Book Reviews

Dancing Till Dawn: A Century of Exhibition Ballroom Dance. By Julie Malnig. Contributions to the Study of Music and Dance, Number 25. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. [xi, 174 p. ISBN 0-313-27647-1, $42.95.]

The Greenwood Press's Contributions to the Study of Music and Dance presents an interesting hodge-podge. Musical historical topics dominate, and recent works have focused on topics as far-ranging as Mozart's health, microtonal notation, theomusicology, Alfred Einstein's music criticism, and salsa. Julie Malnig's book, number 25 in the series, joins only several other dance studies. The limited number of dance titles in a purported music and dance series says more, however, about the infancy of serious dance research than the intentions of the Greenwood Press.

With the exception of anthropology, just about every scholarly field that could deal with dance doesn't or hasn't. Maybe it's because dance can't help but remind us of our bodies and all their attendant messiness that we've ignored. Or perhaps dance's very interdisciplinary nature — combining the multiple and multifarious intricacies of music, movement, theatre — played out against cultural and political life has been its undoing. How do you begin to wrap words around the experience of moving to music and ascribe meaning to it?

Julie Malnig, to her credit, chooses not to ignore dance; rather she celebrates one particular embodiment of it. Her study examines an aspect of twentieth-century social dance: professional dance teams who displayed variations of then-current social dances for an audience that might wish to participate, or as Malnig refers to it (too neatly I think), "exhibition ballroom dance." While she spends most of her time on what she identifies as the development of this exhibition dance in the teens and twenties, her study does deal, although briefly, with subsequent aspects, including the current phenomena of competition ballroom dance and the resurgence of couple-dancing among the college-age population. In her chronicle of the popularity of one-steps, fox-trots, and tangos, Malnig provides new evidence of the widespread popularity of such dances through the careers of heretofore unknown dance performers. While Irene and Vernon Castle may have reigned as the foremost representatives of social dance professionals in the teens, they were by no means alone.

Malnig approaches her topic solely as a kind of theatre and provides an examination of the theatrical circumstances surrounding exhibition dancing — from cabaret and vaudeville acts to musical theatre, film, and finally television — and its development as a viable, even lucrative, profession. This single perspective, however, limits the usefulness of the study. She spends very little time with surrounding issues of music and movement. Her perfunctory nod to ragtime as an agent ignores both music's power in dance and especially race as a complicating social issue. And although she uses and overuses the term "dance craze" to describe the focal time of her study, she provides no sense of what social critics at the time suggested with their use of that term

and attendant descriptions of individuals gone "dance mad": what the movement looks like and feels like and why people wanted to participate.

I would not mind this limited focus if Malnig — or her publisher — did not promise more than she delivers. Both the press publicity for the book and the jacket fly leaf promise: "exhibition ballroom dancing is also examined as a cultural and social phenomenon, promoting new cultural standards, including the emancipation of women and a casualness and spontaneity between the sexes." This is just not the case. Malnig provides very little cultural and critical interpretation of her topic and leaves unexplored crucial issues of race, gender, and class.

With regard to the "emancipation of women," two of her accompanying pictures are worth a thousand words. The cover photo shows the dance team Maurice Mouvet and Florence Walton in a dip move from 1913. Walton arches back with her right leg extended and her bent left leg planted so as to keep from falling over backwards from the sheer weight of Mouvet, who leans towards her, flattening her breasts against his chest. The pose quite clearly represents the male dominance of much social dance from this time, as the set dance steps of nineteenth-century social dance gave way to men leading their partners in a supposedly spontaneous reaction to the music. Nowhere does Malnig discuss the politics of the male lead and the female follower. Rather, she seems to celebrate uncritically the individuality of these dances without recognizing that this individuality was accorded to men alone; women were expected to respond to their partner's touch, not initiate movement.

A second photo, again of Mouvet and Walton, shows them in a move from an Apache dance, their so-called "dance of the French underworld." In this photo, Mouvet, crouching on the floor, sneers down at Walton and holds her, again tilted backwards, over his knee. Her left arm is not visible; her right hand clasps his left hand which grips her by the hair. Thus she appears to have been pulled backwards by her hair. Malnig describes the "stylized intimacy" that these new social dances suggested and even promoted, an intimacy created by crowded dance floors and close partnering holds. Certainly many commentators of the day recognized this intimacy too and many reformers decried it. Malnig also notes the use of social dances as featured parts of vaudeville romance or flirtation skits which suggests how heterosexist intimacy was further reified through dance and a kind of theatrical voyeurism. Yet, in the Apache photo, intimacy begets misogynistic violence. But nowhere does Malnig discuss the dance as a female danger. Kathy Peiss, in *Cheap Amusements* (Temple University Press, 1986), a splendid cultural study of working class women and leisure, provides an enlightening discussion of dance as a pleasure rife with tension especially for working-class women who were often economically beholden to their dance partners who had paid for their entrance to the dance hall.

As stated in the book's foreword, Malnig's study does begin to fill a gap. Given the paucity of material on dance in general and social dance in particular, Malnig at least gives the topic some scholarly visibility. The 18 pages of appendices and lists of archival and secondary sources will make the work of future dance historians and cultural critics that much easier. We can only hope that others will now go back and start to question what it all means.

Susan C. Cook
University of Wisconsin-Madison

The Seventh Stream: The Emergence of Rocknroll in American Popular Music. By Philip H. Ennis. Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1992. [xii, 445 p. ISBN 0-8195-5238-0 (cl.). $50.00. ISBN 0-8195-6257-2. $22.95 (pbk.).]

In a recent discussion of lacunae in the historiography of twentieth-century popular music, jazz critic Gary Giddins notes that the mid-1920s are generally seen as containing the complete roots of modern American pop. "As a result," Giddins argues,

> the premodern era — the century's first two decades — is lost to contempt, neglect, and embarrassment . . . we tend to cringe before that dark, distant, unswinging past. The first generation of jazz critics was as loathe to deal with it as the first generation of rock critics was to track the pop roots of rock and roll, preferring the fake patrimony of blues and country. Each case perpetuates the idea of the new music as revolutionary cudgel, and denies the evolutionary facts. (Giddins, 1993, p. 86)

Rock has consistently been identified with notions of revolution, and studies of rock have often been quite explicit about this aspect — for example, Arnold Shaw's *The Rock Revolution* (1969), Richard Robinson's anthology *The Rock Revolution* (1973), and Herbert London's *Closing the Circle: A Cultural History of the Rock Revolution* (1984). The standard account is that rock 'n' roll exploded onto the music scene sometime in the 1950s, constituted an essential rupture with the traditions of Tin Pan Alley, and, by rebelling against the commercialism and proprieties of the record industry, incurred the wrath and rejection of the world of adult show business and the love of teenagers everywhere. The exact relationship of rock 'n' roll to rock is never specified, although it is always assumed that we know the difference between the two. At the same time, it is made clear that rock/rock 'n' roll is somehow about "youth," regardless of the age of the audience.

However, George Melly's (1971) early admonishment that the emergence of rock consisted in the transformation of revolt into style has consistently been ignored throughout the past quarter century's historiography of rock 'n' roll. Lately, though, with the aging of the baby boom, the rise of classic rock radio, and the recent successes of, on the one hand, MOR versions of the 60s rock canon (Clapton, Bolton), country music, and Tin Pan Alley standards (Cole, Connick), and on the other, rap and dance musics, it seems that dominant scholarly conceptions of rock (especially within cultural studies, where "resistance" continues to be conceived as the locus of value) are becoming increasingly anachronistic.

Philip Ennis's *The Seventh Stream: The Emergence of Rocknroll in American Popular Music*, while buying into much of the standard account nonetheless constitutes an important beginning to a new era of rock historiography. It locates rock within the wider context of twentieth-century popular musics, and sees the emergence of what he idiosyncratically notates as "rocknroll" as the result of a series of extended evolutions over time. Ennis is uniquely positioned for such a study: in the early 1950s, he was a Columbia-trained sociologist working at Paul Lazarsfeld's Bureau of Applied Social Research, studying radio exposure of popular music for BMI, then in the process of defending itself against charges of monopolistic practices brought by rival rights

organization ASCAP. The studies concluded that AM disk jockeys, not publishers or record companies, made the hits, but also that DJs tended to follow, rather that lead, public taste, which, during the period of the research (1952-55), was apparently moving toward rhythm & blues and country.

This apparent contradiction (DJs make hits but the public determines its own tastes) provoked Ennis to examine the larger history of institutional change in the record and broadcast industries. Although the trajectory of the first two-thirds of the book, covering the period from 1900 to 1960, does not substantially deviate in its broad outlines from accounts given by Charlie Gillett (1983) or Richard Peterson (1990) — rock 'n' roll emerges out of the confluence of black and white musics and performers, and of technological, institutional, and demographic changes — it is the depth of his research, his commitment to examining the world of pre-rock pop, and his exposition of the organizational frameworks of the music industries which are truly remarkable. In these sections of the work, he marshalls an impressive range of statistics, chart data, and trade press writing in order to argue that "rock 'n' roll" comes to be, in large part, the description of a particular mode of hit-making as well as of a moment of extensive cross-chart activity. He masterfully traces the structural changes in popular music during the first half of this century, including the shift from the song, as embodied in sheet music, to the sound, as captured on record, as the central commodity of the popular music industries. He also presents a lucid account of the decline of network radio and the concurrent rise of local programming (largely due to national advertisers shifting from network radio to network television), which increasingly relied on recorded music. He emphasizes the attendant increase in importance of the record company A&R person and the local disk jockey in the hit-making process; these come to replace the previously dominant actors — song pluggers, publishers, and remote broadcast performers.

One of the key concepts Ennis deploys is that of a musical "stream," which he defines as "a palpable part of social reality, made up of several elements: an artistic system, an economic framework, and a social movement" (p. 21). He considers six streams individually (pop, black pop, country, jazz, folk, gospel), before examining the ways in which they merged to form "the seventh stream", rock 'n' roll. However, Western classical music is never treated as a stream, nor are its crucial influences on popular music ever addressed. This is all the more surprising in light of Gunther Schuller's conception of a "third stream" music resulting from the merger of the jazz and classical streams, which is only mentioned in passing by Ennis. Ennis makes no mention whatsoever of Charles Hamm's pioneering study of American popular music, *Yesterdays* (1983), which is insistent in its views on the relationship between popular and classical musics. Similarly, the process of the separation of music into classical and popular, as discussed in Lawrence Levine's recent *Highbrow/Lowbrow* (1988), is never examined, although a footnote mentions that by 1950 classical recordings accounted for 20 percent of the market. Ennis also slights the contributions of Latin music to "rock 'n' roll," devoting only a few paragraphs to Hispanic and Afro-Caribbean musics, despite his assertion at one point that Latin could be considered "the eighth stream" (p. 384; the irony here is that one of the key stylistic aspects marking the emergence of rock, the transition from swung or shuffled rhythms to "straight eights," almost certainly developed out of Latin influences).

Since Ennis conceives of rock 'n' roll as a synthesis of various musical streams, he examines the post-war chart crossover boom, which he unfortunately (and, in light

of his chronological emphasis, unjustifiably) limits to the 1950s, focusing particularly on 1950 and 1955. The truly unprecedented three-chart success of Nat Cole's "Straighten Up and Fly Right" (#9 pop, #1 Harlem Hit Parade, #1 Hillbilly, 1944), which sets the tone for the post-war crossover boom and the subsequent three-chart successes of Elvis and others, is never discussed or even mentioned by Ennis, nor is Frankie Laine's million-selling "That's My Desire," which became a #4 pop hit by first breaking through on the race charts in 1947. Despite these oversights, he makes a compelling case for the contribution made by changes in the construction of the charts during the post-war years to the increasing amount of crossover success. Ennis argues that the pop, black pop, and country charts were gradually aligned, especially in terms of their individual rates of turnover, during the late 40s and early 50s; this alignment then facilitated the movement of songs across boundaries previously thought of as unbridgeable.

One of the key implications of these boundary crossings, which is regrettably not addressed by Ennis, is the problematization of what constitutes the relationship between the "artistic" and "social" aspects of a stream, insofar as the chart categories (pop, R&B, country) set up by the music trade press technically describe markets or audiences (racially and geographically); and yet there is a common sense that somehow these categories equally describe a set of musical-aesthetic practices. This is most evident when we look, for example, at the history of the appearance of white performers on the *Billboard* R&B and soul charts outside of the rock 'n' roll moment of the 1950s. We may be surprised to learn that Percy Faith's "Theme from A Summer Place" was a #2 R&B hit in 1960, or that Debbie Reynolds, the Beach Boys, and Tom Jones all had hits on the R&B or soul charts. What this surprise should tell us is that common assumptions about the connections between music, genre, and race remain unexamined, and to the extent that they affect academic work on popular music, they constitute a priority within cultural analysis (see George 1988 and Perry 1990 for discussions of the implications of contemporary crossovers).

Therefore it is important to note that, as a liberal pluralist, Ennis invests heavily in the idea that rock involves a certain kind of eclectic egalitarianism, and accordingly tends to downplay the more divisive aspects of rock ideology, particularly the role of musical taste in marking racial and social distinctions. He often fails to note crucial differences between, for example, the age, class and education of the early '60s folk audience and, say, the teenage rock 'n' roll audience of the same period. Ennis never actually addresses a fundamental issue in the study of rock, which he himself raises: "The emergence of rock 'n' roll as unquestionably "a white boy's" music therefore raises the question, Where did the black part of rock 'n' roll go?" (p.231) This question has crucial implications for the various arguments about the nature and meaning of the chart crossovers, but Ennis ultimately sidesteps the issue by plunging headlong into the final third of the book, which consists of a largely mythological reading of the alignment of youth movements and rock 'n' roll in the 1960s.

In light of the superior scholarship of the first two thirds of the book, it is all the more disappointing when Ennis fails to maintain his industrial/institutional analysis in the concluding sections, which deal with the emergence of rock, as distinct from rock 'n' roll, in the 1960s. He characterizes rock as being articulated with certain patterns of commitment and release in the context of the youth movements of the 1960s, emphasizing the contribution of the folk stream to the baby boom's rebellious search for alternative ways of life. The book brings the story of rock through its moment of

maturation, 1965, up to what Ennis calls "the pause point" in 1970, when rock began to be disengaged from political movements, and the coalition of the teen and college youth audiences started to fragment. He moves away from his earlier focus on the economic and systemic aspects of the musical streams, where he displayed an impressive command of his subject matter, to the artistic and social movement components of the rock 'n' roll stream, areas in which he appears to be much less at home. Although he is to be commended for identifying his own background and musical taste history in the introduction, the sections on the 1960s suffer from extended anecdote and the absence of theoretically elaborated argument. A brief conclusion attempts to cover the last 22 years, but, given the kinds of changes experienced by popular music in that time span, this final section of the book presents a superficial treatment of what is (if we accept 1955 as the first year of the "rock era") over 50 percent of its lifespan in just 18 pages.

Though the industry research on the first half of this century sets new standards for thoroughness, and is presented in an extremely accessible fashion, there are, unfortunately, a number of factual errors throughout the book — some more trivial than others: the Duke Ellington Orchestra was not on radio in 1922; Ella Mae Morse is white; Howard Greenfield, not Harold, worked for Aldon Music; the Animals never had a U.S. #1 LP; Bob Dylan did not write "I Got You Babe" (Sonny Bono did); Buffalo Springfield had 5 charted LPs (Ennis claims ". . . the Buffalo Springfield never made a charted album . . ." p. 338); the Velvet Underground did not disband "after making their last album in 1969" (p. 341); pivotal Memphis station WDIA is given two commencement dates for its African-American programming. (1949, p. 173; 1948, p. 232)

Despite my reservations and nit-picking, this book is a remarkable achievement and a marvelous source for future research. Ennis has created many original and highly useful graphs depicting historical transitions in chart size, rate of song turnover, crossovers, share of LP market by musical stream, musical instrument sales, etc. He has reproduced a number of tables from earlier sociological studies reporting, for example, radio listener preferences in 1947, teen musical tastes in 1957, and the relationship between various local R&B record labels, local radio stations, and amount of African-American programming in the 1950s. The book also contains a wealth of historical documents, including a WDIA program schedule from 1952, early rock 'n' roll DJ playlists, and many complete (and legible) charts and articles from Billb*oard*, *Variety*, *Hit Parader*, and *Cashbox*.

The first half of the study is absolutely essential to anyone interested in the development of twentieth-century popular music; if Ennis had ended his story in the 1950s, I would have been able to recommend his book highly as a landmark achievement in the historiography of popular music. However, the continuing mystification of the emergence of rock in the 1960s evident in the later chapters, and especially the failure to address issues of class and gender with regard to "rock as youth music," undercut the study's value as a history of the transformation of rock 'n' roll into rock, of which the latter issue must remain a high priority in the historiography of Anglo-American popular music.

Because the historical transition from rock 'n' roll to rock remains unclear, it is important to suggest certain avenues of investigation. It may be useful to note that rock begins to be theorized and historicized precisely at a moment of social crisis (the late 1960s), which to some extent may account for its emphasis on rupture and revolution,

as well as its grafting of a temporally-specific generation gap onto a musical formation (Grossberg 1984, 1987). At the same time, the so-called "rock era" may ultimately be seen as that period when African-American performers were rendered effectively inaudible on the soon-to-be dominant medium (FM) and later-developing format (AOR) of rock radio circa 1967-77 (or even between the British Invasion and *Thriller*). This is what necessitates Dave Marsh's "Rock and Soul" designation for his canon of popular music (1989) — "rock" alone would exclude too much. Although Ennis emphasizes that the coalition of teen and college audiences was crucial to the formation of rock, and claims "teen" music re-emerged to contribute to the fragmentation of rock in the late 60s, it is likely that so-called "Teenybop" music, though its profile may appear to have been attenuated, continued to exist between 1964-67. Therefore rock cannot be defined simply by its audience (in other words, as "Youth Music"); rock needs to be seen as youth music taken seriously, both as business (the rise of rock LPs to sales dominance over adult pop LPs in 1967 is nicely charted by Ennis on p. 345), and as art (the folk-blues-jazz connections). The apparent politicization of certain artists or forms of popular music in the 1960s contributed to the rise of rock as art, but also, by re-coding the kinds of emotional investments pop fans have always made as explicitly "political" moves, to the economic health of the record industry during the period.

Rock's ideological validity (and purity) has conventionally been thought to rest in its apparent break with the mainstream (the retrospective historicization of the emergence of rock 'n' roll in the 50s as a revolution which topples Tin Pan Alley); this serves to emphasize rock's continuities with the blues and country traditions. Thus, its Romanticism comes out of a double movement: rejecting the commercial, choosing the authentic. Of course it is seldom acknowledged that these are rhetorical moves, particularly evident when we attempt to disentangle the "commercial" from the "non-commercial;" Elvis learned his blues from commercially successful African-American-programmed Memphis station WDIA; country music sales were growing by leaps and bounds in the 1940s. Thus it might be more accurate to see rock as a discursive shift, from one corpus of popular music to several other (commercial) traditions, which thereby sidestepped any need for a true rejection of consumerism (compare the remarks on rock as symbolic, rather than actual or radical, change in Buxton 1990 and Shepherd 1982). While Ennis is to be praised for identifying the larger institutional and industrial cross-media shifts, his analysis of social discourse, including questions of celebrity and masculinity, remains unnecessarily narrow and tradition-bound.

It seems likely that the failure of many attempts to conceptualize rock history stem from a continuing belief that rock is somehow, actually, revolutionary, rather than considering the prevalence of notions of rupture with the past and of cultural revolution as particular rhetorical devices, as components of a contemporary social discourse about the value of the practices so described. Until researchers can differentiate between the valuing practices of a musical culture, and the historical evolutionary emergence of that culture, we will continue to be presented with historiography distorted by discourses of authenticity masquerading as the real thing. At the same time, as the Giddins quote above suggests, there is an ever pressing need for an examination of the wider antecedents of contemporary popular musics, including those seen as somehow ideologically opposed to rock, such as the dreaded domain of white pop. Phil Hardy and Dave Laing, in their introduction to the recent *Faber Companion to 20th-Century Popular Music*, suggest that the inclusion of pre-rock

musicians and music industry professionals (some even from the nineteenth century!) in their dictionary is intended to encourage ". . . a moving away from the over-simplification of such concepts as that of a rock revolution" (1990, p. vii). Though *The Seventh Stream* is a promising, albeit flawed, start, we still have "many rivers to cross. . . "

Keir Keightley
Concordia University

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Salsa and Related Genres: A Bibliographical Guide. By Rafael Figueroa. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. [xii, 109 p. ISBN 0-313-27883-0. $45.00.]

For years salsa was a difficult music to research, since most of what was in print was either in the popular press, and therefore not collected by most university libraries, or else in Spanish-language journals or books that were difficult to obtain in this country and off-limits to non-Spanish speakers. Now, access to English-language sources on salsa has been vastly improved with the publication of Rafael Figueroa's annotated bibliography, *Salsa and Related Genres: A Bibliographical Guide*, whose explicit purpose is "to present materials about this musical genre that are available for the non-Latin world." Not all the entries are annotated — the author claims to have annotated only those entries whose titles are not self-explanatory — yet occasionally books and articles in Spanish, whose titles will not be self-explanatory to English-only readers, are not annotated, while others whose contents are obvious, are. This, however, does not detract from the book's greatest strength — that of the book's 606 entries, the majority are in English.

In order to appeal to the broadest possible audience — from lay readers to scholars to musicians interested in learning how to play salsa — the author has selected entries from a variety of popular, academic and technical sources. The book is organized into four parts: the first contains general references to Spanish Caribbean music; the second is organized around specific styles and rhythms; the third focuses on individual Spanish Caribbean musicians; the last addresses topics related to teaching and playing salsa. This four-part organization is useful and conceptually sound, but the selection of entries is sometimes inexplicably incomplete. For example, in the "General" chapter, the sub-category also called "general" includes entries that cover more than one country, such as Peter Manuel's *Popular Musics of the Non-Western World* (Oxford University Press, 1988). Yet other general sources that would be useful to readers to know about such as the *Penguin Encyclopedia of Popular Music* and important journals such as *Latin Beat* or *Latin American Music Review*, which regularly publish articles on the subject, are not listed — in spite of the fact that citations from these sources appear repeatedly throughout the book. Moreover, the location of some entries within the four chapters sometimes appears to be somewhat arbitrary, although the book's two indexes, one for author and title, the other for subject, serve as useful correctives.

To me the most bothersome aspect of this book are the geographic and theoretical boundaries Figueroa has drawn around salsa. There have been a number of lively and

on-going debates about salsa, ranging from different interpretations of the word "salsa" to far more polemical discussions concerning the Cuban vs. Puerto Rican vs. New York City origins of salsa. Figueroa, the founder and director of CONCLAVE, a database on what he generically calls "Afro-Hispanic music of the Antilles," is certainly no stranger to these debates, and in his introduction he explicitly refuses to tackle the nomenclature issue. Nevertheless, he blithely offers the following definition: "Salsa represents a body of sound that emerged from the Antilles (Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic) as a result of the meeting of European and African cultures, just as jazz did, but on a different basis." Totally excluded from this definition are the crucial contributions from other parts of the Spanish Caribbean as well as from U.S. Latinos.

If this definition did not have further impact upon the contents of the book I would simply disagree with it rather than contest it. It has, however, affected the very organization of the book, as well as the selection of its entries. In the "General" chapter, for example, he has separate sub-sections for Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, but none on other Spanish Caribbean countries such as Venezuela, Colombia and Panama, that have made far greater contributions to salsa than the Dominican Republic, where musical production has been largely limited to the merengue genre. As a result, the Dominican section contains entries (most of them in Spanish) on musics that have nothing whatsoever to do with salsa (including several articles of mine on the totally-unrelated bachata genre), yet the growing number of Spanish-language books and articles on salsa which have appeared in non-Antillean Spanish Caribbean countries such as Colombia have been excluded from this chapter. (A very few, such as the Venezuelan César Miguel Rondón's groundbreaking *El Libro de la Salsa* (1980), do appear elsewhere.) While Figueroa also excluded U.S. Latinos in his definition of salsa, he at least implicitly recognizes their importance by including in the "General" chapter a sub-section entitled "U.S.A.," which contains a number of key entries on salsa in its New York City context. I asked myself whether Figueroa's use of the word "Antilles" in his definition (as well as in his description of his CONCLAVE database) might indicate that he deliberately chose to limit himself to the Spanish Caribbean islands; but since New York City is clearly not part of the Antilles, I am at a loss to explain his arbitrary and inappropriate exclusions and inclusions.

In spite of these problems, the fact remains that this book is the most extensive collection of English-language references to salsa in print. The task of maintaining an up-to-date database is immense, and Figueroa is to be commended for his efforts, in spite of the fact that this book is — by his own admission — far from comprehensive; dedicated salsa fans and scholars will inevitably find that particular articles, books, or theses do not appear. Nevertheless, *Salsa and Related Genres: A Bibliographical Guide* is a welcome addition to the growing body of salsa research. The hefty $45 price may discourage individual scholars from buying it until a more inexpensive paperback version appears, but college and university libraries should be encouraged to purchase it, as both students and faculty will certainly find it useful.

Deborah Pacini Hernandez
Center for Latin American Studies
University of Florida

Running With the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music. By Robert Walser. Hanover, N. H.: University of New England Press, 1993. [xvii, 224 p. ISBN 0-8195-5252-6 (cl.). $39.50. ISBN 0-8195-6260-2 (pbk.). $15.95.]

Ever since Robert Walser took the 1988 IASPM conference at Yale by storm when he illustrated a paper on Bon Jovi with live demonstrations on his electric guitar, I have eagerly anticipated the publication of this book. I remember feeling at the time, "That's the way to do popular music studies: don't just talk about it, *play* it!" Walser is both a committed intellectual with a solid grasp of cultural theory, and a working musician with a first-hand understanding of the realities of musical practice. *Running with the Devil* is the first satisfactory account of one of the most significant genres of popular music today. But beyond that, I feel the book sets a new standard for popular music studies in its skillful interweaving of critical theory, ethnography, and close analysis of the music itself.

Heavy metal, as Walser observes, is a "site of explicit social contestation that can tell us much about contemporary society"(p. 24). It has been treated with scorn not only in the popular press but among academics as well. Heavy metal bands are frequent targets of calls for censorship and suppression by the PMRC and by religious fundamentalists. Walser does not pretend to take a neutral stand in this controversy: he is a self-avowed fan and a committed advocate. *Running with the Devil* is a scholarly study, but also an impassioned polemic and defense of a much-maligned musical movement. This is consistent with Walser's methodological stance, which rejects claims to scholarly neutrality. His aim is to discover what heavy metal music means to musicians and fans, and "there is no way to decide what something means without making a political statement."(p. 31)

But though Walser is open about his political agenda, he is also concerned to ground his arguments in close observation and careful analysis. He describes his methodology as "a kind of cultural triangulation, using ethnography as a check on textual interpretation and developing ethnographic strategies out of my own and others' cultural analyses." (p. xii) His ethnographic data includes interviews with fans and musicians, concert attendance, heavy metal guitar lessons, his own performances in bands, and extensive reading in the popular press. His cultural analyses draw on many of the ideas now current in cultural studies, including Foucault's notion of "discourse" and Bakhtin's dialogic techniques. I will have more to say about musical analysis, the third point of the triangle, later in this review.

The book does not offer a detailed history of heavy metal or a systematic survey of canonical recordings; Walser's interest is "less in explicating texts or defining the history of a style than in analyzing the musical activities that produce texts and styles and make them socially significant." (p. xiii) Thus in the first chapter he presents, not an attempt to arrive at an objective definition of heavy metal, but an investigation of "how heavy metal gets construed — by fans, historians, academics, and critics." (p. 3) This investigation includes an overview of the historical development and commercial growth of the style, and a portrait of the heavy metal audience that flies in the face of the common stereotype of metal fans as lower-middle-class adolescent males. Metal fandom encompasses a wide range of ages and socio-economic backgrounds, and today includes nearly as many women as men. Walser shows that the fans' own account of the appeal of this music has little to do with the mindless adolescent

rebellion, nihilism, and escapism that its detractors — and some of its supporters — attribute to it.

Two of the later chapters take up specific social implications of heavy metal in greater detail. The fourth chapter is a sensitive exploration of gender construction in the style. Walser doesn't deny that sexism is rampant in metal, but warns that "writers who expose racism and sexism in popular culture must take care that their critique does not collude with those who want to identify such barbarisms with an economic and cultural underclass that can thus be more self-righteously condemned and oppressed." (p. 111) As a "discourse shaped by patriarchy," heavy metal is inevitably preoccupied with dealing with "what patriarchy perennially perceives as the 'threat' of women." (p. 109 ff) Walser outlines four strategies for dealing with this "threat:" misogyny, excription, androgyny, and romance, but within the last two strategies he finds "a kind of free space ... opened up by and for certain women, performers and fans alike." (p. 131)

The final chapter (portions of which appear elsewhere in this journal) deals with the themes of madness, suicide, and horror, and with heavy metal as a political statement. Here Walser takes arms against the critics who portray heavy metal as an evil, deviant influence on impressionable youth. He sees it instead as an integral part of our culture that offers its devotees strategies for making sense of a confusing and threatening world, and a way of creating "a social world of greater depth and intensity." (p. 170)

In his introduction, Walser writes, "Much of this book will be concerned with what has been conspicuously absent from discussions of popular music: ... analysis of the specific musical choices embodied in individual songs and organized by genres. Musicians take such conventions and details seriously, and fans respond to them; critics and scholars cannot justify continuing to ignore them." (p. xiv) To this I cry a hearty "amen!" Popular music scholars have avoided dealing with the music itself for a number of reasons, the most common being the lack of musical training or knowlege. Some scholars excuse themselves on the grounds that the conceptual apparatus of classical Western music theory is inappropriate to the study of popular music, and foreign to the way popular musicians themselves conceptualize their work. Walser refutes this objection, demonstrating that many heavy metal musicians are extremely well-versed in traditional music theory. The book is rich with quotations from musicians and teachers that demonstrate a very sophisticated conceptual grasp of such arcana as the theory of modes.

Chapter 3, which deals with heavy metal's appropriations of styles and techniques from the tradition of European art music, is especially enlightening. Walser pursues the analogy between modern metal guitarists and European virtuosi of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries not to bestow a spurious "status" on the former, but to "pursue what Bakhtin called 'interillumination' his method of 'de-privileging languages' " (p. xv). He sees metal's use of the classical tradition as a critique of the "pickled rituals of the concert hall:" "the reasons behind heavy metal's classical turn can reveal a great deal, not only about heavy metal but also about classical music. We must ask: if we don't understand his influence on the music of Ozzy Osbourne or Bon Jovi, do we really understand *Bach* as well as we thought we did?" (p. 63) Walser's analyses in this chapter have changed the way I hear heavy metal guitar solos: when I judged them by the standards of blues or jazz guitar solos, I faulted them for their rhythmic squareness, reliance on sequential patterns, and insistence on displays of speed and

dexterity at the expense of a flexible, voice-like sense of phrasing. But such qualities become virtues rather than deficiencies if I compare these solos to Baroque toccatas or nineteenth-century virtuoso display pieces.

Walser's analyses are never purely formal or technical; he is always concerned to show that the music bears meaning, and to attempt to describe how it does so. This is a crucial undertaking, but it is fiendishly difficult. Walser's outline of his analytic methodology in Chapter 2 includes a brief synopsis of earlier writers' attempts to come to grips with the semiotics and the social meanings of music. Like many others, he begins with Adorno's view that "musical and social structures (are) metaphorically linked" (p. 35), while rejecting Adorno's vitriolic attacks on popular music. He praises the "sensitive analyses of musical meaning in social contexts" by such ethnomusicologists as John Blacking, John Miller Chernoff, and Steven Feld (p. 37). His assessment of Philip Tagg's pioneering work in the semiotics of popular music is mixed: while Tagg is "almost alone in having produced compelling explanations of the meanings of musical details in popular music," Walser feels that his methodology is flawed: "The problem is that there are no people in Tagg's analytical world save anonymous 'respondents'... There are no voices but Tagg's own; musicians and fans are dehumanized into 'Emitters' and 'Receivers.' "(p. 38-39)

Walser aims to avoid such "formalism" by grounding his analyses in "a poststructural view of music ... that ... sees all signification as provisional, and ... seeks for no essential truths inherent in structures, regarding all meanings as produced through the interactions of texts and readers." Thus he believes that "There is never any *essential* correspondence between particular musical signs or processes and specific social meanings." (p. 29) But if all meanings are fluid and provisional, how is it possible to reveal meaning through musical analysis? In fact, Walser's analyses are ultimately based on a critical strategy that antedates post-modernism — and modernism, too, for that matter: he locates meaning in musical structures by interpreting them metaphorically. Thus, for example, the effect of the Phrygian mode is "claustrophobic and unstable" because the lowered second degree "hangs precariously over the tonic;" (p. 47) and the relationship between a steady rhythmic pulse and syncopated accents gives rise to a "dialectic of freedom and control." (p. 49) Often Walser's metaphorical interpretations make very fine distinctions: here are two passages describing very similar musical events. In both of the passages, the bass repeats a tonic pedal point, while the guitar plays a pattern of syncopated chords that ends on the tonic:

> (in "Runnin' With the Devil") the main gesture is a syncopated suspension of a power chord on ♭VII (D) over the pulsing bass tonic (E); the E serves as a pedal point that clashes with the D, creating desire for resolution while guaranteeing it. (p. 52)
>
> "Suicide Solution" is very carefully crafted to produce an affect of despair and futility. ... Other chords slide inevitably back to a power chord on A; in spite of their syncopated energy, they can never escape... Throughout, the bass remains immutable, implacable, relentlessly pounding tonic downbeats. (p. 149)

In the first case, oblique motion to the tonic is said to represent stability and fulfillment; in the second, it is said to represent oppression and entrapment. Admittedly there are differences between the two passages that support Walser's interpretations: matters of mode, instrumental and vocal timbre, and lyrics. But the different meanings he

attributes to these chord progressions are based on very subtle distinctions, and another listener might construe the significance of these passages quite differently. Ultimately, as Walser acknowledges, his analyses are "monovocal," and although he insists that his readings not be taken as "essential or definitive," he does not offer alternative readings. When it comes to saying what the music means, the only voice we hear is Walser's own.

Indeed, I don't think there is an alternative. Analysis and criticism of the sort Walser presents here is more of an art than a science, and his analyses are the work of a virtuoso artist. Despite his claims to a postmodern perspective, I don't think his approach differs in kind from that of many earlier critics: ultimately he relies on subjective impressions expressed by means of adjectives and metaphors. What is distinctive here is the quality of thought. His sensibility has been refined by his solid understanding of musical structure, his immersion in the style as both a musician and a listener, and his careful attention to what fans, musicians, and others have to say about the music. His critical perceptions are thus deeply rooted in an understanding of what heavy metal is all about. The ultimate test of a musical analysis is whether it resonates with one's own subjective impression of what is going on in the music. By this test, I find Walser's analyses extremely persuasive: his ability to pinpoint the subtle differentiations of musical elements that engender specific emotions and meanings is extraordinary. *Running With the Devil* has not only broadened and deepened our understanding of heavy metal music, it has set a standard for the study of popular music of any sort.

Peter Winkler
State University Stony Brook, New York-