

I have always been concerned with...the way particular songs are situated within a single style and across various styles, and not so much with the kind of social or political statement that the music may have been making. In many years of playing in a wide variety of bands and performing situations, I found that most of the musicians with whom I worked shared this basic attitude. This is not to deny that others may have found that the same music makes social or political statements, or that there were social forces at work in my experience in unconscious ways; my claim is simply that this is not the principal manner in which its practitioners have tended to understand most popular music. I find that many of the claims made in popular-music scholarship, interesting and revealing though they sometimes are, never really capture the popular-music experience as I understand it. In short, I distrust the popular-music scholars' claims that this music is meaningful in ways that are principally socially constructed.

—Covach, p.466

- **Why do you think Covach's experiences suggest that musicians tend not to be socially-focused in their approach to music?**
- **Do you agree?**

Ultimately, I am arguing that if popular music is going to be interesting to musicologists, it will be interesting because it engages issues that already exist in the current discourse, or because it raises issues that extend or are closely related to issues within the current discourse; this needs to occur before popular music can suggest new issues within the discourse. The proposals made by McClary and Walser, Shepherd, and Middleton not only ask musicologists to look at different music, but also tell them to care about different issues in all the music they study. This is too much to demand of the discipline, and this kind of radical change is therefore unlikely to occur.

—Covach, p.469

- **Do you agree with Covach's assessment?**
- **Why should or shouldn't we defend research that's unpopular within our institutions?**