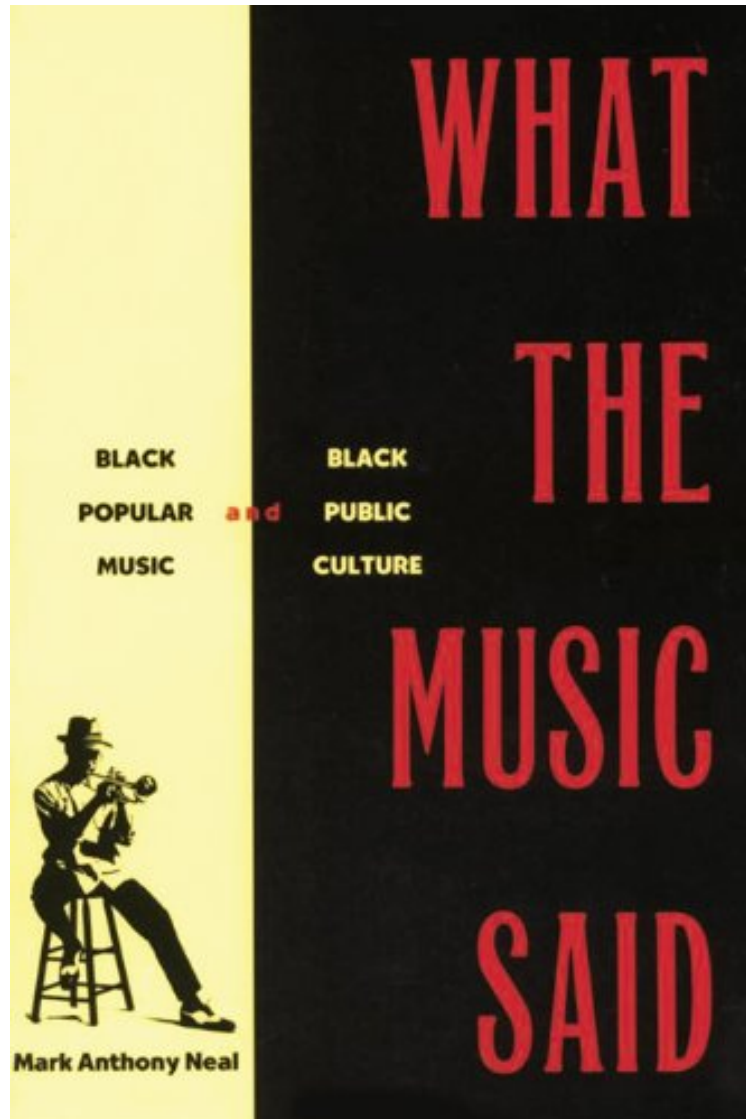


[Download pdf] What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture

## What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture

Mark Anthony Neal

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**Mark Anthony Neal : What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy CustomerLoved it0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Required readingBy NatalieText book. Son said it was fine.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Detailed Writing on Music and CultureBy Andree G. Robinson NealI was not suspecting such a well-

researched volume when I chose to purchase this text. I was looking for some information about a particular piece of music and this book was the only one that addressed it. I am still reading it because the particular copy I have has rather small print and the writing is very dense; this is not a text for the light-hearted as it is a scholarly work. Excellent job, Mr. Neal (no relation, to my knowledge...).

First Published in 1999. Routledge is an imprint of Taylor Francis, an informa company.

From Publishers Weekly Rap and hip-hop clearly serve as a public forum for African-American cultural critique; here, SUNY-Albany African-American studies professor Neal argues compellingly that black popular music has always played such a role. While ably describing the ways in which the "aural landscapes" of noted performers like John Coltrane and Anita Baker comment on the social realities of their day, Neal is more concerned with social history than with musicology. His interpretations of music are closely informed by the impact of developments like Reconstruction, mass migration, urbanization, the civil rights movement and the rise of the black middle class on the African-American community at large. He is attuned to the nuance given to accounts of the black experience by class and gender at specific historical moments. He also charts the impact of the commercialization of various forms of black popular music, which, he argues, has often compromised the ability of their music to serve as an authentic articulation of African-American values and experience. However, commercialization is not, for Neal, the end of the cycle: when a genre becomes too heavily mediated by market forces, he says, black artists simply find new modes of self-expression. In this deftly written study, Neal persuasively demonstrates that, from the spirituals sung by slaves to 20th-century blues, jazz, be-bop and soul, music has provided important "aural public space" in which African-American communities have been able to share and evaluate their collective experiences. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal For a large number of African Americans, black popular music was as much about history, sociology, and politics as it was about entertainment. As radio overtook the jukebox as a hit-making force and records became a recreational option affordable to even the poorest households, rhythm and blues and bebop gave the African American community a language of its own and a medium to communicate throughout the nation. Neal (African studies, SUNY Albany) explores how music reflected the evolution of a race as its members migrated from the rural areas of the South to the industrial centers of the North, and how singer Sam Cooke's defection from gospel music mirrored the declining influence of the black church. As much as anything, music was the force that both contained the stories of a people and offered them the forum to express their ideas to one another and the world. Not for the casual fan who wants to know how Motown got started, this is a scholarly work that may be more at home in the sociology than the music section. Dan Bogey, Clearfield Cty. P.L. Federation, Curwensville, PA Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. ... "validates Neal's intellectual and practical contribution to the fields of popular culture and Black cultural studies." -Deborah Elizabeth Whaley, "American Studies, Fall 2002 ...".carves out a well-defined intellectual and theoretical space for the post-soul generation--the "soul babies of history." -Deborah Elizabeth Whaley, "American Studies, Fall 2002 "Neal's cogent, coherent, and comprehensive "What the Music Said is arguably the definitive study of the relationship between 20th-century black American music and black American society as a whole." -Bill Piekarski, "Library Journal "Neal's grasp of the sociology of urban development is impressive, as is his familiarity with African-American studies scholarship and his knowledge of black popular music. Neal has undertaken to achieve a grand synthesis of popular culture and social research about the post-World War II black diaspora. Neal possesses encyclopedic knowledge of the music he surveys, while his pronouncements about its significance are incisive and insightful. [S]cholars interested in music, urban sociology, African-American studies, and cultural history will find "What the Music Said to be wide-ranging in scope and penetrating in analysis. Indeed, since Neal undertakes to explore the ability of popular music to define community values, critique injustice, and inspire individuals to struggle for a more just society, perhaps [his book] should be considered appropriate reading for us all." -"History of Education Quarterly ""What the Music Said is a passionately written book. It provides expert analysis for those interested in the history of black arts, music and culture..." "What the Music Said hammers home the point that black music is the spiritual and political connection to our communal souls." -Trent Fitzgerald, "QBR, Nov/Dec 99