Review

Ian Inglis, ed. *Popular Music and Television in Britain*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2010. 266 pp. £60.00. ISBN 978-0-7546-6864-0 (hbk).

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Whilst they are central aspects of our cultural life, the study of popular music and television often falls into the disciplinary gap. What academic work does emerge in this area is often the result of scholars from each side dipping their toe into the other discipline, with a tendency to focus on score (Rodman 2009; Deaville 2011) or industrial exploitation (Donnelly 2002; Dickinson 2004) so it is refreshing to see work that values popular music's creative role. As part of the Ashgate Popular and Folk Music series, this collection is largely populated with popular music scholars, placing music and its cultural meanings at the centre with television largely cast in a supporting role. Yet this readable book is also accessible for those outside the discipline—with only Nicholas Reyland's examination of *Postman Pat* tipping into musicology terminology—thus hopefully sewing the seeds for further cross-disciplinary study of television music.

Ian Inglis suggests that 'pop and rock have contributed much to, and benefited greatly from, the historical development of television in the UK' (1). In its look back across the twentieth century this book offers a popular music companion to the recent boom in work on British television history and memory studies. The collection's core value is its nationally specific frame—countering existing work's tendency to orientate towards US programming (Brown 2001; Dickinson 2004; Fairchild 2011). Inglis argues the collection highlights the ways in which UK television has 'sought to incorporate, organise and distribute information about, and images of popular music—often in unique and groundbreaking ways' (2).

In doing so it covers a diverse range of topics, from the talk show interview that defined the Sex Pistols, to the role of wartime songs in *Dad's Army's* characterization of the Home Guard, to the shifting theme tune composition of children's television classic *Postman Pat*. These it organizes into four parts: History and Heritage, Performers and Performances, Comedy and Drama and Audience and Territories. As would be expected from the disciplinary focus of the contributors, the majority of chapters primarily consider television as an adjunct to, or a facet within, popu-

lar music, as documenter and facilitator of its cultural spread. Weaker chapters—such as Rupa Huq's discussion of UK indie music—are marked by a lack of detailed engagement with music on television *in practice*, with relatively general descriptions of television programmes and performances. However, stronger chapters draw out the integrated relationship between pop performers and television.

One example is Ian Inglis's clearly argued analysis of the contribution of television appearances to The Beatles' image and fame in the early 1960s. He demonstrates how biographical narratives and cultural memory have canonized three late-1963 televisual performances as a turning point in The Beatles' career. Yet he suggests that the band's large amount of television appearances throughout late 1962 and 1963, often overlooked or dismissed, actually played a crucial part in developing the popularity of the group and their relationship with the audience.

The shifts and changes in British music (and its relationship with British audiences) are reflected in the procession of performance-focused programmes documented throughout. The consistent address to music performance—from Peter Mills's history of the *Old Grey Whistle Test* to Richard Mills's exploration of the largely forgotten comedy-punk/new wave hybrid *Revolver*—demonstrates the importance of television's essential quality of liveness. Television's liveness often signifies musicians' authenticity and transparency, as in Mills's contrast of *Old Grey Whistle Test* rock performances to the miming of pop stars on *Top of the Pops*. Or it can capture historic non-performance moments such as Bill Grundy's goading of the Sex Pistols into swearing on teatime television. This is broken down through some excellent close analysis by Mark Duffett who unpicks the gender issues at play in the confrontation, along with its contribution to the Sex Pistols' identities moving forwards, framing the event as 'an adolescent ordeal that was quickly recycled to entrap its participants' (93). Duffett explores the role of cultural memory in this ritually repeated piece of television, and how different narratives frame our reading of the event.

Issues of gender and cultural memory are centralized in Estella Tincknell's excellent discussion of the gendered soundscape of time-travel cop show *Life on Mars*. Through detailed close analysis Tincknell demonstrates the presence of music as a discrete identity, as a nostalgic object and time-period signifier. Yet she also shows how music is woven into the text to articulate the fluid and fragmented sense of self of its time-shifted protagonist Sam Tyler. Highlighting *Life on Mars*'s struggle to reconcile its 'conscious intension to problematise the past, with its unconscious desire *for* the past' (174), she connects its privileging of white, masculine guitar rock within its soundscape to the programme's ultimate valorization of 'unreconstructed' 1970s masculinity. Tincknell's chapter demonstrates the value of close textual analysis, compared to a tendency elsewhere to make do

with generalized description of televisual aspects, perhaps a casualty of the disciplinary focus of the majority of the book's contributors.

However, this generalization is also perhaps evidence of access problems inherent in historical television studies, particularly as the ephemerality and low cultural status of pop programmes fell prey to practices of tape wiping in the 1950s and '60s. Some chapters offer practitioners' aural histories in place of close analysis of archive footage, which is highly valuable yet can prove problematic when anecdotes and readings are left uninterrogated. For example, whilst Adrienne Lowy offers testimony from production designer Nicholas Ferguson on his creative choices I would have like to have seen more of her *own* analysis of the *Ready Steady Go* performances of the Fab Girl Four of Dusty Springfield, Cilla Black, Sandy Shaw and Lulu. As without this her valuable argument for the programme's decisive role in the formation of these women's identities and careers lacks a solid grounding, skipping across a range of complex issues and slipping into generalized claims.

This book makes a valuable contribution to the documentation of British popular culture, with television's service of popular music made plain throughout. Its role in the spread of trends, the capturing of historical moments and the articulation of its audiences identities is clear. However, it is a shame that this relationship is not presented on a more equal footing. Future work on television and popular music could benefit from reaching further across the disciplinary gap.

References

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