

Daisy Rockwell (2003), and Aswin Punathambekar (2013) have changed the scholarly landscape over the last decade to strengthen ethnomusicological perspectives. The fact that Hindi film songs effect such a disruption and yield a near-maddening excess of possible readings delights me even as they render writing a book-length survey of them an unenviable task. *Bollywood Sounds*'s ability to integrate detailed, insightful analyses of individual songs with such thorough, lucid, and well-researched discussions of social and historical contexts results in its offering the most readable and accessible account of the history of Hindi film songs so far. 🍀

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- Rap and Hip Hop Culture.** 2014. Fernando Orejuela. New York: Oxford University Press. 272pp., 17 Listening Guides.

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Totaling just over 250 pages, *Rap and Hip Hop Culture* offers a very broad overview of rap that serves the book's intended target audience: students with no special training in music. I lead with the book's length in order to set expectations about what Orejuela does and doesn't intend to do: there's a good chance your favourite song isn't ana-

lyzed at length, and that's okay. Instead of hitting every single detail of rap's history, Orejuela provides a framework that compiles the main building blocks of a solid survey course all in one place. From hip hop's roots in African diasporic aesthetics to contemporary mainstream rap (the most recent examples come from 2013, likely just as the book went into publication), *Rap and Hip Hop Culture* lays out an occasionally overlapping chronological account in ten chapters, each with its own set of learning objectives and discussion questions, slotting neatly (allowing time for tests and an excursion or two) into a standard semester.

Orejuela breaks rap's history into six eras. The first three periods are largely chronological: two "Old School" waves – the first (1973-81) gave way to the second (1979-83) after the success of "Rapper's Delight" – followed by the Golden Era (1984-1992). In contrast, the last three periods – Hardcore (late 80s/early 90s), Hardcore II (90s), and the New Millennium (1995-present) – overlap much more significantly. An overview of these six eras comprises the heart of the book (Chapters 5-9), and it's here that Orejuela packs in a ton of information in impressively concise and engaging prose. Bouncing from East to West to Third Coast and back, touching on gender and race politics, mapping the disputed boundaries of mainstream and underground, discussing the music's omnivorous sampling sources, all while holding a sense of unfolding chronological time, Orejuela proves himself as deft a cutter and narrator as the DJs and MCs who come to life in his book. It's crucial to realize that these

chapters are primarily an account of *commercial* hip hop. That is, Orejuela's attention revolves around songs and albums performed by artists who have enjoyed a fair amount of radio and sales success, with walk-on roles meted out to a few darlings (Dr. Octagon, Chali 2na, Atmosphere) recognizable to hip hop heads but relatively unknown to the casual fan. As a textbook intended to be digested in a single semester, this makes sense; students will learn a lot of new information, but it will be tethered to the music they already hear in their everyday lives, providing them with some firm footing while hinting at a whole realm of subterranean hip hop vibrating beneath the surface.

Before he gets to rap, Orejuela begins with several chapters that lay the groundwork for the genre's emergence in the mainstream. Readers are offered a broad definition and overview of hip hop (Chapter 1) before diving into the cultural context of the South Bronx (Chapter 2), a brief history of graffiti and breaking (Chapter 3), and an account of the oral traditions that informed rap. As with the later chapters, Orejuela's ability to break down complex ideas (like diasporic routes and syncretic cultures) into concise bits shines through. These early chapters introduce a few threads that are left dangling once Orejuela begins his analysis of rap in earnest in Chapter 5. For instance, graffiti and breaking appear barely at all after Chapter 3, and while Orejuela attributes this to the two art forms' general divorce from hip hop culture in the years after "Rapper's Delight" hit the airwaves, that explanation means that the chapters on the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s miss an oppor-

tunity to show evolving dance forms, especially on display in music videos, that are directly rooted in b-boy/b-girl and breaking traditions. Orejuela also emphasizes the ways commercial rap left old-school DJs behind, so that his account of the last three decades of rap contain only a few links between what old-school DJs did and what producers would come to do. These are, perhaps, the concessions of a textbook that has to strike a balance between being broad and being concise, but given Orejuela's obvious ability to juggle complexities like they're a funk break under Flash's fingers, telling the story of commercial rap with relatively little graffiti, breaking, and DJing involved feels like a missed opportunity.

As a book that is ultimately about commercial rap, *Rap and Hip Hop Culture* centres the South Bronx origin story that will be familiar to instructors of hip hop survey courses. Orejuela is careful to point out that the roots of the genre are embedded throughout the African diaspora, but he situates West Coast and Southern hip hop more as the offspring of South Bronx rap and less as styles entrenched in the musical histories of their own regions. Southern rap, which is the subject of a good deal of Chapter 9, floats free from the blues, country, funk, and R&B traditions that directly inform its sound. A particularly curious moment comes in Orejuela's discussion of New Orleans bounce music, which he demonstrates primarily through David Banner's "Like a Pimp" (2003). Banner certainly nods to bounce in this song, incorporating the "Triggerman" beat that reverberates through the genre, but "Like a Pimp" doesn't include the layers

upon layers of frantically paced lyrical repetition that we'd be able to hear from New Orleans artists like Big Freedia or Katey Red.

Aside from the awkward fit of the Banner example, though, the 17 Listening Guides peppered through the book work quite well as entry points to a variety of techniques and sub-genres from hip hop's pre-1970s roots to the 2010s. Orejuela includes a lengthy contextualization of each song alongside an easy-to-follow chart that pinpoints key musical moments marked by lyrics and a time stamp. Orejuela also stresses that his book is introductory and open, encouraging teachers and students alike to engage with what he has done: dig deeper, and keep eyes and ears alert to alternative accounts. *Rap and Hip Hop Culture* is pricey (US\$62.95), presumably because of the permissions needed to reprint the many blocks of lyrics that appear in the text. But there's a vision in here of a multi-semester hip hop sequence, where a resourceful instructor might combine Orejuela's introductory material with some journal articles and extended playlists. As hip hop and popular music programs continue to crop up on college campuses across North America, a book like Orejuela's that could serve as the framework for an extended study of hip hop history and sound promises to be a valuable resource. 🌱