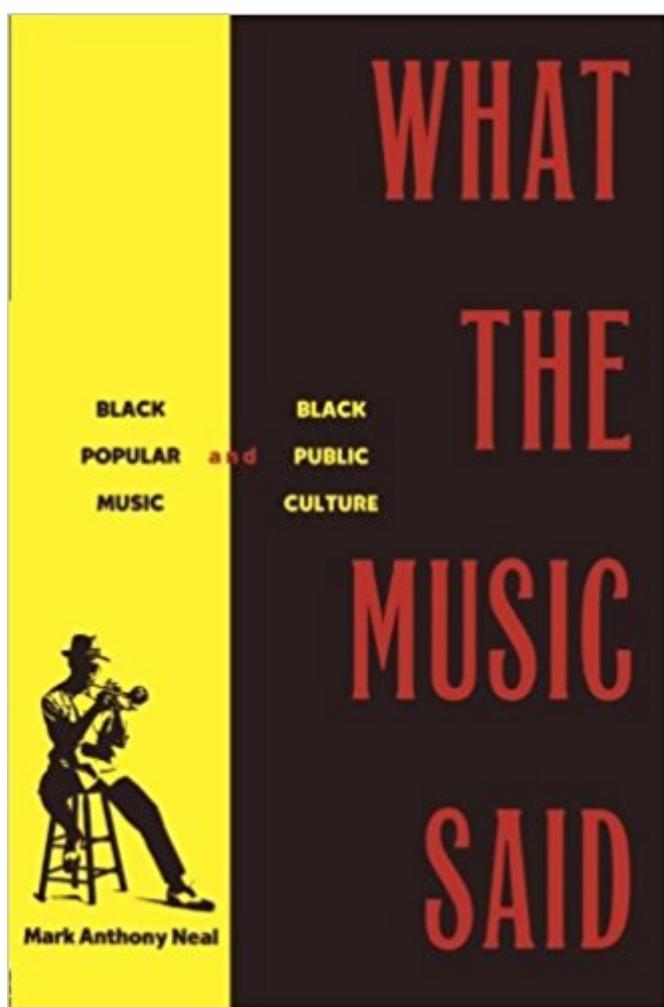


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What The Music Said: Black Popular Music And Black Public Culture



Synopsis

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Customer Reviews

Rap and hip-hop clearly serve as a public forum for African-American cultural critique; here, SUNY-Albany African-American studies professor Neal argues compellingly that black popular music has always played such a role. While ably describing the ways in which the "aural landscapes" of noted performers like John Coltrane and Anita Baker comment on the social realities of their day, Neal is more concerned with social history than with musicology. His interpretations of music are closely informed by the impact of developments like Reconstruction, mass migration, urbanization, the civil rights movement and the rise of the black middle class on the African-American community at large. He is attuned to the nuance given to accounts of the black experience by class and gender at specific historical moments. He also charts the impact of the commercialization of various forms of black popular music, which, he argues, has often compromised the ability of their music to serve as an authentic articulation of African-American values and experience. However, commercialization is not, for Neal, the end of the cycle: when a genre becomes too heavily mediated by market forces, he says, black artists simply find new modes of self-expression. In this deftly written study, Neal persuasively demonstrates that, from the spirituals sung by slaves to 20th-century blues, jazz, be-bop and soul, music has provided important "aural public space" in which African-American communities have been able to share and evaluate

their collective experiences. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

For a large number of African Americans, black popular music was as much about history, sociology, and politics as it was about entertainment. As radio overtook the jukebox as a hit-making force and records became a recreational option affordable to even the poorest households, rhythm and blues and bebop gave the African American community a language of its own and a medium to communicate throughout the nation. Neal (African studies, SUNY Albany) explores how music reflected the evolution of a race as its members migrated from the rural areas of the South to the industrial centers of the North, and how singer Sam Cooke's defection from gospel music mirrored the declining influence of the black church. As much as anything, music was the force that both contained the stories of a people and offered them the forum to express their ideas to one another and the world. Not for the casual fan who wants to know how Motown got started, this is a scholarly work that may be more at home in the sociology than the music section. ?Dan Bogey, Clearfield Cty. P.L. Federation, Curwensville, PA

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Loved it

Text book. Son said it was fine.

I was not suspecting such a well-researched volume when I chose to purchase this text. I was looking for some information about a particular piece of music and this book was the only one that addressed it. I am still reading it because the particular copy I have has rather small print and the writing is very dense; this is not a text for the light-hearted as it is a scholarly work. Excellent job, Mr. Neal (no relation, to my knowledge...).

In this book Neal theorizes about African-American music, examining the link between early 20th century musics and turn-of-the-millenium music. The author shows connections between social developments and the forms of pop music that black Americans developed. The book is interesting both as a survey of some threads of black music and as an overview of historical changes for African-Americans in our nation. The linkages between the two-- the music and the social climate-- are supported by a careful analysis of the music, and more often of the lyrics of some well-known composers. Performance styles are given some attention also. However, Neal is selective about examining only those artists whose work supports his theories. Other artists whose work does not fit

the schema are generally ignored. In this sense, the book is not exhaustive. That is fine, actually, as the volume is elegantly structured into six digestible chapters. This maintains the momentum of the writing and allows the reader to remain engaged, to avoid being bogged down in minutia. Neal does a nice job of examining the African-American societies that have emerged during the 20th century. He looks at how different groups of blacks have related with each other, and how the music serves to both mollify and communicate the tensions and connections between the groups. The roles of work, finances, and community are given emphasis in his theories. As such, he focuses mostly on the middle-class, the working-class, and the under-class blacks. Other groups, such as gays or the wealthy (often the artists themselves), receive less attention. The author does at times surrender to a hair-splitting approach with the concepts. Sometimes his writing becomes entangled, with long, long sentences that are structured so that the reader becomes lost. This occurs primarily in the later chapters. The index given to the book is fairly incomplete, making cross-referencing difficult. To his great credit, Neal tends to hew closely to common language. This makes the book as a whole accessible to a variety of readers. Overall, I found this to be an educational and insightful volume, and recommend it to anyone interested in popular music, African-American cultural studies, or contemporary history.

I think that this book was very well written and focused very well on how the music of the Black community was a reflection of the status of blacks as well as their position. As a former student of Dr. Neal, I have learned that resistance to oppression does not always come from marches and sit-ins, but music itself can be a form of social protest. If you are a student of African-American history, you must have this book for your collection. Buy it now!

Books Like This state The Facts of the Importance of Black Music not only in America but also WORLDWIDE. How it has shaped the World at Large. How The Beauty & Tragedy of The Music always keeps your Attention. Black Music Has Influenced everything Period. Rock-Roll was Taboo because it was from Blues, Jazz, Funk to Rap all have been Called Taboo because of The Negro Imput. it Plays Out on Society at Large. The Impact is so Strong that thru out History to this day you Get a Watered Down take of it. From What Little Richard had to Put up with thru Pat Boone among others to What The Jackson 5 & New Edition deal with all of these Wack Non-Singing White Boy Bands Cashing in on a Style and Not Respecting it. Jimi Hendrix took it back Home for us as did Michael Jackson. cuz all of The Styles are Ours. Miles Davis was Straight Black with it. Marvin Gaye as well. James Brown among many made Statements Heard around the World that Spoke Volumes

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