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Introduction:

Sounding out the past

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This is the second of two special issues dedicated to the question of history in popular music studies. In the first issue, we began with an exploration of the meaning of different acts of retrieval among popular music scholars, whether revising a well-known historical narrative (Mausfeld 2019) or demonstrating the potential for popular musicians to act as public historians (Martin 2019). In this issue, we take a further step to examine the nature of our sources and what they can tell us about the kinds of histories we produce. Our focus is on the many ways in which the production of historical narratives about popular music raises questions of how we experience the past and what such encounters come to mean for different groups and individuals. How can we account for the 'pastness' in and of our experiences of music? Who are we speaking for and to in such accounts? And whose past is it anyway? In following the many traces that mark out the relationship between past and present—from the vast repositories of sound recordings available to us on internet streaming services to the affective histories embodied in the interplay of voice, movement and place—we become aware of the limits of our methods, as well as the silences we create along the way (Trouillot 1995).

Part of our aim here is to ask what an alternative history of popular music might look like, one that recognizes these limits and acknowledges those silences. To some extent, this involves listening again to the evidence we already have in order to reconsider how we might reinterpret it (Wald 2009). But in another way, and more importantly, it is a process of listening elsewhere, of looking in other places or at other things, and taking the time to hear voices or feel things we might otherwise ignore. Starting our account of the past with the repetition of a hardly remembered song, for example, or the return to a favourite venue years later, or the comfort of a childhood memory, sets a different kind of narrative in motion that foregrounds the imaginary dimensions of the everyday, the forgotten details of the familiar, and a passion for the habitual (Stewart 2007).

Each of the articles we have included in this issue aims to shift our perspective on the traces we rely on to construct our histories. In a discussion of the relationship between music, memory and materiality, Iain Taylor examines the importance of artefacts such as recordings in people's ordinary experience of listening. Taking his cue from Bennett and Rogers' (2016) claim that the 'material culture' of popular music acts as a rich site of memory and identity for popular music fans and listeners, who often 'signpost a life by cycles of engagement with music's physical extensions' (2016: 39), Taylor offers a compelling account of how we refigure our sense of the present through our attachments to objects of the past. Based on her extensive work as the curator of *The Lapsed Clubber Audio Map*, and online archive, Beate Peter takes up the methodological and conceptual challenges that popular music historians might encounter when faced with cultures or practices that cannot be captured through conventional or paradigmatic principles of the treatment of sources. She asks us to compare the standard accounts of raves with the more intimate histories that emerge from the stories of clubbers, especially through their affective memories. Finally, Paul Long broadens the question of our relationship to the past through a call for a poetics of history. Basing his discussion on Jean-Paul Sartre's novel *Nausea*, Long explores the way in which, when we hear a recording from the past, the encounter opens up a space for us to reflect imaginatively on our experiences of time, being, and historicity in the present.

Encompassing the practices of scholars, music industries, cultural institutions and communities of interest, we have identified a burgeoning field of practice devoted to popular music history. Bestriding personal, public and commercial imperatives, such practices challenge us to assess how we think about history, memory, time and music. Taken together, the authors and articles assembled in these special editions offer a suggestive set of directions for responding to this range of activity, its abiding concerns and futures for popular music history.

This special issue also includes a separate article that nonetheless engages in thinking about how we engage in music as both televisual and historical object. Andy Bennett examines an iconic programme from 1970s British broadcasting: *The Old Grey Whistle Test*. The programme introduced a number of US and international acts to British audiences, and played an important role as 'tastemaker' parallel to other mainstream media programming. As Bennett points out, the programme has enjoyed a life beyond its initial 1970s transmission, where its archival status on YouTube and other platforms allows us to re-consider 'classic' artists at the time of their emergence in Britain. Bennett's article also invites us to re-examine how notions of 'authenticity' are presented and received between industries and audiences during the era of 'album rock'.

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