

exhibits the author's fine scholarship and well-informed interpretation of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century social and cultural history in relation to Tonic Sol-fa. This book has been meticulously researched and carefully written, and is sure to contribute much to the understanding and appreciation of the unique input that Tonic Sol-fa had to the British way of life, particularly during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

**Shane Homan and Tony Mitchell, eds, *Sounds of Then, Sounds of Now: Popular Music In Australia***

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**Reviewed by Kath Nelligan**

Shane Homan and Tony Mitchell's *Sounds of Then, Sounds of Now* is a collection of essays that provides an informative overview of Australian popular music practices, reflecting on sociological and cultural scholarship. Discussing popular music in Australian contexts raises questions about what is considered 'popular music' and what is understood as 'Australian.' Indeed, the label 'Australian Popular Music' evokes debates around nationalism, cultural imperialism, globalisation, appropriation, authenticity and local identity: themes that appear throughout this volume. Australian national identities are diverse, spanning postcolonial, Indigenous, migrant and so on; one would, therefore, expect this diversity to be reflected or integrated into Australian popular music practices (p. 2). This is certainly the case when considering the way some Australian hip hop artists incorporate languages other than English into their lyrics (p. 235), or when Indigenous artists conflate native instruments with non-Indigenous styles of music, like rock or country. However, despite this, the diversity of Australian national identity is grossly underrepresented in popular culture. One recalls Baz Lurhmann's *Australia*, a 2008 film that depicts Australia as a rural, cattle-droving and kangaroo-jumping landscape. In popular music, the tradition of 'Oz Rock' has all too often been the genre of choice—at least in popular culture contexts—for representing a typically Australian sound and identity, and much has been written examining and debating this point.<sup>1</sup>

As recently as 2011, Universal Music Australia released a compilation double CD entitled *The Great Australian Songbook* featuring songs that reflect the Oz Rock tradition. Some of the bands featured on that release are Midnight Oil, Cold Chisel, Men at Work, Daddy Cool, The Easybeats and GANGgajang. Of the forty songs, only six are by female artists (five of whom appear on the second CD) and only one is by an Indigenous Australian. These bands, which are indicative of 1980s pub rock and white working class masculinity, are presented as a summation of 'great' Australian popular music and songs. Idealising Oz Rock as the typical Australian sound presents several problems: first, female and Indigenous artists are

<sup>1</sup> See Jon Stratton, *Australian Rock: Essays on Popular Music* (Perth: Network Books, 2007) 57–62; James Cockington, *Long Way to the Top: Stories of Australian Rock and Roll* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2001); and the first chapter of the volume under review.

excluded; second, genres other than Oz Rock, such as jazz, country or hip hop (to name a few) are not acknowledged as having produced 'great' Australian songs worthy of inclusion in this compilation; and third, it caters predominantly to white male sensibilities.

This is precisely the issue Homan and Mitchell address in the introductory chapter of *Sounds of Then, Sounds of Now*. They open the volume by challenging the acceptance of Oz Rock as the genre most commonly associated with Australian popular music (p. 2). They present a critique of the compilation CD *Unofficial National Anthems*, released in 2003, which features songs such as Cold Chisel's 'Khe Sahn,' GANGgajang's 'Sounds of Then (this is Australia),' Daddy Cool's 'Eagle Rock,' and Jimmy Barnes's 'Working Class Man.' With the exception of 'Working Class Man,' these same songs also appeared on the *Great Australian Songbook* compilation, a point that clearly demonstrates the continued reproduction of Oz Rock as the so-called 'great' Australian sound. Homan and Mitchell argue that labelling these songs as 'anthems' idealises Oz Rock as a form of Australian nationalism. Excluded from this nationalistic construction, however, are other genres that, as Homan and Mitchell attempt to show throughout this book, form a significant part of popular music practices in Australia. They argue that Oz Rock 'is generally associated with crowded, sweaty pubs, raucous singalongs and drunken Anglo-Australian masculinity' (p. 2), which not only caters to mainstream male sensibilities and audiences, but also excludes both female and Indigenous artists from the so-called canon of archetypal Australian popular music artists (see pp. 1–2). Homan and Mitchell contest the narrow male-dominated image projected by Oz Rock by offering a volume that 'attempts to survey different genres of popular music as they have been practised in Australia both historically and in contemporary contexts' (p. 5), thus demonstrating the diversity of popular music practices as they emerge in 'everyday Australian life and traditions' (p. 7).

The collection convincingly fulfills this objective by taking a genre-based approach: the authors discuss a variety of different genres, including jazz, contemporary Aboriginal music, dance music and rave culture, electronica, metal, music of Torres Strait Islanders, hip hop, punk, folk and Top 40 mainstream music. While acknowledging the global reach of many of these genres, authors of individual articles nevertheless attempt to identify a local (or an 'Australian') specificity within a global context.

Shane Homan's opening essay demonstrates how the Oz Rock tradition reflects a 'set of attitudes, sounds and industrial arrangements of a distinctly local nature' (p. 19), while Chris Gibson and Peter Dunbar-Hall highlight an 'Australianness' in the music of Aboriginal artists. Broadly speaking they discuss how twentieth- and twenty-first-century Aboriginal artists combine contemporary non-Indigenous styles of music such as country, reggae and rock with Aboriginal customs, native instruments and languages to address issues of land rights and Aboriginal health and wellbeing in remote communities (pp. 256–57). Karl Neuenfeldt's discussion of contemporary music of the Torres Strait Islanders similarly focuses on Indigenous Australia as a signifier of the local, while Tony Mitchell convincingly argues that local specificity is firmly established in the music and identities of Australian hip hop artists. Graeme Smith's chapter on folk music engages with concepts of authenticity, tracing the folk 'movement' from the late nineteenth century through to the folk festivals of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. However, as Michelle Phillipov and Caleb Kelly acknowledge in their chapters, it is not easy to identify a specifically Australian identity in metal and experimental music.

Popular music in relation to government policy, consumerism and globalisation are also themes explored in this book. Susan Luckman deals with rave culture in an Australian context by examining how the term 'doof' has local significance (pp. 137–38). She also examines media representations of the Australian dance party scene and demonstrates how this sparked moral panic in mainstream society. This led to reforms in the way raves, dance parties and nightclubs were regulated (p. 142). In a subsequent chapter, Luckman examines music and the internet, outlining how technology has revolutionised the consumption of popular music and how this has affected the Australian record industry. Aline Scott-Maxwell engages with the highly contentious and current 'world music' debate, discussing themes of authenticity, exoticism, creativity and accessibility within 'world music' practices in Australia.

Given that Homan and Mitchell's intention was to offer a broad view of Australian popular music practices, which transcends the narrow, male-dominated image projected by the Oz Rock tradition, the neglect of female artists in this book is surprising and disappointing. Music by female artists is discussed in chapters by Tony Mitchell and Karl Neuenfeldt. Mitchell highlights the significant output female artists have contributed to Australian hip hop. Not only does he allocate a section of his chapter to discussing prominent and influential female MCs (or as he puts it 'femcees') but, more importantly, he also refers continuously to female artists throughout the chapter, thus showing that female artists' contributions to Australian hip hop are just as significant as those of their male counterparts. Further, Mitchell discusses the role of female MCs as tutors and mentors to young and up-coming artists; this depicts females not as passive participants in hip hop culture, but as respected leaders and influential teachers in a genre that is widely viewed as male dominated (p. 244). Neuenfeldt's article acknowledges the contributions of Islander women to Australian popular music by presenting two case studies that discuss in depth the work of female artists Christine Anu and the Mills Sisters (pp. 172–73).

In general, however, female artists are grossly underrepresented. Homan and Mitchell note Kylie Minogue as a 'curious omission' from CD compilations that claim to exemplify Australia's *Unofficial National Anthems* (p. 2) yet, ironically, Minogue does not reappear in subsequent chapters.<sup>2</sup> Bruce Johnson's article on Australian jazz is similarly problematic. He notes that in the 1920s 'women were ... prominent in jazz performance, and were in the actual majority in the major public workshop for improvisational practice' (p. 116), yet he fails to list any of these prominent females. Women have made, and continue to make, a significant contribution to Australian popular music in a variety of genres. They have contributed extensively to genres such as jazz, folk, rock, pop, and although sometimes a minority group, women have made headway in genres such as electronica and metal, and this warrants inclusion in such a collection.

So, Katie Noonan, Grace Knight and Renée Geyer are curious omissions from Johnson's article on Australian jazz; Chrissie Amphlet and Sarah McLeod are noticeably absent from Homan's article on Oz Rock and the absence of Shellie Morris from Gibson and Dunbar-Hall's chapter on contemporary Aboriginal music is a disappointing oversight. Readers searching for

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<sup>2</sup> Kylie Minogue is mentioned briefly on pages 3, 4, and 6 in the context of Homan and Mitchell's literature survey. Homan refers to her fleetingly in his chapter on Oz Rock (p. 30), merely describing her as an artist who represents global mainstream conventions. Minogue is not discussed in any other chapters.

material on these and other prominent Australian female artists, such as Missy Higgins, Sarah Blasko, Clare Bowditch, Sally Seltmann, Delta Goodram, Natalie Imbruglia and Kylie Minogue will need to look elsewhere. This oversight is even more disappointing given that these women have had, and many continue to have, extensive careers in the Australian recording industry; as yet, their work has not been documented in academic literature.<sup>3</sup>

Graeme Smith's article on folk music unfortunately pays only minimal attention to recent, twenty-first-century singer-songwriters. Smith covers an extensive amount of material, demonstrating how folk music in Australia has been developed, redefined and recontextualised over centuries, from the postcolonial folk songs of the nineteenth century (pp. 153–54), to the Irish dance bands of the 1970s and '80s, such as the Bushwackers (pp. 157–58). He briefly discusses the folk festivals of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and explains how artists performing at these vary in style and genre, yet he does not discuss artists whose music is often described as folk or as containing folk-like tendencies, such as Missy Higgins, Holly Throsby, Laura Jean, Jen Cloher, Josh Pyke and Lior.

These omissions reflect an overall underrepresentation of twenty-first-century Australian artists in this volume. Nonetheless, this book is a useful and welcome addition to current scholarship on popular music in Australia. It explicitly and successfully fulfills Homan and Mitchell's objectives of 'surveying different genres of popular music as they have been practised in Australia' (p. 5), while implicitly contributing to an understanding of Australian culture more broadly. This is evidenced by the variety of genres covered in this volume, and by the way the authors of individual chapters discuss these genres in Australian contexts, placing particular emphasis on concepts of nationalism and local identity. Recent literature published in this area reflects vested interests either in genre, such as folk, rock, or contemporary Aboriginal music,<sup>4</sup> or place, for example Perth or Brisbane.<sup>5</sup> *Sounds of Then, Sounds of Now*, on the other hand, offers a wide-ranging view that covers many genres and is not exclusively concerned with a particular Australian city; rather, the articles draw on a broad range of Australian music scenes and sensibilities. The genre-based approach at times obscures the common thread between articles, but it provides an easy-to-navigate structure for readers who have a particular interest in specific genres. The 'questions for discussion' at the end of each chapter provide a launching pad for further research and suggest that the book is intended as a teaching resource. The book would be suitable for, but not limited to, courses in Popular Music Studies, Sociology, Cultural Studies and Media Studies.

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<sup>3</sup> A notable exception is Australian singer-songwriter and country music artist Kasey Chambers, whose work is discussed in Graeme Smith's *Singing Australian: A History of Folk and Country Music* (North Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Smith, *Singing Australian*, Stratton, *Australian Rock*, and Peter Dunbar-Hall and Chris Gibson, *Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places: Contemporary Aboriginal Music in Australia* (Sydney: University of NSW Press, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> See Tara Brabazon's edited collection *Liverpool of the South Seas: Perth and its Popular Music* (Crawly: University of Western Australia Press, 2005). Andrew Stafford examines popular music in *Brisbane in Pig City: From The Saints to Savage Garden* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 2004).