

Bruce Johnson and Martin Cloonan

Dark Side of the Tune: Popular Music and Violence

(Adlershot: Ashgate 2008)

Review by **Carlo Nardi**

In his book *The ragas of North India*, Walter Kaufmann reports a conversation he had in 1934 with an eminent classical musician in then Bombay. On the basis that a rāga performed at a wrong time is inauspicious, the old man expressed his sense of frustration in these terms:

“Do you know that you people in the West will soon experience a most terrible disaster? And do you know why? [...] Because you people in the West abuse music and perform it at wrong times and occasions! You play funeral marches and sing dirges when there is no funeral and no cause for sadness, you sing love songs and spring songs when there is neither love nor spring, you play nocturnes during the day, wedding music when there is no wedding. How long – he roared – will the universe tolerate this abuse of music, music, mind you, a most sacred thing?” (Kaufmann 1968, p. 18).

This passage is enlightening in many respects, as it acknowledges that a wider circulation of music through time and space, often under the umbrella of cultural imperialism, brings about a loss of connection between a community and its music, generating a collapse of meaning in music itself. Anyway the Indian musician doesn't consider at least one relevant aspect, namely that music is not inherently something good, and the potential violence of music is not confined to its misuses, but is inherent within music itself. Music is not necessarily therapeutic nor pleasant, and what is pleasant to some can be even harmful for others. Moreover, an individual or group may find the same music either pleasant or unpleasant according to the situation. Furthermore, we cannot be even aware that it is music itself causing that feeling of unpleasantness, as we don't always process consciously the soundscape. If this can appear somehow unmistakable for music scholars, the main merit of this book is to help to define the abovementioned situation, also against the common thought, in a comprehensive study – as the title suggests – on the dark side of music.

The first three chapters, written by Bruce Johnson, contextualise the link between music and violence sensorially, historically and in relation to recording, storing, transmitting and reproducing technology. This first part is followed by four sections authored by both contributors and each dedicated to a different modalities of linking music and violence, to conclude with a discussion on issues concerning music policies in contemporary society and, more precisely, in the urban environment.

First of all, in line with the last trend of music studies, the attention is less on music as text than on subjective experience, and hence with the sensorial and cognitive implications of listening to music. Accordingly Johnson, drawing on psychological research, mainly in affect and to a lesser extent in perception, introduces some theories that will uphold the subsequent exposition. The attention is towards those situations in which determined sonic qualities place the hearing subject at variable unease in the environment, like the so-called “ubiquity effect”, which refers to the disorientation following the failure to recognize the source of a sound. The strength of these processes resides in their ability to elicit emotions while bypassing conscious-

ness, so that the first stage of arousal is an involuntary reaction to sounds, followed in its turn by a culturally-mediated response.

Here I see a first fault in this volume, that is a misleading trust on certain psychological theory which results in an essentialist and ethnocentric approach to the senses. It is a pity that Johnson doesn't refer to the more recent sensorial scholarship and to the production of such scholars as David Howes (1991, 2003, 2005), Constance Classen (1993, 1997), Jim Drobnick (2003) or Jonathan Sterne (2003), production which would help to contextualise these psychological theories, as long as perception, and hence also the very possibility for a stimulus to bring arousal – especially in a soundscape as inconsistent as that of today's cities, so distant from the laboratory environment –, are most likely mediated by culture. For instance, the idea that “hearing internalizes, and sound projects, a shared experience” (17) cannot be assumed as a universal of culture as it is linked to western organisation, functioning and conceptualisation of the senses, as Jonathan Sterne stresses stigmatising what he calls the audio-visual litany, i.e. an idealisation of hearing as manifestation of pure interiority (Sterne 2003, p. 15). This perspective maybe symbolizes the mainstream discourse on our sensorial abilities, yet it doesn't explain their practices – and not just in the peoples studies by Steven Feld (1990), Alfred Gell (1995) or Paul Stoller (1989), but not even in the western world.

Moreover, the capacity of vision to enter in contact with objects, so that perception happens both in the body and in the perceived object, has been cleverly exposed by Michelle Serres: the senses are wrapped in a knot, and every kind of tool functions as an extension of our body as full-blown sensing appendixes (in Connor 2005). At any rate, already Aristotle considered sight as a form of contact, and this idea has been revised for instance by Walter Benjamin in his theory of mimesis.

However Johnson is keen to recognise that the border between somatic and cognitive domains is uncertain:

“There is no absolute threshold between sonic pain and pleasure that can be defined simply in terms of sonic effect, organic impact, musical form or genre. This is partly because the threshold is ambiguous [...] and because it is not the character of the music that makes the difference. [...] It will be our argument that any music, however sweet or innocuous, can be deployed to engender pain” (22).

This brings to the conviction – possibly one of the key points of the book – that it is not possible to ascribe to specific music the faculty to generate violence, nor to negate this potential under any circumstances (26); rather, the link between music and violence is more often than not a matter of power relations (24).

The next step undertaken is a brief historical excursion on the connection between the two poles under discussion. Rather than representing an attempt to build a history of violence, aim of this chapter is to present some significant, though somehow disconnected, instances in different times and spaces, in order to stress the complicity of music and violence:

“Complicity may manifest itself in any violent encounter, whether nation against nation, tribe against tribe, state against citizenry and vice versa, or even the ostracism or punishment of a single individual. Sound in general and music in particular are a major site over which conflict is negotiated. We will be ar-

guing that the struggle over who has the right to make public noise, and in particular music, is a way of tracing the history of the emerging modern age and defining its often violent tensions” (37).

This complicity further develops itself in coincidence with the formation of the nation, through the process of urbanisation and the foundation of the modern institutions of law and punishment. Among the many consequences, noise came to be associated with the lower classes while silence reflected the refinement of the bourgeoisie (41); more in general, sound assumes a central role in the changing relationship between public and private space, as we will see later on.

If the industrial revolution brings about an exponential increase in the level of sound and in its technological mediation (50), according to Johnson, it is the First World War that irrevocably transforms the sonic imagination (55):

“The magnitude, the duration and the effects of these aural assaults seem to be both unprecedented in history, and a harbinger of one of the more extreme pathologies of modernity; that is, the capacity of technology to effect the violent subjugation of the human being by sound. [...] By sounding we assert our identity. Here, all identity is obliterated, human sonority made meaningless” (54).

Johnson then compares sound technology with modern military technology regarding the range, level and pervasiveness of their impact (57). Sound reproduction increased the loudness of the soundscape – and therefore its capacity to cover individual voices – and at the same time it provided individual voices with the potential of multiplying their power, as witnessed by the strategic use of radio broadcast in the propaganda of the national socialist regime: “Through the radio voice it was possible to reconcile the mass with the individual, to speak to everyone as though speaking directly to each” (62).

Considering the pervasiveness of music brought about by new technology, Johnson states that “recorded music requires no symbolic mediation: anyone may hear it directly” (58) – which in my opinion once again essentialises hearing: not only listening to music involves a symbolic mediation, but even the act of being able to hear cannot be taken for granted, as perception is the result of cultural construction. Anyway I agree with him when he underscores the imbalance hidden within this pervasiveness: “The sound recording thus made music potentially an instrument of global imperialism, particularly as the global industry was largely controlled by the US” (58).

The next four chapters, written in partnership by Johnson and Cloonan, build a taxonomy based on four different modalities of relationship and causality between music and violence: music accompanying violence, music and incitement to violence, music and arousal to violence, music as violence. The first of the four opens with the premise that asserting a causality between the two poles is a difficult matter that requires a cautious examination. This statement is followed by an attempt to indicate some historical events that present an evident association between violence and popular music (the authors sometimes use the periphrasis “pop music”, but I assume they mean with that a contraction of “popular music”); the association is illustrated through a heterogeneous record of music representing violence, shifting quite abruptly from murder ballads in eighteenth-century England to Kurt Weill in Weimar Germany. If music has been employed also to reproduce violence through sonic anaphones, it is in

its association with the moving image that its potentiality has been further explored both in its overt and its ambiguous side: “Film music has become a particularly useful vehicle for the problematization and differentiation of forms of violence and the moral schemata it occupies” (70); the authors suggest in particular that “a fascination with and fashion for mainstream representations of violence has become more widespread” (71).

If the connection between violence in the movies can be vague if not even concealed, history provides us with evidence supporting this connection, as in the case of music performed by prisoners for their guards and for the other detainees in Nazi camps. Yet someone considers music a site for resistance, even against the testimonies of the prisoners forced to listen to the Nazi repertoire of marches and popular songs. The point is that the nexus between music and violence needs to be contextualised: “At one end of a spectrum this connection can be apparently fortuitous – just a coincidence – at the other, the music and violence are in a form of collaboration” (74).

The use of music to arouse the crowds during gatherings, sport events, military events is associated with violence directed towards someone else, there are also cases in which violence is self-inflicted. Among the latter, the authors are keen to champion the mosh-pit’s harmlessness, on the ground that participants emphasise its catharsis and the chance it offers to engage with emotions denied in daily life; the authors concur that “the mosh-pit is normally a place of harmonized – if robust – interdependencies” (80).

This theme is tackled again in a case study regarding Woodstock 1999, which commemorates the original festival. Here the rioting behaviour of the audience seems to challenge this hypothesis on mosh-pits; nevertheless, as the authors warn, the reason for this outbreak of violence has to be found on the size and audience profile (92) and, most of all, on the contradiction embedded in the festival, which originally symbolised rebellion and now represents the mainstream (87). More in general, this contradiction lies in the heart of mass-mediated popular music:

“Perhaps the particular problem with pop music is that it so often explicitly proclaims the possibilities of transcending the political economy which largely produces it, and to which it must submit and limit itself. [...] Being so intensely a site of an emancipative imaginary, its failure to deliver brings to a point of angry focus the accumulated force of all those other promises that consumerism fails to deliver” (90).

The next chapter deals with incitement to violence, including symbolic violence, through music, from a latent social option aimed at maintaining conformity inside the peer-group to explicit encouragement (95). Then main thesis is that incitement to violence, rather than pertaining exclusively to the margins of society, can be found most often in every day life: “Incitement to violence in popular music continues an ancient tradition which is state-sanctioned rather than unlawful” (96). Moreover, the supporters of moral panic’s incapacity or denial to recognise that the problems within society are often inherent to its own contradiction, leads to unconvincing explanations:

“The ‘panic’ to find explanations as to why apparently ordinary citizens turn out to be monsters, is an eloquent statement about cultural solipsism. The possibility that the ‘ordinary citizen’ is constituted partly by monstrousness is a proposition too unpalatable to be entertained, since ordinariness should be a guarantee of social acceptability” (113).

And again:

“The regulation of social conduct, appearance and demeanour according to supposedly shared national values is a guarantee of moral rectitude. By contrast, any deviation from those standards must be, or lead to, some form of depravity. The ‘darkness’ is always somewhere else on the map, never within us” (114).

Johnson and Cloonan choose to focus their analysis on song lyrics, leaving little space for other musical features – choice that I find questionable, the more after the premise of an attention towards the sensoriality of music conduct. Yet the authors are aware that “it is not axiomatic that the narrative voice of a lyric expresses the overall thrust of the song containing the lyric” (95), which would further invalidate the analysis that follows, as it isn’t matched by an attention either of the non-lyrical “content” of music or of the musicality of lyrics – that is, their being sung. Nevertheless they seem to be aware of this aspect when they point the finger at moral panic in the media because it cares only for the lyrics, while violence appears to be carried – but this conclusion is less inferred than guessed – mainly by sonority: “Record warning stickers are about words, not music. [...] Moral panic has overridden aesthetic critique” (106).

Overall, concerning the question if popular music can incite violence, the authors don’t have any doubt about it (122), yet they leave open the issue if this incitement actually arouses audiences to violent action, which brings us to the next chapter.

Arousing is different than incitement in that the first is in the music and the second in the listener (94). Here the emphasis is on the stimulation of the autonomic nervous system and hence on measurable, physiological symptoms, as long as instead “emotions cannot be assumed to be unambiguous and homogeneous, and indeed they are often conflicting” (124). The theoretical grounding in psychology of music is expressly recalled, with reference to the work of Emery Schubert, who differentiates between an external and an internal locus of emotion, where emotion expressed through music falls in the first category and the emotion felt by the listener in the second; a corollary of this splitting is that what music expresses doesn’t necessarily correspond to what is aroused: “That primary ‘quick and dirty channel’ [...] is opened not by something as cognitively mediated as the verbal content of the lyrics, but by sound itself” (125). I frankly find naïve the statement that lyrics are cognitively mediated and sound not. Most likely the cognitive process of hearing a sound is not entirely conscious – and as a matter of fact neither is the process of hearing lyrics (assuming that the listener is able to understand them at all, and most popular music listeners probably don’t) – and yet both processes are culturally informed. I stumble on the same apparent essentialism later on: “We do not have to be taught to move our bodies to music; on the contrary, as we get older in western society, we are ‘taught’ not to” (129) – as if music would induce movement naturally and immediately. What I feel is missing, is a theory that links the effects of sound on the individual, recordable through psychological and neurological procedures, and the equally evident regulating function of sociocultural structures. At any rate, the existence of a link is acknowledged.

Certain features of sound, like the register, can elicit particular emotions, and it is precisely sound that generates our first affective response (140); this emotional potential is inscribed in music genre or style (are they to be considered synonyms?), which operates as an “affective platform”:

“These styles or genres function as what we have called an affective platform. That is, before we even think about what the song is about, the style sets an agenda – this will probably be a hate song – within which interpretation and affect are circumscribed” (141).

Then the authors recognize that, more than – or alongside a presumed violent content in the music, it is the social framework that determines the violent potential of a musical event:

“We shall find that the forms of musical ‘texts’ which most frequently actually cause violence, contain no message or intent of incitement to that end” (139)

and:

“we suggest that the wellsprings of arousal lie in two other sources which can operate singly or in concert: sonority and non-musical context, in particular the relations of power which frame musical experience” (140).

My impression is that Johnson and Cloonan achieve a remarkable grade of understanding of the phenomena investigated, yet this understanding remains often at an intuitive level, not being supported by a wider theory of society and of groups. Hence I feel the need to refer to some “great thinker”, at any rate not merely “in order to deflect lowbrow associations”, as the authors insinuate regarding a practice popular music scholars would be used to (9).

I can't help noticing that the concept of violence is too narrowly defined as “any response that is either unequivocal pleasure nor indifference, or which induces physical or symbolic violation”, but nothing is said about what is to be considered a violation – in other words: attacking a defenceless individual is the same as self-defence from a unilateral attack? If not, what is the difference? Can we disregard this difference and wrap both social facts under the same label? With this I am not implying that psychology should be disregarded, but rather that a more comprehensive perspective is necessary, one that considers the social and political description and implications of violence, the more when the subject under scrutiny is a cultural phenomenon like music. Not that a cultural perspective is lacking in this book: the relevance accorded for instance to power relations in triggering violence through music shows an awareness of social dynamics, yet it disregards previous foundational writings on the subject, like Donald Black's theory on the direct relationship between social distance and violence (Black 1993) or, even more blatantly, the works of Randall Collins (1974) and Johan Galtung (1996) – not to mention their eminent predecessors, like Georges Sorel, Max Weber, Walter Benjamin (who is quoted in the epigraph but unfortunately never acknowledged later on), Theodor W. Adorno, Michel Foucault – just to name a few thinkers, and omitting the vast production within social and general psychology. To conclude this parenthesis, perhaps it is not by chance that moral panic borrows its theoretical instruments from psychology or psychiatry rather than from social sciences; in fact moral panic, by focusing on individual rather than collective or structural responsibilities, and by manipulating the causal connection between a musical (or lyrical) stimulus and violent behaviour, finds a fertile ground in the methodology of psychological and psychiatric disciplines.

Going back to the chapter on music and arousal to violence, in the course of the more than legitimate refutation of the moral panic practice, I have the impression that the authors

spend too many efforts in an attempt to defend specifically heavy metal from the charges against it. If most of the argumentation follows a lucid method of exposure of the inner contradiction of moral panic preachers – not last the remark that “the attribution of causality in specific cases of violence associated with music always follows rather than precedes the event” (116) – elsewhere the reasons adduced don’t appear pertinent. I refer in particular to those sections where, in order to discharge the violent potential of music, reference is made to the private life of musicians, as if this would make a relevant difference at the level of reception – especially when this information is not available to the fans.

Instances of this objectionable attitude emerge in relation to the persona of Alice Cooper, who is portrayed as a playful and god-fearing fellow that enjoys playing golf (134), or that of Kimi Kärki of the Finnish doom metal band Reverend Bizarre, who is described as a family man and a light-hearted lecturer in sharp contrast with violence offered by his lyrics: “What do you think, when you lie there at the altar/Waiting for some ugly jerk to rape you/As a sacrificial fuck?” (135).

The point is that the consistency between the intention of the musicians and the meaning that a musical piece assumes for the listener are two different matters, and this for many reasons, some of them quite obvious, which I’ll try to synthesize in a few remarks. First of all, the musician is only one of the many contributors of music production, which can be better described as a collective process; as a result, the process of music-making involves many mediations, each with different motivations, aims and functions – a process that is organised hierarchically so that not each participant holds the same power or grade of control. Moreover the intentions of each participant are not fully aware, including the musicians’; in this regard, some theory of social action should be borrowed. At any rate, because of ideological biases, we cannot base our understanding of a musician’s intentions on their statements. Due to these multiple contributions, each in its turn being part of multiple networks of factual and symbolic relations, the musical text – assuming that, at least abstractly, it is possible to isolate it – is polysemic, so that it may convey even apparently incompatible messages. Therefore the reception of a musical event is informed not just by all these mediations, but also by the cultural framework which belongs to the receiver – and to which s/he belongs. Last but not least, even golf *is* violent, not so much as it involves hitting a ball with different weighted clubs, but because it excludes huge amounts of territory from a public use and hence imposes the comforts of a very restricted few over the necessities and leisure of a larger though weaker population.

On a similar ground, I find myself in partial disagreement with the conclusion that certain isolated situations, involving role play, are not dangerous for its participants or for people or groups adjacent to them, in that I find it too generalised. More precisely, the authors write:

“The formal pop concert or the framed and bounded rave or party, might be usefully regarded as collective game playing, with rules operating within a closed system, and as such, the least rather than the most socially harmful kind of music experience” (136).

Even if we assume that role games allow to play out “possibilities, including those which are potentially counter-productive in social relationships” (137), it would be a mistake to generalise this and the former assertion. First of all there is no hermetically closed system. Secondly, the same situation within a group can be experienced differently by different participants. Fur-

thermore, as long as popular music, also when it involves small and more or less isolated communities, is at the same time mass-mediated, the same event can assume different and contrasting meaning for insiders in comparison to a wider public non proficient with the insiders' rules and idiolect – which could be problematic for instance in the reception of the song lyrics previously quoted. Therefore what is a playful role game for some could hurt or arouse violence in someone else: even a game role can become so serious to override reality. But this is not all: in such a “framed and bounded rave or party” who makes the rules and for what purpose? That is, behind the playfulness of taking part in a game, different individual interests could be disguised. And who controls that the rules are respected? Is the respect of rules an imposition or are they voluntarily internalised? In every case, which is the price that the transgressor will pay? In short, which is the power relation between the participants? Do these subsystems bear any resemblance with the disproportions in the allocation of power – e.g. between genders or ethnic groups – that we recognise in the so called “mainstream”? Sarah Thornton (1995) has written convincingly about this issue, and I always like to go back to her writings when I spot an attempt to idealise a musical subculture.

The next chapter on music as violence is perhaps the most convincing, notwithstanding the topicality and delicacy of the theme approached, or possibly just because of that. Johnson and Cloonan here focus on how music can become “both the site and agent of violence” (147). This particular deployment of music or, more in general, of sound, is aimed at humiliating, disturbing, disorienting or torturing and, as that, is inherently political (*ib.*).

“Musical violence is about the attempted exercise of power over someone else and the soundscape. [...] Power rests on music's potential to inflict forms of pain in two overlapping ways. The first of this is biologically. As a sonic force, sound may be deployed in a high volume, at particular registers or in other ways which physically hurt and cause organic damage. The second and intertwined way is psychologically. Thus, for example, music may be used to disorient detainees, humiliate them, insult their culture or assert the cultural supremacy of their captors” (147-8).

According to this scheme, the authors present several instances in which an institution employs sound either to inflict physical and psychological pain to individuals and groups or to weaken inner-group feelings of the enemy – from the treatment of prisoners in Northern Ireland to the wars in Yugoslavia, from the Iraq invasion to the strives after the G8 in Genoa. This imposition, under certain circumstances, may be interpreted as the “mirror image of censorship”: “Not preventing others from making music they like, but forcing them to make that which they do not” (158).

In any case, the choice of music, rather than being incidental, rests upon what Johnson names “affective platforms”, that is “particular forms of sonority and musical genres which can function for specific categories of emotion [and which] may be experienced as culturally aggressive by detainees unfamiliar with such sounds. However, familiar sounds may also be used in a way that disorients detainees” (153). The role of technology here is pivotal, as nowadays “it is in anyone's power to mount a sonic assault, through imposed music, voice theft, and sonic violence” (160).

The impositional potential of music, especially in relation to the possibilities brought about by technology, takes us to the next and last chapter on the thorny question of how to regulate music:

“With the constant opening of new channels through which music can be directed to produce social friction, attempts to regulate its use come into increasing conflict with arguments regarding freedom of expression and censorship” (181).

Notwithstanding the often humorous and understated tone adopted by the media (188), this is a serious problem, not simply in the evident occurrences abovementioned, but also as it is experienced by citizens in everyday life. On the other hand, there is no better evidence of the powerful influence of music on behaviour than its adoption for commercial and political aims:

“Much, and probably most of this unsought music is both sustained and purposeful, and its purpose is to regulate our mood and therefore our behaviour. What makes it so insidious is how rarely we are conscious of it. [...] This is almost subliminal in the sense that it is fully taken for granted. Yet its purpose is control” (182).

This point is clearly illustrated by the use of music to delimitate public and semi-public territories (183 et seq.), as for instance also Jonathan Sterne has elsewhere argued (1997). Johnson and Cloonan suggest then that the negative side of music belongs to the familiar texture of life (161), where government or powerful commercial interests intersect individual preferences, with all the social implications that these preferences carry:

“Of all the elements in the modern soundscape, music is among the most invasive, because over and above basic sonority, it projects finely discriminated markers of social difference such as taste, class, race, age and gender” (163).

These concerns and contradictions hence call “for a re-examination of assumptions about rights to free expression, censorship, regulation and policies relating to cultural and physical welfare” (12), not without implications as regards the role of the social scientist. This study, according to the authors’ intent, is set against a common practice of popular music studies, characterised by an exclusive concern with music’s counter-hegemonic potential coupled with a propensity for defensiveness and unreflectively celebratory accounts of the subject (5):

“A review of pop music studies literature suggests a tendency to foreground and glorify ‘outlaw’ genres such as rap and to neglect or trivialize those musics which, as we have seen, are most demonstrably the major sites of conflict in the westernized urban societies in which most of us pursue our research. And conflict is at the heart of any politically engaged scholarship” (191).

This stance, related also to the marginal status of popular music studies (5), should be overtaken by means of bringing popular music studies back to its roots in cultural critique (11), thereby the authors explicitly invite popular music scholars, and IASPM members in particular, to acknowledge the dark side of music.

On the one hand I cannot refrain from sympathising with this taunt, if not in the hope that it will stimulate further debate. On the other hand, not only it must be said that this volume ignores much of the recent engagement with the “dark side” within popular music studies

(to name a few, Franco Fabbri, the already mentioned Jonathan Sterne, Anahid Kassabian or Ola Stockfeld), but most of all it cannot be overlooked that it presents a blatant bias in favour of books written in English and by English speaking authors, even when it deals with events taking place outside the English-speaking world – which would consequently and by itself neutralise the accusation against popular music scholars *in toto*.

Among the many problems carried by interpreting sociocultural phenomena under the umbrella of a (hegemonic) language and the (hegemonic) culture attached to it, there features the risk of miscomprehension of translated texts, the more when the latter consist of such ephemeral sources as web articles and the printed press, written too in a hurry to be expected to be accurate.

It is true that the authors apologise from the start about this lack, somehow related to the topic; I also give credit that each reference is carefully detailed, so that it is generally possible to double-check the source. Nevertheless, round the corner there is always the risk of falling flat and mimicking the approximate speculations of moral panic, like in the case of the reference to the so called Beasts of Satan, who are described as a music band (77 et seq., 188), but that as a matter of fact were simply a group of people who, during self-managed black masses, listened to the music they liked the best; here a British journalist of the Guardian (or the compiler of the Beasts of Satan's Wikipedia entry: I cannot say who came first) was perhaps misled by the Italian word "group", which means also (but only in the second place) music band. The journalist, on some inscrutable ground, opted for this restricted acceptation and added some evocative details which spread over the web rising up to a scientific publication.

For what it is worth, I have already expressed both my reserves and endorsements regarding this volume, then I won't repeat myself. Then, to conclude briefly this review, I express once again my satisfaction for the publication of such a broad investigation on topics too often eschewed by popular music scholarship – not to mention non-popular music scholarship. This essay, accounting for the complexity of the relationships between violence and music, represents in any case one of the first attempts in this direction, in the hope that others might take further, meaningful steps in enlightening the dark side of music.

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