

INTRODUCTION

HENRY JOHNSON (Guest editor)

Each of the papers herein presents a ‘soundbyte’ of the diverse sphere of contemporary popular music in New Zealand. Using a range of theoretical and methodological approaches, from cultural studies to ethnography, the authors explore themes that help illustrate the breadth of the field while portraying their own specific interests.

The theme of contemporary New Zealand is one that could literally include a multitude of essays, but limitations of space and time have restricted the papers in this themed issue to five, which includes one discussion paper. In the opening paper, Zuberi explores the intervention of cultural policy on popular music in influencing cultural nationalism. In the second paper, Shuker takes this theme slightly differently by examining how and why New Zealand popular music has enjoyed rapid growth in recent years. In her essay on New Zealand hip-hop, Zemke-White focuses on the content of hip-hop lyrics as a way of showing biography, whether real or fictional. She elucidates themes inherent in New Zealand hip-hop that show clear tropes important to the localisation of a US and now global phenomenon. A slightly different popular music topic is given by Bendrups and Johnson. Utilising an ethnographic approach, they explore the place and location of contemporary country music in the town of Gore in the south of the South Island. In his discussion article, Mitchell foregrounds some of the themes that permeate each of the papers, reinforcing their contemporary importance in the field of popular music studies.

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