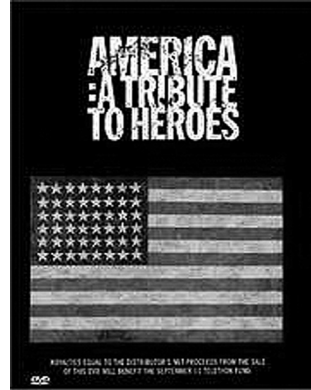
America, part of the world, more various than in Whitman's time, and down there in its shadow, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, a Paul Simon retrospective has begun. "World music" – South African sources – once met crafted American pop on *Graceland*. Some asked whether this was a cultural carpetbagger, an ambassador to the world, or a New Yorker turned musical tourist who loved sounds and styles. As Jon Pareles (*New York Times*, March 28, 2008) points out, Paul Simon was prescient, a forerunner of our global Internet world of digital cut and paste.

Like Simon, Daughtry and Ritter are world-music connoisseurs who are reaching here in this book for an audience that is open to wondering at the wide variety of music, cultures, and musical responses to 9/11. The contributors raise questions well worth asking. In what ways has a new political context emerged post-9/11 and how has this affected popular music? When America went to war, why were oppositional voices marginalized? Why did others choose to appear in "new media" rather than on mainstream radio? This book suggests how the 9/11 event was interpreted through different lenses, at various distances. Recognizing the variety of interpretation, this book, I believe, also asks how we are to remember 9/11? How, in song, have we memorialized this event in our history?

In Reebee Garofalo's overture, America's "mediascape" is viewed alongside the "new political context." Garofalo notes that through the "America: A Tribute to Heroes" broadcast and the "Concert for New York City" artists who would have been identified with an oppositional stance in a previous era "adopted new positions in response to a new political reality." Of course, time shows some of this to have been temporary and of the moment. Turning to country music, Garofalo asserts that corporate radio stifled dissent. She probes whether the Patriot Act "created a climate of intolerance for opposing viewpoints and caused many artists to censor themselves" and notes that "many artists interested in protesting the war turned to the Internet, often posting protest songs as MP3s available for free download." Then she reflects on Bruce Springsteen's *The Rising*: the subject of a fine essay in this collection by Bryan Garman. Finally, Garofalo notes "hints of ...

dissatisfaction within the rap community” and recognizes rap and hip-hop as “the site of the most provocative political commentary in an otherwise timid and muted post 9/11 environment.”

Kip Pegley and Susan Fast, both Canadians, analyze “America: A Tribute to Heroes” and discuss its attempt to foreground community. They point out that this image of unified American community was reinforced by metaphors for community like the appearance of singer/songwriters like Neil Young or Bruce Springsteen with vocal choirs. This book itself may be seen as a similar metaphor for expanded community, urging openness to a broad spectrum of voices throughout the world.



America: A Tribute to Heroes
poster

James Deaville discusses the politics of the news media and the use of music for the news. He analyzes how music is incorporated into news media formats. The advertisers that Deaville refers to appear pragmatic about this: for them, music is a persuasive medium. However, such programming carries with it some assumptions about how the music will be heard by different listeners. Whereas Leonard Meyer (1956) expertly considered the subject of music and emotion, these production companies confidently – and perhaps naively – express an approach to mood engineering through music in which musical styles are described as “majestic,” “hard hitting,” “jazz oriented,” and “timeless”: words that few musicologists would use without qualification. In contrast with Eduard Hanslick’s nineteenth-century aesthetics of music as objective form, this is music as the Brave New World will put it to use. Deaville inquires into whether “musical tapping into personal narrative can actually influence the audio-viewer of television news.” He asks, “Does television news music simply reinforce pre-existing audience sentiments in hopes of increasing market share, or does it actually convince audio-viewers of a specific position on the news?”

Deaville asserts that, following 9/11, network executives expressed a strategy to argue for “just war” and to construct propaganda elements. To support this, he takes up an examination of CNN’s musical theme. He believes that this theme “suited and indeed worked to engender an aggressive retaliatory politics.” We are given a musical transcription of CNN’s “fear and anger” theme: high strings send us to a high D and tympani and drums pursue an insistent pulse of sixteenth notes and triplets. Presumably, the “aggressive” music communicates message and meaning for an audio-viewer when it is attached to visuals and other sounds. One may ask, does music itself promote aggressive retaliatory emotions? Or, does this depend upon the context in which it is set? Deaville directs our attention primarily to the placement of this music. Most interesting is his observation that this same music and imagery was received differently by Canadian viewers and listeners and American ones. In Deaville’s view, whereas American media appeared to foster “a climate of fear,” Canadian networks prompted sympathy. While not a great deal of empirical evidence appears here to support this, it is a very interesting perception. We read through the lens of this comparison as if we are glancing across the border on the bridge beside the chasm of Niagara Falls: this is the reaction of the U.S. side. This is the view from Canada. Deaville takes us to the view from Canada’s CBC Newsworld and its trademark “cymbal swells and rolls” and he reasserts that CNN and CBC “reveal contrasting subject positions through distinct musical responses to 9/11,” positions that “helped shape the mood of each nation.”

Martin Scherzinger inquires into the phenomenon of self-censorship by artists. His concern with corporate censorship on broadcast channels involves “the paradoxical nature of musical censorship ... its double voices” and the silencing of dissent. Scherzinger considers the removal of the Dixie Chicks from the airwaves by several radio programmers in 2003. Then he considers the Boston Symphony’s decision to cancel a performance of John Adams’s *The Death of Klinghoffer*. Scherzinger critiques the silencing of public dissent in the public space of radio, including Clear Channel radio’s “don’t play” list of 156 songs. He challenges

that broadcasting corporation's contention that their decision was based upon grassroots censorship. In his view, "while grassroots flak probably played some role," corporate ownership influences media content and there was a "bond between the owners of Clear Channel and the Bush administration." For us, the question arises as to how this affects art, free speech, cultural expression, and what is available to audiences.

Peter J. Schmelz takes us through the public life of Darryl Worley's song "Have You Forgotten?" He provides evidence that the "political environment directly affected the recording and the video." After examining the video in some detail, Schmelz provides an analysis of Worley's vocal delivery, the timing of the song's release (April 15, 2003), and some aspects of the song's musical arrangement. He notes, for example, that "the glissando suggests a rocket attack or missile shot, the countrified sounds of war." Schmelz acknowledges that "there is no way to measure the direct influence of Worley's song on public opinion (but) given its ubiquity it certainly played a noteworthy role in the media environment." His essay calls for "further examination of the political and class roles of country music." It attests

to the view that popular music can support "dominant ideologies" and that "official" voices "deserve as much scrutiny as the resistant voices on the margins, if not more so." Bryan Garman follows with a well-written assessment of Bruce Springsteen's *The Rising*, noting "the politics of fear, fame and faith," Springsteen's Christian themes, and his hope for moral and spiritual renewal.



The subject of music and commemoration returns in Peter Tregear's essay "For Alle Menschen?" which concludes the book's first section. Tregear investigates public uses of classical compositions to add a quality of gravity and sublimity to memorials for the victims of September 11. As one reads of the public use of Bach's *Suite for Unaccompanied Cello in C minor*, Mozart's

Requiem Mass, and John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls*, one may be prompted to ask what the use of these pieces says about popular perceptions of classical music or classical music's role in cultural memory. In what sense is transcendence suggested by these compositions? Is classical music repertoire to be reduced to a mere commemorative function? Tregear reflects upon music's role in making public rituals approach the condition of cinema. He points out that "Music is by its very nature radically removed from the events it might be chosen to accompany." That is, absolute music – music without words, program, or image – "avoids a direct mimetic relationship with historical events." However, this aesthetic view that music in itself stands outside "any unambiguous assertion of fact or feeling" does not exempt it from political or historical interrogation. As Tregear notes, "The use of this music ... remains undeniably a political act worthy of interrogation, notwithstanding both the magnitude and depth of grief that it might be seen to help to articulate or console." We are led to examine this music as a kind of post-nationalist discourse, suggesting a space where music meets the universal, an expression on these occasions that gestures toward a communal authenticity. Or, as Tregear puts it, the "presumed otherworldliness" of this music and "qualities such as nobility or theological *gravitas*" lies behind its use. Like other authors in this volume, Tregear perceives "how musical artifacts help to define a sense of collective identity."

In Part Two, a series of emergent narratives reveal "disjunctures of global communications" and "global fissures within a variety of responses to mass media." The writers investigate the different ways in which the events of 9/11 have been understood in multiple sites of interpretation. They demonstrate to us how the view changes according to "where one sits." Jonathan Ritter explores how peasants in a remote area of the Andes reflected upon 9/11 for a song contest and saw it through the lens of the turbulence and violence that they have been faced with in their own experience. While geographically distant from the events, the deep authenticity of their response is anchored in their own struggle. Ayacudo's Fajardo Province's carnival song contests, or *concursons*, provided them with an arena for their efforts to make sense of that

experience. Carnival provided a public space where they could protest dehumanization and attempt to transform it through art, music, and sound. Tellingly, Ritter discusses his personal odyssey in which he, the questioning ethnographer, was now asked questions about the 9/11 events in America by concerned people in the city of Ayacucho and in the rural Fajardo province. His personal anecdote well conveys the intersubjective space of empathy he speaks of. Ritter demonstrates how Andean peasants “position themselves as global citizens, emergent cosmopolitans, knowledgeable and willing to comment on world affairs.” As he writes, “These songs reflect an effort to place ‘their’ and ‘our’ experiences of terror on the same dialogic ground, promoting an ethics of empathy.” One might add that this may well be a rationale for this entire book.

The dialogue continues as Larry Blumenfeld explores Moroccan and Senegalese music. Blumenfeld challenges corporate media’s response to 9/11, suggesting that “the simplicity with which they framed the event and its aftermath” soon “appeared to stifle intelligent, open, and complex discussions of the issues at hand.” He observes that there are “vast gray areas of identity and intent” which were not included, or were perhaps negated by certain sectors of politics and media. The writer thus joins the voices of those contributors to this collection who roundly criticize this univocal media. He prizes Youssou N’Dour’s explorations of “the mysterious Islamic traditions of Sufism” which draw upon ancient modes of Sufi, Senegalese *griot*, and contemporary communications. The Fez Festival of World Sacred Music in Morocco likewise suggests “the efficacy of music as a tool to bridge cultural and religious rifts.” Blumenfeld suggests that the spirit of Fez in America is a potent form exceeding “the customary contexts for so-called world music.” He holds the hope that music and cultural expression can say far more than Islamic fundamentalist rhetoric and may be a vehicle to encourage reconciliation.

This diversity of voices proceeds as John Holmes McDowell explores Mexican ballads sung in response to 9/11 and James R. Grippo writes on Egyptian *sha’bi*. The Mexican laments are contextualized. They express attitudes of folk commemoration and emerge from traditions of folk song as social-political commentary.

We learn from McDowell their history, as he takes a look at five post 9/11 *corridos*, observing that they do not speak in a single voice. Meanwhile, Grippo listens to his Egyptian interlocutors saying, “I’ll tell you why we hate you.” He recalls the sincerity of the people he spoke with in Egypt and their sympathetic comments following 9/11. He tells us that he felt “humbled by those who felt the need to apologize to me” as an American. However, such sympathetic attitudes have shifted following U.S. military action in Afghanistan and Iraq. This is “a reaction to a reaction,” he says. Despite an Egyptian love for American pop culture, Grippo perceives among these Egyptians a “mistrust of ... the way 9/11 has been used to advance ... U.S. foreign policy.”

In the final essay, Veronica Doubleday focuses on how Afghan singers have used music to denounce the Taliban and its Pakistani supporters. The history of Afghani musical traditions is presented in relation to the emergent politics of this war-torn region. We hear of solo heroic epics that now receive political treatments. Although Afghan political music is composed mostly by men, we learn of some of the women’s songs that have been coming from refugee camps in Pakistan. There are themes of lamentation emerging from Persian and Pashto poetry and art. Works have emerged to express satire, wit, and verbal inventiveness in storytelling. Doubleday shows how the use of the techniques of asking questions, using animal imagery, and expressing traditions provide reference to a shared milieu and assist in the work of social criticism. She probes the tensions between conservative Islamic values and secularized modernity and Western influence with respect to music and cultural expression.

Music in the Post 9/11 World is a response to a changing world. Sound moves swiftly across our planet. “The Rising” that Bruce Springsteen sang of in 2002 seeks something besides the “Radio Nowhere” of 2008. This book, like Springsteen’s song, seems to be “searching for a world with some soul.” It too is asking, “Is there anybody alive out there?” These contributors call for a more progressive station, with “a million different voices speaking in tongues.” Their book calls us to be open to new sounds, converging cultures. The editors have provided here a collection

for critical thought on the diversity of responses in the post-9/11 world. On the whole, this is a book of global hope. It is a book that is engaged not only in examining the complexities of music and media but also in encouraging us in the venture of opening to diverse voices and transcultural dialogue. It enlists us in the hope for a community that will listen carefully to the sounds of social difference, political engagement, and interpersonal connection.