

The Cambridge Companion to

POP AND ROCK

EDITED BY

Simon Frith

Will Straw and

John Street



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

2001

11 Rock, pop and politics

JOHN STREET

Some of the strongest claims for the political importance of popular music have been made by its greatest enemies. Its most radical effects have been identified by those who most despise the pleasures of rock and pop. From the earliest days of rock'n'roll, priests, parents and politicians have warned of the dangers inherent in the rhythms, the voices, the words and the images of the music. And each new wave in pop history has been greeted by the outcry of those who fear for its consequences. In the West, the political right has been terrified that it will undermine capitalism, family life and traditional values. Racists have seen it as a threat to 'white purity'. Communists have seen it as subverting the socialist dream. These enemies have warned of its extraordinary power to influence the way people think and act. Their fears have not just prompted outbursts of indignation, but have actually resulted in policies and practices that directly affect the production and consumption of pop. Censorship has been a constant feature of the music's history. Under communism and capitalism, in the name of apartheid and Islam, pop music has been banned and musicians punished.

In 1995, Bob Dole led a campaign in the United States Senate against the conglomerate Time-Warner. He attacked the company for its promotion of rap artists like Snoop Doggy Dogg, who were signed to a Time-Warner subsidiary and who, said Dole, were promoting attitudes and behaviour that were an affront to the American people. Dole's campaign succeeded, and Time-Warner severed its links with its subsidiary. At the same time in Britain, the government introduced the Criminal Justice Act which, among other things, outlawed particular forms of musical performance. A decade earlier, the Parents' Music Resource Centre, led by the so-called 'Washington Wives' (including Tipper Gore, wife of Al Gore), persuaded record companies to introduce a system of labelling to identify music that might cause offence. Before this, in the 1960s, records by the Beatles were ritually incinerated in the American south; in the 1970s, the British Broadcasting Corporation refused to play a song about Northern Ireland by Paul McCartney. Such censorship was a way of life in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, just as it was under apartheid in South Africa. It continues today in China, Afghanistan and Algeria, among other places. In their diverse reactions and for their diverse reasons, these enemies of pop and rock have achieved one thing: they have made popular music into

a political issue, and they have invested it with the potential to endanger and disrupt the established order.

Strangely perhaps, those who have defended and delighted in popular music have never been quite so sure about the music's politics. There have been times, of course, when the rhetoric of revolution was accompanied by a 4/4 beat. In the late 1960s, there was much talk of revolution: at festivals, at happenings; in the songs and sounds of the Beatles, Bob Dylan, Country Joe and the Fish, Jefferson Airplane and many more. The revolution was even available, according to the endorsement on the record sleeve, on a budget-priced sampler from CBS. But the difference here was that no one – certainly not at the Columbia corporation – thought of it as a revolution in the traditional sense; there were no vanguard parties or cadres, no manifestos or five-year plans; no sweeping political reforms. This revolution was experienced as a collective dream; it did not have politics and programmes. It owed more to aesthetics than to ideologies, and its politics were acted out *within* the industries that produced it.

The 1970 Isle of Wight Festival – starting the Doors, Jimi Hendrix, the Who and Joni Mitchell – was a microcosm of pop's politics. The stars played along with the radical rhetoric, but haggled over their fees backstage. Activists from France and Britain pulled down the fences, while the organisers pleaded with them to stop and for the fans to pay, all in the name of a utopian communal ideal. The entrepreneurs, like the musicians, were caught between political idealism and commercial reality; between belief and the bottom line. Arguably, it is this tension which actually generates pop's finest moments and its truest politics. Utopian fantasies tend to issue in bland sounds, and self-righteous polemics in dull tunes. The politics of popular music are best animated by the attempt to combine commercial logic with romantic ideals.

Were the music not so commercially successful, its obscenities would be of little concern to its enemies. Or alternatively, were it commercially unsuccessful, but the beneficiary of state subsidy, only then would the political right be concerned. Equally, if it were not for the music's ability to inspire passion in its fans, and to capture their dreams, it would not justify the extravagant rhetoric that cloaks its commercial routines and which prompts its populist politics.

Any attempt to make sense of the politics of pop and rock must, therefore, try to understand the ways in which these conflicting and contradictory needs are negotiated; it must navigate between the fears of the outsiders and the opportunism of the insiders, between utopian rhetoric and authoritarian disgust. It must, ultimately, recognise the different views taken of pop's power. On the one side stand those who see music as a way of representing political ideas and promoting political causes, who see it as a

form of political expression. From this point of view, music has symbolic force, it deploys the power of language to create visions, articulate ideals and to form bonds. On the other side stand those who fear for music's effects, for whom the politics lie in its ability to exercise power over its listeners, to shape and influence thoughts and actions. These two dimensions of pop's power – the power to represent and the power to effect – establish the broad boundaries of pop's politics. This chapter explores both, arguing in the end that they are intimately linked.

Marking time

In a now familiar proclamation, Raymond Williams declared that 'culture is ordinary'. This 'ordinariness' is not, however, mundane. Culture is part of, and derived from, the circumstances of people's lives. It does not just reflect daily existence, though, it both orders it and looks to better ways of living. 'A culture has two aspects', he wrote (Williams 1989), 'the known meanings and directions, which its members are trained to; the new observations and meanings, which are offered and tested.' Culture is lived. It embodies the hopes and rules which form people's existence. And to the extent that their lives are patterned by political struggle, then their culture too is inscribed with political experience.

This insight leads to the stories told about pop music's past. Pop becomes a form of social history (an aural history); every record collection becomes a memoir, and the histories of peoples and societies are told in popular song. Such thinking inspires the use of pop music on film, documentary or advertisement soundtracks; the music acts as an easy shorthand for an era. Scenes of the Paris events of 1968 are accompanied by the Stones' 'Street Fighting Man'; scenes of hippies are enlivened by the Beatles' 'All You Need is Love'. Pop becomes the expression of its political and social context. The history of black music in the United States is sometimes told like this, as a chronicle of the changing political awareness of African-Americans. So the gospel hopefulness of the Impressions' 'People Get Ready' becomes the more assertive, impatient demands of Aretha Franklin's 'Respect'; which is followed by the disillusion and militancy of Nina Simone's 'Revolution'. And this view – music as social realism and political education – persists in accounts of rap which glory in accounts of ghetto life in the Bronx or Los Angeles.

The idea that pop is part of its time is reinforced by the emphasis put upon release dates and playlists, both of which lock the music into a moment and consign the immediate past to oblivion. But there is a danger of reading too much social significance into this process. Record releases,

and the fashions which accompany them, may organise the passage of time and the operations of the market, but they do not necessarily mark social and political change. (One summer recently, I watched three men dressed as nuns miming to 'Respect' in a French campsite. There was little sign of its associations with civil rights and women's emancipation.)

To view pop's politics in this way, to see it as the direct product of political history, is too simplistic. There is no straightforward causal relationship between the times and their sounds (and in the era of the remastered and re-released CD collection, the connection becomes ever more confused – what are we to make of previously unheard tracks by the Beatles, recorded in 1963, but released in the 1990s?). Music's politics cannot be read straight from its context because music-making is not just journalism with a backbeat. The music is the result of the interplay of commercial, aesthetic, institutional and political processes.

The same is true for the consumption of music. Musical pleasure is not just (or even) a consequence of political experience. There is no simple connection between the times and the sounds that were 'popular'. It is not enough to assume that, because the music was bought, it therefore reflected people's experience. Newspapers constantly represent themselves as speaking for the people. In editorials and articles, there are direct or implied references to what ordinary people think. But such claims owe as much to rhetoric as reality. There are, after all, no direct conduits through which popular views (if indeed such things exist) can be transmitted to editorial conferences or newsrooms. The same is true for music. Even where artists claim to be expressing the authentic voice of 'the street', this is more a matter of argument and credibility than actuality. It certainly cannot be treated at face value, because to do so would be to hear only the rhetoric of marketing departments and music journalists, and to ignore the interests of the institutions that mediate and manage the production of popular music. There can be no determinist connection in which particular political experiences find expression in particular sounds, and no reason why these experiences must sound like Diana Ross or like Aretha Franklin. Rock journalists may have insisted that the 'authentic' sound of black politics was Stax not Tamla, but such claims were *part* of pop's politics, not a description of them.

To the extent that the politics of popular music derive from the politics of their context, it makes as much sense to see the music as *shaping the times*, rather than reflecting them. In his account of punk music in Britain, the writer Jon Savage (1991) provides a running commentary on the social and political changes that shaped the 1970s. But the strength of Savage's story is not in the connection that leads from the social history to the music, but rather in the one that goes in the opposite direction. Savage

includes many extracts from his personal diary of the time, and it becomes increasingly clear that it is the experience of punk that is patterning his view of the world. The Sex Pistols frame and interpret the times. Punk gives a structure to the feelings of change and decay.

This perspective on the link between music and society is, in many ways, truer to Williams' original vision of culture as ordinary. The music establishes a context through which politics is viewed and judged. But in seeing the relationship like this, attention inevitably shifts from the social to the musical – to the sounds, images and words. It locates the politics in the text rather than the context. Here pop's symbolic power becomes most explicit.

Textual politics

Musicians from the left and the right have used popular music as a vehicle for their politics, translating their views into blank verse or rhyming couplets, and setting them against the thump of the bass drum. Many performers have made their politics a defining part of their art and their careers: Bob Dylan, Merle Haggard, Curtis Mayfield, Joan Baez, the Clash, John Lennon, Victor Jara, Bob Marley, Peter Gabriel, Public Enemy, Tracy Chapman, Sting, Thomas Mapiuno, Midnight Oil, the Gang of Four, Crass, the Dead Kennedys, Billy Bragg, Chrissy Moore, Rage Against the Machine and so on.

That music should be used like this is a consequence of its history as an accessible and flexible platform for political sentiment. It has the advantage for those living under authoritarian regimes that songs (like poems) can disguise their politics in metaphor and gesture, enabling their performers to avoid systems of censorship organised around the literal and the visual. The use of pop and rock as political platforms has also been greatly aided by the relative accessibility of the form itself and the permeability of the institutions that organise it. Despite its commercialisation and industrialisation, pop music has been less dependent on the barriers created by training, technology and capital that apply to other forms of popular culture. And because of its commercialisation and industrialisation, it has not been subject to the same scrutiny that has been applied to the subsidised arts (like theatre) or high cost commercial products (like film).

Partly as a consequence of its accessibility and the limits to regulation, popular music has given voice to many different political ideas. Music can claim to be the most democratic and the most politically radical mass popular form. Similar politics may, it is true, be found within fringe theatre, but the latter's reach is very limited (as is the case with radical

newspapers). And while television may reach further with its politically charged dramas and documentaries, it is highly constrained, formally and informally, by the conventions of constitutional politics and commercial interests (such as advertisers). Even the most telling of television satires would hesitate to give vent to the political anger of Public Enemy.

But in drawing attention to the political reputations of performers and the political content of the lyrics, there is a danger of making these the defining feature of the music's politics. It would be a mistake, though, to see the words, at least as they appear on the sleeve, as conveying the (political) meaning of the song. Not only are they heard in the context of the other aspects of the song (the beat, the production, etc.), they are also heard through the tone of voice and inflections of the singer. A song is more than its words. The same song can change in different performances. Compare, for example, two versions of Elvis Costello's 'Shipbuilding', a song about war and the conflicting feelings it generates – a hope of work, a fear of death. One version is by Robert Wyatt, the other by Suede: one is understated and hesitant, the other melodramatic and wayward. In each case the singers sing the same words, but their effect, the emotions they convey are quite distinct.

Words are not just ways of representing experience, but of expressing it; they are the material through which singers register emotion by letting their voice explore the sound of the syllables. They may produce a political meaning, but it may not be the one that the written text suggests. Vocal inflection and style can, in fact, work against the ostensible meaning of the lyrics. Tammy Wynette's 'Stand By Your Man' becomes less a plea for domestic subservience than its words seem to represent, when you pay attention to the regret in her voice. 'Sometimes it's *hard* to be a woman,' Tammy Wynette begins, and you can hear that it's hard and that Tammy Wynette knows why – her voice is a collective one (Frith and McRobbie 1990). Similarly subversive subtexts can be heard in rock. The rock rebel pose – from Mick Jagger to Jim Morrison to John Lydon to Kurt Cobain – may seem to be a celebration of freedom, but it is equally the sound of a desperate flight from commitment and intimacy. The music tells another story, one which belies the words and the images. Even wordless songs can convey a wealth of meaning. Liz Fraser of the Cocteau Twins has been described as singing 'a garbled phoneme soup (imagine Welsh sung backwards, through a sieve) that's mostly indecipherable but always sounds rich in wholly private, non-verbalisable meaning' (Reynolds and Press 1995). Analysing music's meaning like this suggests a very different approach to its politics. The politics lies in the sounds and their structures, in the way they refuse or embrace musical orthodoxies, in the way they follow and disturb expectations. The message can be in the mix.

The other side to such arguments is that explicitly 'political' songs, ones in which the words address a specific issue or cause directly, may turn out to lack any actual political resonance. Words that observe a formal concern with political ideology may fail *as lyrics* because they do not acknowledge the constraints (and opportunities) of their medium or genre. The political analysis may be correct but unless the listener is moved, unless the song works as a song (as melody and rhythm), then its politics may become irrelevant.

If the political meaning of songs – as texts – is more opaque than might at first appear, this suggests that we should either attempt a more fine-grained reading of them, or that we should abandon this approach altogether. Ultimately, the latter may be the only recourse. Although we may indeed reveal more about the political nuances within a song by the first route, my suspicion is that these readings will serve as no more than *readings*, which tell us as much about the reader as the text. Instead, I would argue that a more productive route lies in seeing how particular songs or performances engage with particular political moments and issues. This is not to return to the music as the expression of a time or era, but rather to its role in shaping and focusing experience.

Saving lives with a song

Music's ability to do this can actually be measured. We can count the cash that has been raised by Live Aid, Farm Aid or War Child. We can note changes in awareness that result from Rock Against Racism or Rock the Vote, or concerts for Nelson Mandela or Amnesty International.

These are cases of pop engaging with politics. The form of engagement, and the accompanying ideology, may be different in each instance, but there is no disguising the fact that pop can make a political difference. Soon after the success of Band Aid, Bob Geldof met Mrs Thatcher, then Britain's Prime Minister. He records in his autobiography, 'I knew I would only get a couple of seconds with her, so I had to be blunt' (Geldof 1986). There followed a sharp exchange on European Union food surpluses. 'Every time I said something,' Geldof remarks, 'she came back. By now I was getting the icy stare.' Geldof may have failed to change the PM's mind, but he was able to function as a legitimate political representative. He visited the White House, negotiated with the Ethiopian government, and stalked the corridors of Whitehall. And all of his authority was the product of a pop success.

His achievement was to organise and shape a sense of compassion for a cause. Geldof and his fellow musicians forged a way of seeing a problem

and responding to it. They used their skills to fashion our concern. Our (the audience's) feelings were constructed through pop's various musical, visual and other devices. In this process of constituting concern, the political potential of the music was revealed. It became part of the process by which we think and feel and act. This process is not, however, a simple, determinist one. The politics of compassion can assume many guises.

Take, for example, the different judgements made of Live Aid. For some, it promoted a bland, universal humanism, no different from (and little better than) the mass marketing of a commercial product like Coke. For others, Live Aid provided a site from within which it was possible to challenge the (a)moralistic hegemony of Thatcherism. New Right individualism was confronted by a collective compassion. Take, too, the arguments about the Amnesty tour led by Sting, Peter Gabriel and Bruce Springsteen. While, from one perspective, this represented an attempt to spread the cause of freedom and to challenge oppression; from another, it provided the basis for a form of colonial moralism, in which Western interests and values usurped local ones.

In these arguments, familiar political debates about imperialism and modernisation were overlaid with aesthetic ones about the music – its meanings and its effects. It is not just a matter of supporting one cause or another, or about the reasons behind such a stance. It was about how you support it aesthetically. The British Rock Against Racism campaign adopted a different musical strategy to that adopted by its United States equivalent. Where British RAR defined itself against disco and allied itself with reggae and rock, its American counterpart, wary of the 'disco sucks' rhetoric adopted by the British, built upon a more inclusive strategy which deliberately sought to involve all forms of music.

This combination of the aesthetic and the conventionally political is brought into sharpest relief when assessing the success of these various ventures. Not every cause adopted by rock and pop stars gathers the same support. It is apparent, for example, that some causes fare better than others. The reasons for this are never wholly aesthetic ('if only they had a better song/singer...') or political ('if only they had analysed the problem like this...'). It is about how music and politics actually interact, about how political and aesthetic responses are connected.

Sound theories

Here the politics of music become linked to competing social theories and the relationship between cultural and social action. The ability to use pop symbolically rests upon claims about people's relationship to their

cultural practices. This is a question which, like much else in the study of popular music, begins with Theodor Adorno.

Adorno's claims about standardisation and pseudo-individualisation within popular music, and the corporate sources of both, would seem to support the view of those who see such things as Live Aid as sustaining the dominant order. There is little reason to suppose that music can do anything more than reinforce pre-existing sympathies and trends. Against this stands those who want to present popular music as a weapon and as a source of group identity. For them, audiences are actively involved in the consumption of their music; and they can use it as a means of articulating an alternative vision. Consumption is imbued with political significance – more than that, it is a form of political practice. It is not a merely utilitarian, commercial transaction, but a statement of collective identity. And as such, it establishes an alternative to the prevailing order. Popular culture comes to be as important, politically, as the workplace and the state. It becomes the political expression and resource of the marginalised and dispossessed.

The danger here is of an uncritical populism, one which overlooks the material conditions of consumption. In making grand political claims for the music, the populist is actually shifting attention from the sounds to the way they are consumed, and to the interests and aspirations of the consumer. The music acquires its political importance from the way it is used. But it does not explain why and how the music comes to work like this. The populist reading of music depends more upon the sociology of the subculture than the aesthetics of the music. Little attempt is made to discover how, or in what sense, the music actually constitutes a political response.

This problem has elicited two reactions. First, there have been those who have argued that the cultural populism of 'resistance' offers a bland relativism, in which everything is what you make it. It simply celebrates anything that is popular, finding signs of resistance everywhere. What is needed, instead, is the exercise of judgement to discriminate between texts which articulate different political dispositions and which serve more or less effectively as works of art. This means tracing more closely the ways in which political meanings are derived from cultural consumption, to see how memories and myths are contained within popular music, and how each tells a different version of the imagined communities which animate people's lives.

One of the important implications of these revised approaches is that the politics of the music are not pre-given. It cannot be assumed that music serves to undermine or to question the prevailing order. Indeed, it is perfectly conceivable that they serve to confirm it. The conservatism of country music may reveal a radical heart, just as Springsteen's radicalism

may prove to be deeply conservative. But even where the music is not conservative, it remains important not to treat the content at face value. We have to understand the processes by which people come to hear and have access to the music, both as performers and listeners. Music is neither freely made nor freely consumed. Fans are organised into consumption practices, just as musicians are organised into (or out of) the production process.

If this is the case, then the politics of popular music cannot be confined to its symbolic role, its ability to represent ideas and articulate identities. To identify the politics of popular music, we need to move from concern with the power of music, to concern with power over music.

Sound practices and policies

So far pop's politics has been identified with its capacity to articulate states of mind and feeling; to represent social experience, to promote political ideas and causes. But one dimension of the politics of music may get lost in this approach. This is, perversely, the most conventionally political dimension: the impact of policy and the role played by the state. Popular music is the product of political processes, as well as commercial and aesthetic ones.

The failure to take seriously these formal political practices has led to an uncritical acceptance of the logic and the fact of globalisation. It has been assumed that intermediary institutions (especially national governments) can make no substantial difference to the form and character of a globalised culture. And yet there is considerable evidence to the contrary to show that states can deflect or re-shape global pressures.

We cannot afford to ignore the political economy of popular music. As much recent scholarship has indicated this is a key site in the determination of the character of pop and rock, and hence crucial to understanding its politics. It is not enough just to read the music ideologically. Attention has to be paid to its political economy, to the ways in which economic and policy considerations etch out the music's contours. We can neither understand the form of the music, nor the way it is received, without reference to the process by which it is delivered and the forms of access that are thereby organised into popular culture.

This process was most obvious under Soviet communism. Popular music may have been targeted less frequently than some other cultural forms (the printed word, for instance), but it was nonetheless subject to considerable state censorship and control. Musicians were imprisoned and exiled. They were, however, also fêted and promoted by the state.

Censorship was often accompanied by sponsorship. These practices are still evident in repressive states, but they can also be detected in 'liberal' regimes. Censorship has been practised by broadcasters. Sometimes this has been explicit, sometimes it has been the result of routines of selection and legitimisation through the use of devices like the chart and the playlist.

These same states are also implicated in the promotion of music – in judgements about the allocation of radio frequencies, in the regulation of festivals and venues, and in the system of arts subsidy. In these ways, the state shapes the sounds of, and the access to, popular music. But what makes this a political relationship is not the mere fact of state involvement. It is the fact that it requires political judgements to be made about music. In Britain, the decision to legislate for *raves* in the Criminal Justice Act constituted a judgement about the music (and 'the repetitive beats' specified in the legislation), about its effects and significance. In a similar way, the British state has made judgements about the extent to which pop music should occupy the airwaves. Equivalent judgements were also implicated in decisions about the content of the national curriculum for schools – to what extent were children to encounter pop music (and if so, in what form), and how were they to learn about it – as performers or as audiences? These political decisions have their parallel in those of countries who impose quotas on 'foreign' music. They are also part of a general practice, in which the local and national state establish rules and regulations that govern the consumption and performing of music. They can lie in decisions to fund particular types of music or to cater for particular audiences.

These policy issues, attempts to exercise power over popular music, are not so much concerned with the ability to act symbolically, to provide an expression of certain views or feelings. Rather, their concern is with the effects of music, with its ability to change things, to subvert or sustain existing practices, traditions and identities.

Conclusion

In emphasising the politics of power over popular music, and worries about its effects, it would be wrong to suggest that we are dealing with starkly alternate ways of reading pop's politics – either as symbol or as effect. The point is that they are intimately linked, and that it is impossible to separate them. This connection has implications that are too often overlooked. The symbolic politics of music are constituted in part by institutional practices, and policy can alter the ways in which music matters. How this happens can perhaps best be illustrated by the ways in which states respond to the so-called globalisation of popular music.

Two options are typically on offer: to protect indigenous/national musical forms; or to remove all barriers to outside influences. These options form themselves around a debate about 'cultural imperialism' and the perceived threat of global homogenisation. The debate engages with arguments about the cultural formation of identity and the political formation of culture. The sides in the debate seem to emerge in disputes about local culture versus global culture, about protectionism versus de-regulation. But this is to ignore the way in which musical forms may represent political positions. The crude 'cultural imperialist' debate ignores the different ways in which (global) culture is incorporated into local contexts. Different types of relation can be established with this culture, and in this difference political statements can be made. Put another way: adherence to traditional forms need not be radical or authentic, but actually conservative or reactionary; and as a corollary of this, the use of 'foreign' styles may be more radical. Non-traditional styles can represent a political challenge to a dominant order. This politics is not merely a struggle over symbolic meaning; it is also the politics of policy and institutional formation.

To focus on the organisation of popular music is to emphasise the ways in which 'content' and 'effect' are themselves the product of prior political processes, and that neither can be seen as defining pop's politics. At the same time, to draw attention to the ways in which policy decisions affect music is not to be committed to a form of political engineering. Observing the role of policy is not the same as endorsing it. It is, though, to take the view that music does not exist autonomously of other social, economic and political institutions. Music may still be able to change the world as well as reflecting it, but, when we talk of music's politics, we are not just talking of the way in which it articulates ideas and emotion. We are also talking of the politics that shape it.

Further reading

The journal that tirelessly monitors censorship across the world, *Index on Censorship*, devoted an entire issue to music, thoughtfully including a CD of the offending tunes (*Smashed Hits: The Book of Banned Music, Index on Censorship*, 6, 1998). For a more detailed study of the censorship of music, I would recommend Martin Cloonan's *Banned! Censorship of Popular Music in Britain 1967-1992* (Aldershot: Arena, 1996). The use of popular music to promote political causes is well surveyed in Reebee Garofalo's edited collection, *Rockin' the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements* (Boston: South End Press, 1992). This phenomenon is given an intriguing and sophisticated analytical twist by Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison in

Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). One of the best attempts to identify the politics of dance culture is the wonderfully titled *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties* (London: Verso, 1996) by George McKay. The politics of corporate and state involvement in music gets several different takes in Tony Bennett, Simon Frith, Lawrence Grossberg, John Shepherd and Graeme Turner (eds.) *Rock and Popular Music: Politics, Policies, Institutions* (London: Routledge, 1993). Simon Reynolds and Joy Press' *Sex Revolts: Gender, Rebellion and Rock'n'Roll* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1995) provides a splendidly iconoclastic re-reading of the politics of pop's key figures. For an insight into the life of the contemporary political pop performer, see Andrew Collins' *Still Suitable for Miners. Billy Bragg: The Official Biography* (London: Virgin, 1998). And finally, one of the best books which I have read that links all these and other themes is Robin Kelley's collection of essays *Yo' mama's dysfunctional! Fighting the Cultural Wars in Urban America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).