

(Free and download) Audiopia: Music, Race, and America

Audiopia: Music, Race, and America

Josh Kun

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#462992 in Books 2005-11-01 2005-11-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.80 x .81 x 5.901, .96 #File Name: 0520244249319 pages | File size: 50.Mb

Josh Kun : Audiopia: Music, Race, and America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Audiopia: Music, Race, and America:

8 of 13 people found the following review helpful. an illuminating discussion of race and popular music By Scott *Audiopia* takes on a difficult question: if we tell the history of America through its popular music, what does the country look like (or, should we say, sound like)? Kun's answer is that music is one of the most multicultural parts of American culture, able to evoke 'audiotopias' through the clash and fusion of different musical idioms. The audiopia of Ozomatli, for instance, suggests that the various communities that produced salsa, ranchera, reggae, ska,

and funk might not be so far apart in the end -- a hopeful vision that contrasts with the real-life segregation of communities in America. While some parts of the book (e.g., the section on James Baldwin) do have a more academic ring, the sections on music are written with verve and a canny sense of the *sound* of the music. For my money, Kun is more alive to the beautiful strangeness of Roland Kirk's music than anyone else I've read on the saxophonist. And his affectionate reconsideration of the career of Mickey Katz -- a clarinetist who mixed Spike Jones absurdities, klezmer tunes, and Catskills-like Jewish humor -- is wonderful too. On a final note, I would add that I teach the history of popular music on the college level and have recommended the book to undergraduates doing research papers on various kinds of contemporary music. In several cases, the students have told me that the book helped them think in new ways about the special cultural space that music can create -- that it helped them understand why they felt so attached to some kinds of music and the worlds they felt invited into.

3 of 5 people found the following review helpful.
Superb! By negriti This is a superb example of what I would call the "new American Studies," written from a self-conscious, self-reflective Jewish position that branches out to engage and include other identities, cultures, and milieus in a fundamentally new way of looking at America, as an "audiotopia" as yet unfulfilled. It takes seriously the notion that black and latin musics are the lingua franca of a new universal community in America. What distinguishes this book is its superb and unpredictable readings of several key personalities in American Culture. The chapter on Jean Michel Basquiat and his relation to '80s music is worth the price of the book alone. Another is his profound examination of James Baldwin's relationship to the blues, Bessie Smith, and how both allowed Baldwin to explore his black and gay self in new and profound ways. Kun's discussion of rock en espanol shows how musical border crossings may be the most active challenges to the hyper nationalism in 21st century United States and Mexico. Rather than tendentious, the writing is some of the most exciting academic writing I have read in years. This is a rewarding explanation of why music remains an "audiotopia" for so many Americans.

17 of 34 people found the following review helpful.
no gracias By Rockmaninoff Kun's "Audiotopia" is incredibly dense and mostly mundane. Its ideas are buried in academic blather and pseudo-technical vocabulary like "audioracial" and "univocality." Suitable for graduate students in dire need of quotations for middle-of-the-road American Studies papers. The closing line of "Audiotopia" sums up the chaos of the book's thesis: "There were no 'open mouths,' no 'strong melodious songs,' no symphonies and no orchestras, just a house full of strangers huddled beneath a sky still ringing with sound." Indeed, this book is a house full of strange, obvious ideas.

Ranging from Los Angeles to Havana to the Bronx to the U.S.-Mexico border and from klezmer to hip hop to Latin rock, this groundbreaking book injects popular music into contemporary debates over American identity. Josh Kun insists that America is not a single chorus of many voices folded into one, but rather various republics of sound that represent multiple stories of racial and ethnic difference. To this end he covers a range of music and listeners to evoke the ways that popular sounds have expanded our idea of American culture and American identity. Artists as diverse as The Weavers, Caf Tacuba, Mickey Katz, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Bessie Smith, and Ozomatli reveal that the song of America is endlessly hybrid, heterogeneous, and enriching a source of comfort and strength for populations who have been taught that their lives do not matter. Kun melds studies of individual musicians with studies of painters such as Jean-Michel Basquiat and of writers such as Walt Whitman, James Baldwin, and Langston Hughes. There is no history of race in the Americas that is not a history of popular music, Kun claims. Inviting readers to listen closely and critically, *Audiotopia* forges a new understanding of sound that will stoke debates about music, race, identity, and culture for many years to come.

"With *Audiotopia*, Kun emerges as a pre-eminent analyst, interpreter, and theorist of inter-ethnic dialogue in US music, literature, and visual art. This book is a guide to how scholarship will look in the future - the first fully realized product of a new generation of scholars thrown forth by tumultuous social ferment and eager to talk about the world that they see emerging around them." - George Lipsitz, author of *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*

"The range and depth of *Audiotopia* is thrilling. It's not only that Josh Kun knows so much-it's that he knows what to make of what he knows." - Greil Marcus, author of *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the 20th Century*

"The way Josh Kun writes about what he hears, the way he unravels word, sound, and power is breathtaking, provocative, and original. A bold, expansive, and lyrical book, *Audiotopia* is a record of crossings, textures, tangents, and ideas you will want to play again and again." - Jeff Chang, author of *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*

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