
Editors' Note

As we reflect on our first year as *JPMS* co-editors, we are dually heartened and humbled by the level of engagement and readership, the quality of manuscript submissions, the dedication and support of our editorial team, and the journey that the journal has started to take under our vision and care. This current issue, 34.4, continues on this path by featuring essays that address race, class, capital, space, place, gender, sexuality, and disability predominantly (but not exclusively) in and across Black popular musics. Indeed, the Field Notes section starts things off with an edited transcript of this year's celebration of the late, great Detroit hip hop producer J Dilla (aka Jay Dee; born James Yancey) at The George Washington University. The event was organized by Loren Kajikawa, Lauren Onkey, and former *JPMS* editor Gayle Wald; it was moderated by Kajikawa; and it featured discussions and brilliant insight from award-winning journalist Kelley L. Carter (who covered Dilla's death and funeral), famed boundary-pushing pianist/composer/producer Robert Glasper (who also worked with Dilla), music executive and scholar Dan Charnas (who recently published the acclaimed *Dilla Time: The Life and Afterlife of J Dilla, The Hip-Hop Producer Who Reinvented Rhythm*), and prolific and sought-after DJ RBI (who provided music examples during the event for the panelists to discuss). This robust conversation covers a lot of ground in unpacking Dilla's life, career, and legacy—from the importance of Detroit in shaping his sound as well as the importance of Dilla to Detroit in the shadow of Motown, to Dilla's sampling and production techniques that provided the "drunk funk" feel of his music, to the management issues/record deal that affected his commercial profile, to his stutter, to his nerdy homelife, to his influence and imprint on neo-soul, to his relationship to collaboration and collectivity, to his broad musical knowledge, and to his place in the jazz tradition. Throughout this rich discussion, however, panelists often returned to what they saw as the hallmark and impact of J Dilla's genius: his musical and personal commitment to freedom.

In many ways, the J Dilla Field Notes transcript sets the stage for the peer-reviewed section of this issue; these articles address similar themes that emerged in the Dilla conversation, but they are grounded in different artists, musics, spaces, and times. For example, while the Dilla panel explicates when and where Dilla fits within a jazz and hip hop lineage, Ambre Dromgoole's article offers a meditation on the genealogies of a different musical genius: Aretha Franklin. Analyzing Fantasia Barrino and Jennifer Hudson's respective performances of "Precious Lord, Take My Hand/You've Got a Friend"

and “Amazing Grace” at Franklin’s funeral, Dromgoole is interested in what such renditions reveal about Franklin’s artistry. Dromgoole eschews any attempt to evaluate how well Barrino and Hudson “mimic” Franklin—a racially essentialist trap and trope that renders Black women’s voices, and Black music in general, as homogenous—in favor of highlighting how Hudson and Barrino present the different sets of Black religious, musical, and vocal training that Franklin drew on and drew together throughout her illustrious career. Ironically, Dromgoole shows us that it is through multiplicity—via the wide-ranging Afro-diasporic musical and religious traditions that Barrino and Hudson displayed at Franklin’s funeral—that we can develop a fuller grasp of what made Franklin the singular Queen of Soul. In the next article, we move from musical legacies to musical futures, as Hannah N. Krasikov interrogates the world of NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens) in popular music. Using Grimes, Kings of Leon, and deadmau5’s recent lucrative turn to NFTs as a point of departure, Krasikov examines how NFTs initially appealed to musicians looking to break free from the financial strictures of streaming platforms and record labels and how they structurally undercompensate artists. And yet, as Krasikov shows, NFTs are far from democratizing projects. Instead, they deepen existing inequities in the already stratified music industry, benefiting high-profile mainstream artists and hurting struggling independent and lesser-known musical acts.

The next two peer-reviewed articles consider the role of space, place, and time in Black popular music. James G. McNally’s essay places us at a party in Bristol, England in 1987, where rappers Tricky Kid, Willie Wee, and Krissy Kriss are performing. McNally closely listens to an archival recording of this party, and considers the sociopolitical and socio-cultural import of hip hop liveness. McNally hears in the performance of and between these artists and the audience as a collective and affective experience of joy, ecstasy, and freedom. But far from abstract concepts and feelings, McNally situates and grounds such experiences, and the party, within a Black working-class life and culture in Bristol in the 1980s, and illustrates how this party is a site of alternative worldmaking, a site of fugitivity and maroonage that produce new conditions of possibility. From the sounds of hip hop in Bristol, Landon Palmer’s article takes us across the pond to the world of Motown on the silver screen. In particular, Palmer explores the place of Motown in the 1964 and 1975 films *Nothing but a Man* and *Cooley High*, respectively. For Palmer, unlike in later movies, such as *The Big Chill*, that use Motown as a nostalgic device that recenters white normativity, *Nothing but a Man* and *Cooley High* treat Motown as the figurative and literal soundtracks of Black quotidian life—from the bars and restaurants to walking and living in the urban Midwest. And it’s these films’ insistence on Black music and the Black everyday that Palmer wants us to think through because they offer a sonic, spatial, and visual response to spectacles of Black abjection and terror.

We close the peer-reviewed section with Mark R. Villegas’s article on hip hop, masculinities, geek and nerd culture, and Afro-Asian aesthetics. Drawing on the tv series *The Get Down* and RZA’s memoir *The Tao of Wu*, Villegas considers the intersections of the male hip hop nerd and Black Orientalism in the production of alternative scripts of and for Black masculinities. For Villegas, Black hip hop practitioners’ engagements with and embrace of Asian cultural productions that register as “nerdy” (e.g., anime) provide a space

of and play with racialized gender and sexuality. And in so doing, these cross-cultural practices not only allow for a more expansive understanding of gender and sexuality, but also provide new avenues for theorizing nonnormativity in hip hop.

As always, this issue concludes with a series of insightful book reviews. Kályn Banks Coghill begins with a review of Christina Baade and Kristin A. McGee's edited volume *Beyoncé in the World: Making Meaning with Queen Bey in Troubled Times*. Coghill praises the breadth of the collection as it examines the work of Black feminism, beauty standards, colorism, LGBTQ+ politics, southernness and regionalities, and transnational reception in Beyoncé's work. And it's due to this wide-ranging framing in *Beyoncé in the World* that Coghill sees potential in more work on Beyoncé and digital/social media, a remark rendered truer with the release of Beyoncé's acclaimed new album *Renaissance*. Next, Paxton Haven reviews Kai Arne Hansen's *Pop Masculinities: The Politics of Gender in the Twenty-First Century Popular Music*. Like Coghill and *Beyoncé in the World*, Haven lauds Hansen for the broad scope of and intersectional approach to *Pop Masculinities*, exploring artists like Justin Bieber, Zayn, The Weeknd, Pharrell, and Lil Nas X as they dually subvert and shore up normative masculinity. And it's in this complex terrain that Haven sees Hansen as setting the stage for further inquiry into how other social actors—music executives, fans, etc.—also shape the contours of masculinity in and across the contemporary pop landscape. Our last book review comes from Felicia Angeja Viator, who examines *Who Got the Camera?: A History of Rap and Reality* by our JPMS managing editor, Eric Harvey. Viator argues that Harvey expertly details the ways in which we cannot fully grasp the place of rap in U.S. culture during the 1980s and 1990s without the dialogic relationship between rap and tabloid/"reality" media and journalism culture. Viator commends Harvey's approach as a new, exciting, and much-needed way to historicize rap, and places him alongside hip hop pathbreakers Mark Anthony Neal and Robin D.G. Kelley.

As we move into a new year, we want to, again, thank you for your continued support of JPMS. And we encourage everyone to read, circulate, and submit work to JPMS! Here's to 2023! ■

K. E. Goldschmitt and Elliott Powell, co-editors