



Music and Capitalism: A History of the Present (Big Issues in Music)

By Timothy D. Taylor

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iTunes. Spotify. Pandora. With these brief words one can map the landscape of music today, but these aren't musicians, songs, or anything else actually musical—they are products and brands. In this book, Timothy D. Taylor explores just how pervasively capitalism has shaped music over the last few decades. Examining changes in the production, distribution, and consumption of music, he offers an incisive critique of the music industry's shift in focus from creativity to profits, as well as stories of those who are laboring to find and make musical meaning in the shadows of the mainstream cultural industries.

Taylor explores everything from the branding of musicians to the globalization of music to the emergence of digital technologies in music production and consumption. Drawing on interviews with industry insiders, musicians, and indie label workers, he traces both the constricting forces of bottom-line economics and the revolutionary emergence of the affordable home studio, the global internet, and the mp3 that have shaped music in different ways. A sophisticated analysis of how music is made, repurposed, advertised, sold, pirated, and consumed, *Music and Capitalism* is a must read for anyone who cares about what they are listening to, how, and why.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Taylor’s contribution is to see the questions surrounding music and capitalism through the lens of traditions of social theory that have been crowded out by Adorno. His case studies, rich in the voices of actors and participants as well as in theoretical debate, throw us into the diverse histories and cultures of the musical marketplace. This is a bold and ambitious book, by an author whose reading in these fields is unrivaled and who has a knack for getting quickly to the point. Required reading across all of the musicological disciplines.”

(Martin Stokes, author of *Republic of Love*)

“Using a historically informed approach grounded in Marx, Weber and Bourdieu, Taylor’s book is wide ranging but focused, nuanced and clearly articulated.”

(*Ethnomusicology Forum*)

“First-hand accounts from Taylor’s interviews tie together the wide-ranging topics throughout, revealing how each individual or organization negotiates their own position in the economy and builds their own identity in the cultural value system of the music business. . . . *Music And Capitalism* builds on the argument put forward by Jacques Attali in *Noise: The Political Economy Of Music* that capitalism both shapes and is shaped by culture. This approach necessarily invokes systems of value other than the monetary—brand value, edginess, tastemaking, and the construction of identity through conspicuous consumption are discussed. Yet in Taylor’s view of capitalism as a cultural force, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between aesthetic judgments and marketing decisions.”

(*The Wire*)

“Music and money have a strong affinity. Taylor explores their synthesis as cultural commodities in the era of neoliberal capitalism. This pathbreaking book is an original work of theory built on encyclopedic knowledge of commercial music today.”

(Keith Hart, author of *Money in an Unequal World*)

“Comprehensively researched and presented with numerous historical and ethnographic examples, *Music and Capitalism* is a major landmark in music studies and research on capitalism. Critical, insightful, and erudite, Taylor addresses the production and consumption of music in a work that deeply reveals the social organization of capitalism and its profound impact on music.”

(Jocelyne Guilbault, author of *Governing Sound*)

“This book addresses a fundamental question: how have changes in capitalism impacted the production and consumption of music? In the first chapter, Taylor (UCLA) offers a brief history of music and capitalism, and in the chapters that follow, he looks at neoliberalism and the cultural industries, globalization, digitalization, and neoliberal capitalism. . . . In contrast to many social scientists who critique present-day society, Taylor is mildly optimistic: he concludes that humans have the potential for better lives. Of interest to those in the culture industries. . . . Recommended.”

(*Choice*)

“Taylor convincingly argues we can’t properly look at music in a vacuum that doesn’t consider economics, and provides a framework for understanding the big pictures and unseen hands driving the industry and the people who work within it.”

(*PopMatters*)

About the Author

Timothy D. Taylor is professor in the Department of Ethnomusicology at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is the author of several books, most recently *The Sounds of Capitalism*, also published by the University of Chicago Press.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Benjamin French:

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