Review

Robert Kronenburg, *This Must Be the Place: An Architectural History of Popular Music Performance Venues*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. 286 pp. ISBN 978-1-5013-1928-0 (pbk).

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'Everyone who enjoys live music has felt that thrill of arriving at a venue in anticipation of a performance', says Robert Kronenburg in the opening pages of *This Must Be the Place: An Architectural History of Popular Music Performance Venues*. The thrill that Kronenburg describes is at the heart of *This Must Be the Place*; it is a monograph deeply rooted in the emotional value that is often attached to performance venues. The author's claim for the importance of understanding the architectural history of these venues is a valid one, yet this is a book that offers far more than a study of architecture and design.

The performance of popular music is often as important as the music itself. Music venues are, for many, places of sociability, leisure and community. As Kronenburg himself argues, 'every gig is unique; every individual's experience of it is personal' (p. 3). These spaces, then, are the sites of individual and deeply personal experiences. Scholars of popular music and those involved in the music industry have written at length about the cultural and social significance of performance spaces, of their role in the urban environment, and their role as drivers of musical innovation (Connell and Gibson 2003; Haslam 2015; Chatterton and Hollands 2003). However, the physical spaces in which popular music performances happen are often taken for granted. While there is literature on the architectural history of classical music (see, for example, Howard and Moretti 2009), and studies of particular spaces (see Nott 2018), far less has been said about the development of popular music on a broader scale. Kronenburg's study of the typologies of music venues is therefore much needed, and offers an international history of performance spaces. While *This Must Be the Place* is a monograph about the architectural history of music performance venues, it is also the story of those who moved through them.

In positioning his writing within the human experience of live music venues, Kronenburg has produced an engaging and accessible piece of research. The book offers a comprehensive survey of the development and history of live music performance venues, taking the reader from the 1700s through to the late twentieth century. In 240 pages, Kronenburg covers an impressive array of spaces; from Victorian music halls and Mississippi river boats to Parisian cabarets and Manchester nightclubs. *This Must Be the Place* takes the reader inside these venues, offering an often overlooked glimpse into the design of these spaces. The monograph follows a broadly chronological structure through its twelve chapters. Chapter 2 examines that harbinger of mass musical entertainment: nineteenth-century music and variety halls, while Chapters 10 and 11 consider the rise of super clubs and multi-purpose arenas in the late twentieth century.

Given the breadth of Kronenburg's survey, the book's chronological and geographical focus is necessarily far-reaching. While concentrating predominantly on examples from the United Kingdom, continental Europe and America, *This Must Be the Place* takes examples from across the globe. Those wanting a detailed account of specific architectural developments may, therefore, have to look elsewhere. However, the book's breadth of focus is arguably one of its greatest strengths. It is this breadth that enables the book to demonstrate international links between different venues, showing the increasingly global nature of music and performance. Numerous examples can be found of architectural exchange between continental Europe and America. In Chapter 6, Kronenburg explores the rise of Palais-de-Danse venues in both Britain and North America. Chapter 5 uses the example of Ciro's nightclub in Shanghai, opened in 1936, to show how the image of glamour associated with grander venues was transmitted around the globe. Ciro's was a well-recognized name, once part of an exclusive chain of upmarket restaurants and clubs with venues in London, Paris and Monte Carlo. In this way, *This Must Be the Place* offers a coherent and significant account of the transnational connections that develop in the architectural design of popular music venues.

This Must Be the Place offers scholars and students of popular music an essential account of the music venues themselves. From plans and sketches, to photography and descriptions of individual venues, Kronenburg's research takes readers inside these places. Chapter 2, for example, opens with a vivid description of Wilton's Music Hall in Graces Alley, London. Wilton's is one of the very few remaining music halls from the 1800s, reminding the reader of the inherently transient nature of the majority of popular music venues. *This Must Be the Place* contains a plethora of visual material to enable readers to contextualize Kronenburg's research. Over 100 images accompany the text, including a central collection of seventeen coloured images of key venues and designs. Writing a history of these spaces is not easy—

often housed in temporary buildings or demolished to pave the way for new entertainment spaces, many popular music venues have a short life-span. This is often compounded by the similarly short-lived nature of the entertainment companies that take up residence inside these spaces. As such, visual and descriptive material for individual venues is often hard to come by. The combination of images, floorplans and description of interiors that accompanies the text in *This Must Be the Place* therefore allows the reader a vital opportunity to construct an image of the spaces being discussed.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the book is its personal touch. Kronenburg notes in the introduction that he draws heavily on his own experiences of Liverpool's music venues, and the focus on Liverpool is certainly notable throughout the book. While the book could be criticized for the numerous examples drawn from one city, it is this personal experience that grounds the research. The preface to the book opens in 1966 with the descent into the cellars of Liverpool's Matthew Street. Kronenburg's description of a lunch-time session at the Cavern Club, his first experience of a live music venue, demonstrates the lasting power of a good performance venue. It is this power that has ensured live music performances endure, despite the numerous technological developments of the last decades.

This Must Be the Place is an important and welcome addition to the academic literature on popular music venues. It is an impressive piece of research, providing both a comprehensive survey of over two hundred years of architectural history with an intimate portrayal of the central place that music venues hold in many people's lives. It offers researchers of popular music a glimpse into the physical spaces of historic music venues, and demonstrates why popular music venues remain such a vital part of our society.

References

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