

Book Reviews

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Dan Galen Hodges, Jr. and Eric M. Griffin. *The Profession of Publishing Music* (First Edition).

Cognella Publishing, 2026.

Reviewed by Benom Plumb, University of the Pacific

Will Kuhn and Ethan Hein. *Electronic Music School: A Contemporary Approach to Teaching Musical Creativity*. Oxford University Press, 2021.

Reviewed by Steven Potaczek, Samford University

Kevin Evers. *There's Nothing Like This: The Strategic Genius of Taylor Swift*. Harvard Business Review Press, 2025.

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Eddie Huffman. *Doc Watson: A Life in Music*. University of North Carolina Press, 2025.

Reviewed by Jeremy Polley, University of South Carolina

Matthew D. Morrison. *Blacksound: Making Race and Popular Music in the United States*. University of California Press, 2024.

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Dan Galen Hodges, Jr. and Eric M. Griffin. *The Profession of Publishing Music* (First Edition). Cognella Publishing, 2026.

The Profession of Publishing Music by Hodges and Griffin stands out as one of the more scholarly textbooks currently available on music publishing. No other textbook offers such a detailed, well-researched account of the historical and legal developments that have shaped the music publishing profession into its current state. The book offers substantial depth on the history and legal foundations of music publishing, along with valuable insight into daily operations, and presents an appropriate level of challenge to undergraduate readers. The book also proves to be an excellent text for those students wishing to pursue a career in IP law or work in the business

side of a music publishing company. Much of its content does tend to come from a Nashville point-of-view regarding some terminology and business practices.

The Profession of Publishing Music's structure is especially well organized. The book is divided into four distinct content units—Unit 1: “Historical Perspective”, Unit 2: “Copyright & Music Rights”, Unit 3: “Day-to-Day Music Publishing”, and Unit 4: “Additional Topics”, which includes sampling, demos, catalog sales, and the future of music publishing. Each unit is evenly divided into four chapters, totaling 16 chapters. Among the book's most effective features is the consistent structure and logical flow within each chapter. This predictable format supports teaching by making it easier for instructors to assign readings, prepare discussions, and assess student learning. Each chapter begins with a “Chapter Objectives” statement, followed by content headings and sub-sections that flow well together within the unit's context. At the end of each chapter is a “Chapter Summary” statement, followed by important key terms, and a list of “Chapter Questions” that will provoke and challenge a student's critical thinking and reading retention. Chapters also include thorough citations and helpful QR code links to other relevant websites and organizations mentioned within. Some chapters include “Expert Questions,” which are advanced critical thinking questions for students. For example, in Chapter 11, “The Business of Songwriting,” there is a fantastic “Expert Question” regarding a hypothetical songwriter's publishing deal. In this advanced question, students must connect details of the publishing agreement terms and compute the writer's financial standing at the publishing company.

While the book excels in presenting the legal and business foundations of music publishing, it devotes limited attention to the creative and aesthetic subjective dimensions that also define the profession of music publishing. Given that music publishing is grounded in the evaluation of songs and in the development of creative processes, a fuller understanding of these creative aspects and what publishers look for in great songs could enrich the book's content. For instance,

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examples of how publishers evaluate songwriting demos, build their writer rosters, and shape their pitching strategies could bridge the gap between the business and creative sides. Though the book does discuss what publishers generally look for in the personality, talent, and work ethic of individual songwriters, faculty seeking to address these more subjective, artistic aspects (including songwriting, creative development, A&R processes, etc.) may wish to supplement the text with additional readings or case studies.

Though the book lays a solid foundation in licensing structures, faculty may find opportunities to enrich classroom discussion by expanding on areas in mechanical, performance, synchronization, and dramatic performance ("Grand Rights") licensing. For example, regarding mechanical licensing rates, the book omits the Copyright Royalty Board's multi-bucket royalty comparison for interactive streaming mechanical calculations, including the TCC (Total Content Cost) figures and the deduction of performance royalties required in mechanical interactive streaming payments. This omission may be intentional to avoid overwhelming the reader, though instructors seeking deeper coverage may wish to supplement this material.

The discussion of public performance royalties is robust and might be further enhanced by including example amounts or sample royalty statements, which could help students visualize how various uses translate into revenue streams. In addition, instructors may wish to expound on performance royalty payments tied to commercial advertising ("commercial jingle") uses and how the performing rights organizations track and pay royalties on these advertising performances. The authors' primary attention is on the four major U.S. performing rights organizations—ASCAP, BMI, SESAC, and GMR—but notably omits the most recent and growing U.S. music rights organization—All Track—which represents mechanical, performance, and neighboring rights. As for dramatic performances for the living stage ("Grand Rights"), the text omits possible licensing fees and the finer points of negotiation for songs used in musical plays, Broadway, etc.

As to synchronization licensing, this section is especially strong and invites further discussion in the classroom on the topic of cue sheets. Faculty will likely want to expound on this area with examples or samples of cue sheets tied to particular synchronization uses (such as visual vocal, source, or background vocal uses) and their possible corresponding audio-visual performance royalties. Instructors may also find it helpful to expound on some terms in certain synchronization licenses, such as the broad language, "all media now known or hereafter devised" so common in today's licensing environment.

The text includes material on sound recordings, recording studios, and the record industry—content not traditionally found in a publishing textbook. While slightly outside the

book's core focus, these sections help clarify the important interdependence of publishers, sound recording professionals, and record companies. The addition of record industry content ultimately makes the text more appealing for faculty teaching about the broader music business and enhances the reader's understanding of how the profession of music publishing works in the modern era.

Regarding different types of publishing agreements, the text boils these down into three categories—exclusive songwriting agreements, single song agreements, and administration agreements. This simplification makes things more digestible for a student reader. While other types of agreements, such as sub-publishing and artist development deals, are discussed, though not in as much detail as the aforementioned three categories. The book's appendices are especially helpful to further reinforce and expound on these agreements. The appendices include template and example forms of a Mechanical/DPD license, Synchronization license, Letter of Direction, Exclusive Songwriter Agreement, Assignment of Copyright, Single Song Agreement, and Administration Agreement.

In comparison to other music publishing texts—such as the Brabec brothers' *Music, Money, and Success*, Winogradsky's *Music Publishing: The Complete Guide*, and Wixen's *The Plain & Simple Guide to Music Publishing—The Profession of Publishing Music* is a valuable addition to music publishing education. Drawing on decades of experience, Hodges and Griffin—both well respected throughout the music industry—have created a textbook rich with real-world, practical information for students and creative professionals alike. This is not a theoretical text, but a hands-on guide focused on the legal, administrative, and professional dimensions of music publishing. While its coverage ranges from rigorous and detailed to more general and introductory, its thoughtful structure and engaging pedagogical tools make it an appropriate choice for undergraduate instruction. Though instructors may wish to supplement certain areas, Hodges and Griffin have produced a timely and lasting resource.

Benom Plumb, University of the Pacific

Will Kuhn and Ethan Hein. *Electronic Music School: A Contemporary Approach to Teaching Musical Creativity*. Oxford University Press, 2021.

There are books we read, and then there are books that seem to read us. For me, *Electronic Music School* belongs in the latter category. Self-described as a "practical blueprint for teachers wanting to begin teaching music technology," I found this book to be a companion, guide, and coach for any educator wanting to innovate and teach music curriculum

beyond the traditional, Western, ensemble-based framework. This includes those of us teaching music and entertainment-industry courses and those working with students interested in songwriting, music production, technology, non-traditional music making, and/or popular music ensembles.

The book starts with a set of poignant questions: "What would music education be if we had to start over? If we burnt it all down and started over, would we do it the same way?" (xvii). In the not-so-distant past of the COVID-19 epidemic, many schools had to suspend large-group gatherings, which effectively shut down much of the music education infrastructure. The authors further note that many schools are increasingly struggling with declining student interest in traditional ensembles:

Teenagers who don't care about music are rare, so why do so few students want to enroll in school music programs? Becoming a performer of composed music is only one way to be a musician, and it's not the one that aligns with the tastes, identities, and aspirations of most kids. (5)

Statements like this contain strong words, especially for those of us who have spent our careers building and sustaining reputable ensembles and quality conventional music programs. Yet, the authors do not shy away from these challenges, pointing to a growing body of research that exposes the limitations and inequities inherent in traditional music education. This is happening in the context of a larger American culture where hip-hop, R&B, country, rock, and dance are the most consumed genres, while classical consistently accounts for less than 1%. Whether the issue is elitism, overt or covert racism, or a myopic definition of modern musicking, these are critical considerations if music education is to remain relevant and aligned with the interests and opportunities available to 21st century students.

Part One of the book outlines the foundational components needed to design a creative music curriculum. This not only outlines the technological components—including hardware, software, or instruments—but also the physical space, budget, educational standards, graduation requirements, and potential curriculum. The authors also anticipate potential pushback from colleagues or administration: "In our experience, the strongest resistance comes from other music teachers. Administrators, parents, students, and the community at large are mostly pragmatic and are rarely driven by passions or ideology," (25). To address this, they share helpful strategies for collaborating, fundraising, and addressing common concerns in the midst of innovating.

Part Two focuses on designing relevant, sustainable, and engaging projects for students. As this section is largely practical, it was nice to see the authors include an overview

of the pedagogical philosophy underlying the projects (largely constructivism), potential challenges, and more than a few examples. Many of these projects utilize Ableton Live—a common digital audio workstation (DAW)—as the primary canvas for musicking. Topics include functional music theory, recording and sampling, remixing, syncing music and foley to video, sound design, drum programming with step time, and songwriting with MIDI.

A standout feature of this section is the inclusion of specific suggestions for student differentiation, assessment, and common inherent issues within each project. The authors also discuss designing projects to teach originality. In concert with more traditional music ensembles, I believe incorporating approaches such as this would benefit all music students by not only teaching them how to effectively 'blend' with their large ensemble peers, but also how to find their unique voice—an area that historically received less emphasis when teaching fundamental music-making concepts such as tone, style, embouchure, and/or diction.

The third and final part of the text outlines processes for creating student-led performing groups, a virtual approach to music education, and a performing arts program that elevates culture. Fortified with scholarly research, the authors spend time investigating the cultural convergence that makes up American popular music, as well as the racial politics embedded in the history of American music education.

The authors clearly assert that our curricula inherently carry messages of inclusion or exclusion, regardless of our intentions. In a 2009 study of the "undergraduate music education program at a major American university found that students spent 93% of course time on Western 'art' music, as opposed to the 0.5% of course time spent on all forms of popular music" (270). Certainly, this lopsided approach conveys value judgments that students internalize. To drive the point home, they allege that while Kendrick Lamar may be a good enough musical artist to win multiple Grammy, BET, MTV, and Billboard awards (as well as a Pulitzer Prize), he "would not be accepted into most undergraduate music... programs" (270).

This book is a bold and prophetic call to action that has the potential to be overlooked, dismissed, or even resisted by the broader music education establishment. Like the authors, however, I say this does not pose an either/or, binary perspective on music education. This is not a zero-sum argument. I believe that despite the obstacles such an endeavor would present, the American music education system is nonetheless overdue for a stronger "yes, and" approach. As research continues to affirm the efficacy of pedagogical approaches such as project-based learning, differentiation, and small group education, I believe there will be more and more of a demand for music education that

incorporates the “whole” rather than merely a “part.” If this is true, then textbooks like this will undoubtedly be an invaluable resource for music educators looking to innovate and expand their curriculum.

Steven Potaczek, Samford University

Kevin Evers. *There's Nothing Like This: The Strategic Genius of Taylor Swift*. Harvard Business Review Press, 2025.

On June 7, 2024, my daughter and I experienced a sensation now known as a “Swift Quake.” During multiple songs throughout the first night of The Eras Tour in Edinburgh, Scotland, the nearly 73,000 fans in attendance at Murray Field generated seismic activity that was detectable nearly four miles away.

As a lifelong musician who has attended hundreds of concerts by some of the biggest names in music, I've never been this affected by an audience's energy. That night in Scotland, I witnessed something extraordinary: a crowd entirely captivated and wrapped in jubilant ecstasy from their connection to an artist and a cultural movement. This was not simply a concert; it was a form of communion replete with friendship bracelets, costumes, open smiles, and screaming. Lots of screaming. The experience affirmed for me, despite plenty of critical press that I had read across her improbable 20-year career run, that Taylor Swift was more than a successful musical artist—she was a generational icon.

Kevin Evers explores this phenomenon and its history in his extensively researched and aptly titled new book, *There's Nothing Like This: The Strategic Genius of Taylor Swift*. Importantly, this is not simply a work of “fan fiction” or hagiography for a rock star. Evers, a senior editor at Harvard Business Review, brings to bear his journalistic expertise and research in leadership, strategy, and creativity to examine Taylor Swift not merely as a cultural figure, but as a case study in ambition, risk-taking, and intentional decision-making.

From the outset, Evers positions Swift's story within a framework of strategic thinking. He draws comparisons not only to other successful musical acts, but to major business empires including Marvel, Amazon, Tesla, and oft vaunted executives like Steve Jobs, Jeff Bezos, and Elon Musk while divining larger transferable lessons from many of the anecdotes in Swift's career. *There's Nothing Like This* is fast paced, easily digestible, and provides a wealth of in-depth information and introspection drawn from one of the most transformative artists in recent history.

To support his narrative, the author details every one of Swift's album releases from 2006's “Taylor Swift” to 2024's “The Tortured Poets Department” by including first week sales data, streaming statistics, promotional strategies, and press quotes

highlighting Big Machine's (and later Universal Republic's) hits and misses on their target sales and marketing goals for each LP. For any industry wonk or educator looking for data-based research projects or classroom talking points, *There's Nothing Like This* and its detailed 500+ citation bibliography are an invaluable resource.

Evers opens with Swift's earliest career moves, emphasizing how even as a young tween in Nashville, she demonstrated a rare clarity of purpose. After an early development deal with RCA expired, multiple labels passed on continuing to work with the still developing artist who was just starting to perform at local venues and cowrite with established producers. However, while seeing her perform at a songwriters-in-the-round event, Scott Borchetta, an executive at Universal Music, was struck by the teenager's poise and ability to hold her own on a stage filled with performers twice her age. Evers documents that Swift impressed the industry veteran with her self-awareness and focus by quoting one early collaborator who explained: “She knew exactly who she was, she knew exactly what she wanted to say, she knew exactly where she was going. That blows everything else away.”

Without minimizing Taylor's creative or musical gifts, here and throughout the book the author continually reframes success not simply as something bestowed only to some due to birthright or luck. Instead, Evers suggests that talent and career traction might best be found through an essential process of self-reflection, determination, and learned self-assuredness. By highlighting that Swift didn't want to be known as just “another girl singer,” *There's Nothing Like This* threads together how effectively Swift's resoluteness to write her own songs ultimately became one of the most endearing aspects for fans and their ability to relate to her and to her music.

In an industry rife with pressures from managers, labels, and other forces, this was a bold decision for any artist to make, let alone one who still wasn't old enough yet to drive. Yet by telling her own stories in her own voice, often without any co-writers involved, this decision and her stubborn determination allowed Swift to differentiate her earliest singles and albums from a crowded market. From record to record and lyric to lyric, a generation of music fans quite literally grew up with Taylor Swift and intimately understood the inherent emotions and rites of passage cataloged in her songs.

Additionally, the author deftly shows how Swift's rise occurred alongside massive shifts in technology and media. Chronicling the transition from physical sales to downloads to streaming, *There's Nothing Like This* is as much an analysis of a changing industry, disruptive technology, and consumer behaviors as it is an analysis of an individual artist. Diving into the specifics, the book recounts that Swift's debut album in 2006 was not an instant hit, but by engaging directly with

fans through social media, curated events, and surprise appearances, Taylor Swift slowly and methodically built an incredibly loyal fan base over time.

Not surprisingly, Evers specifies how social media played a pivotal role in expanding her reach and deepening fan engagement. Swift, like her fans and much of society, slowly adopted a series of platforms moving from Myspace to Facebook, Tumblr, then Instagram, and finally TikTok. Social media had increased the speed at which Swift's music had spread and strengthened the connections with fans—and their connections with each other. It was a pivotal factor of her success.

Later, despite the rocket-like success arc that seems to dominate in discussions around Taylor Swift, Evers points out that her career trajectory was not frictionless. Throughout the book, Evers explores several difficult situations wherein Taylor's rise to fame was accompanied by a slew of business challenges, industry roadblocks, and even public outcry. Many critics faulted her singing, especially during a poorly regarded Grammy performance in 2010. Swift also suffered significant backlash from several public instances with Kanye West and Kim Kardashian.

Often protective of her public persona and exuding a warm and casual demeanor with fans, these particular events became amplified online and led many to suggest that Taylor's behavior was instead disingenuous. Ultimately, millions perpetuated this attitude online, and for some time, Swift avoided any public engagement. Here, Evers carefully notes that while social platforms helped endear Taylor to her fans, those same tools could be used to "spread hate at scale." The author even includes reflections from Taylor herself where she suggested that those moments of backlash had the potential to completely alter or even derail her future career aspirations. As an educator who plans on using this book in the classroom, the exploration of these issues and the negative effects that can come from social media exposure seem especially poignant. In an environment well documented by mental health challenges among youth and many of today's college-aged students, case studies about how to navigate online negativity read as compellingly as any of the details of Taylor Swift's creative output or career.

Correspondingly, the author is quick to point out that not every LP Taylor Swift released met expectations, another lesson for younger artists or aspiring professionals. Red (2009), Reputation (2017) and Lovers (2019) faced an array of either fan or industry-based disappointment causing Taylor and her team to often adjust and refine their strategic approaches in real time. The book also does not shy away from addressing the broader cultural challenges Swift faced along the way including misogyny, exploitation, and the ever-present public scrutiny of her personal life.

Still, Evers frames Taylor's responses to these pressures as part of a larger story—one about grit, courage, and navigating complexity with poise and attention to personal values. These themes all resonate deeply with so many continuing conversations around "resilience" in higher education today. Taylor's own declaration from Wembley Arena in 2024 will be informative for my students: "Every time someone talks shit, it just makes me work even harder and it makes me that much tougher."

There's Nothing Like This is so much more than a biography—it is a blueprint for creative leadership that is difficult to put down. While I can't teach perfect pitch, I can introduce new learning resources that help encourage self-confidence and self-reflection. In a world of constant change, Kevin Evers expertly details how much Taylor Swift's success is about "an uncanny ability to turn adversity into opportunity" as it is about musical dexterity, talent, or some other skill that we as mere mortals don't possess. I don't know if I personally agree that "Taylor Swift is the music industry," as Bloomberg Businessweek once declared, but she certainly is a model to illustrate how far ambition, courage, and adaptability can take you.

Lastly, several times throughout the book, Evers shares some of the more personal Taylor Swift moments he has been able to experience with his own daughter, Maisie. Tenderly describing images of an Eras concert literally reflecting powerfully in his daughter's eyes, the author encourages us to consider the impact that an artist like Taylor Swift and her story might have on the next generation. Reframed and juxtaposed against her considerable achievements, by delving deeply into the stories behind the music, *There is Nothing Like This* challenges many of our zero-sum preconceptions about life and the entertainment industry.

Maybe, there could be more things like this. But, for that to happen, we too would need to learn to trust ourselves and empower our students to do the same.

Scott LeGere, Augsburg University

Eddie Huffman. *Doc Watson: A Life in Music*. University of North Carolina Press, 2025.

When writing about the life of someone whose impact spanned decades, it is difficult to avoid lionizing them. It becomes even more arduous a task when the person was so humble and down-to-earth, overcoming disability and numerous challenges to rise to the pinnacle of their field. Eddie Huffman navigates this task expertly in *Doc Watson: A Life in Music*, weaving the story of Doc from his humble roots in Deep Gap, North Carolina, all the way through the skyrocketing popularity of MerleFest. Along the way, Huffman utilizes numerous press writings and first-hand accounts to

tell the story of the recording of Doc's first album *Old Time Music at Clarence Ashley's*, his role in the folk revival of the 1960s, his love of Gallagher Guitars, and his partnerships with numerous musicians and producers throughout his truly impressive career.

Huffman clearly respects the subject of his research, taking time to dig through archival newspapers, interviews, and historical documents to construct the story of Doc's life, which would have been especially difficult as so many of these tales traveled the same way as the music did—by word of mouth. Huffman traces Doc's upbringing in Watauga County, North Carolina, living in a cabin with no electricity or running water. Doc's undefeatable spirit shines through in his youth, never allowing his blindness (a result of tainted eye drops, congenital vascular disorder, or the result of an 'old wives tale') to drag him down. Growing up, Doc's love of music came from hearing the songs of his mother, as well as the sounds of the world around him. And while he would become a world-class guitarist, his musical roots came in the form of the harmonica, taught to him by his father. Further musical exposure came in the form of the radio and records, as well as his time at the North Carolina School for the Blind. Soon the harmonica was joined by a cat-skinned banjo, and later a \$12 Stella guitar purchased in North Wilkesboro (an accounting that runs counter to previous tales, where his first guitar was a Silvertone). Huffman lays this story out for the reader in a familiar manner, creating the feeling of a conversation around a dinner table.

So much of this text is based upon the interpersonal relationships of Doc. His deep love for his wife, Rosa Lee Carlton, is expressed in his own words—"Every breath of every day was her name." Huffman also provides background on some of Doc's earliest collaborators, such as Jack Williams, Thomas Clarence Ashley, Henry Cook, and Joe Reid. His touring schedule, which was fairly intense, is also explored in depth. The reader is almost dared to keep up with Doc as he crisscrosses first the Appalachian region, the East Coast, and, later on, the nation. Doc's career spanned over sixty years, with numerous phases and accolades, making any retelling of his story a daunting undertaking. Huffman is able to establish a mostly clear timeline, occasionally needing to jump into the past to establish an event that connects to the current moment of the narrative but otherwise remaining chronological.

If there is any shortfall in this text, it is that a large amount of the work (particularly the middle) focuses on Doc's son, Merle. This is a point that the reviewer wrestled with mentioning, as it seems as though Huffman may have faced a similar struggle. How do you tell the story of Doc Watson, the blind, flatpicking sensation, without telling the story of his son, Merle, who struggled with demons and died tragically at the age of 36? So much of the narrative established in this text centers around

Merle, which would be expected to a point. However, for a large part of the text, it does feel as though we are learning more about the Watson *family* versus Doc himself—but can that really be avoided when talking about the legacy of a man who was so closely connected to his family that they performed on stage along with him, even late in life?

Overall, I greatly enjoyed my time with this text. As a guitarist, I have admired and respected the work of Doc Watson (though I was introduced to him via the soundtrack to his work on the soundtrack for the 2000 Coen Brothers film, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*). The narrative style of this text makes the reader feel as though they are part of the story, a retelling happening around a dinner table or fireplace, in the company of family and good friends. Huffman's deep respect and renown for the source material never crosses the line into fan service and provides a fascinating and entertaining view of the life, career, and musical impact of a true icon.

Jeremy Polley, University of South Carolina

Matthew D. Morrison. *Blacksound: Making Race and Popular Music in the United States*. University of California Press, 2024.

Matthew Morrison's *Blacksound: Making Race and Popular Music in the United States* has already achieved an exceptional level of notoriety for an academic monograph. The PROSE and CHOICE award-winning book also made the shortlist for the 2024 Museum of African American History Stone Book Award and was named one of the twenty-five best music books in 2024 by *Rolling Stone*. In this review, I echo the well-deserved praise that *Blacksound* has garnered for its impressive contributions to American music history and ethnomusicology. But beyond its methodological merits, I want to make a case for this book as a paradigm-shifting, foundational text in the study of American popular music that should significantly inform and influence future work in the field.

American creative industries have been a key aspect of the nation's global cultural hegemony for more than a century. Cultural phenomena like New York hip-hop or golden age Hollywood glamour are recognized across the globe, defying boundaries of geography and language. Despite their perceived allure, these same industries are also widely known to be exploitative of the individuals who produce the creative works that the public demands. Even major stars with household names must regularly advocate for fair financial compensation. Through deft historical and musicological analysis, Morrison shows with crystalline clarity that the exploitative nature of the creative industries in the United States is no accident. Rather, from their very inception, creative industries were *designed* to exploit the creativity of enslaved African Americans for the amusement and profit of whites.

America won liberation from British rule in the Revolutionary War, but it continued to be dominated culturally by European art, literature, and music until the 1830s when the first truly American popular cultural form, blackface minstrelsy, emerged. In this book, Morrison positions a theory of “blacksound” as “the sonic complement and aesthetic legacy of blackface minstrelsy and performance within American popular music and its industry” (2). He also innovates the concept of “intellectual performance property,” defined as “the sonic and corporeal practices developed by black people... to both recognize and acknowledge the property value inherent in black performance, even as it continues to elude black claims to sonic and musical authorship within most property laws today” (16). While Morrison certainly builds upon previous work such as Anjali Vats’s *The Color of Creatorship* and Katrina Dyonne Thompson’s *Ring Shout, Wheel About*, his articulation of “blacksound” and “intellectual performance property” are original contributions to the study of American popular music that substantially enhance our understanding of its history and structure.

Blacksound traces the economic history of American popular music from its beginnings in blackface minstrelsy in the 1830s through the infusion of ragtime aesthetics into popular music that coincided with the invention of mass media technologies a century later. Biographical studies of William Henry “Master Juba” Lane, Stephen Foster, Isidore Witmark, and George Washington Johnson provide narrative structure to individual chapters, but a primary throughline across the text is a critical analysis of copyright law. As suggested in Morrison’s theorization of intellectual performance property, *Blacksound* makes plain the limits of current IP policy. But crucially, Morrison explains these limitations not as a fundamental dissonance between creativity and the legislative process, nor even as a determinant, inevitable result of a capitalist system. With an impressive depth of historical evidence, Morrison lays bare the ways that black creativity simultaneously created musical products the public would pay for while the emerging American intellectual property regime consistently categorized the unique contributions of black performers as public domain.

This text would be a stretch for most undergraduate music industry classrooms, but instructors in those classrooms owe it to their students to read this book and teach its precepts as an essential part of American music history. I believe it especially important to emphasize that this is not a book foundational just to black music history, but to any fact-based, historically

informed understanding of popular music in the United States. To relegate *Blacksound* as merely an exceptional critical race take does a disservice to the scope of what it achieves and misunderstands its point. What this book achieves is a thoroughly convincing explanation for why the American music industry as a whole is structured the way that it is, and why it continues to operate the way it does up to the present. When considering the influence that the early music industry had upon all future American creative industries, and in turn the influence that American creative industries have had upon the rest of the world, the importance and explanatory potential of *Blacksound* would be difficult to overstate.

Future work on the political economy of creative industries, particularly in the United States, should incorporate Morrison’s analysis. Even if their focus is on class, rather than on race or gender, *Blacksound* definitively shows the intersectionality of race and class in American popular culture, and how it was intentionally deployed to reinforce inequality. Future work on subcultures and countercultures should reference how this book demonstrates that American popular culture was designed at its inception to create an axiomatic understanding of “black and white” as “other and mainstream.” In this way, *Blacksound* joins texts such as Eric Lott’s *Love and Theft* and Dick Hebdige’s *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* as seminal and foundational to subsequent work.

Morrison’s book shows us that idealized narratives about the fusion of African and European music sensibilities as the basis for American music’s popularity must not belie the violence and exploitation that occurred for that “fusion” to take place. Our fundamental understanding of the value of creativity, especially as it is reflected in our philosophy and application of intellectual property law, is as much a product of our racist past as any other aspect of American history. If we ever hope to repair the harm our history has caused, we must begin by acknowledging it. *Blacksound* provides indisputable evidence of the harm, but it also suggests a path toward healing. When our copyright philosophy is built on exclusive ownership rather than fair value and moral rights, it is little wonder that inequality is the result. We need an understanding of intellectual property more in line with the actual processes by which creative works are produced— and a meaningful acknowledgment of the contributions that African American ways of creativity have made to every aspect of American popular music and culture.

Jason Lee Guthrie, Clayton State University