

[The Best Side of Capitalism? The Life, Death, and Afterlife of the Record Store](#)

Announcement published by Matthew Worley on Monday, June 29, 2020

Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

August 16, 2020

Subject Fields:

Popular Culture Studies, Music and Music History, Cultural History / Studies, Contemporary History, British History / Studies

Call for Chapter Proposals

The Best Side of Capitalism? The Life, Death, and Afterlife of the Record Store, Gina Arnold, Christine Feldman-Barrett, John Dougan, and Matthew Worley, eds.

This book explores, from a variety of perspectives and methodologies, how record stores became such important locales. As an agora, a community center, and a busy critical forum for taste, culture, and politics, the record store prefigured social media. Once conduits to new music, frequently bypassing the corporate music industry in ways now done more easily via the Internet, independent record stores (in direct opposition to rock radio programmed by corporate interests), championed the most local of economic enterprises, allowing social mobility to well up from them in unexpected ways. In this way, record stores speak volumes about our relationship to shopping, capitalism, and art. The editors of this volume believe that record stores are spaces rife for examination because their cultural history is in some ways the story of the best side of capitalism seen in microcosm. To that end, this book employs three motifs: cultural history, urban geography, and auto-ethnography to find out what individual record stores meant to individual people, but also what they meant to communities, to musical genres, and to society in general. What was their role in shaping social practices, aesthetic tastes, and even, loosely put, ideologies? This book will collect stories and memories, and facts about a variety of local stores that will not only re-center the record store as a marketplace of ideas, but also explore and celebrate a neglected personal history of many lives.

The editors are open to a myriad of approaches charting the various histories of record stores and the cultures they created, and encourage contributors to use media/textual analysis to explore how record store culture is portrayed in both fictional and documentary film, examples of which include *High Fidelity*, the Tower

Records documentary *All Things Must Pass, Empire Records* (now being adapted into a musical), *Village Music: The Last of the Great Record Stores*, *Good Vibrations*, and *Sound It Out* to name but a few.

Content and Approach

The main focus of this volume will be the culture of record stores from roughly the mid-20th century through the early 2000s. While there are a number of record stores central to this narrative – Wax Trax (Chicago) and Rough Trade (London), both of which expanded into important independent record labels and distribution centers – there are numerous other smaller locations that became essential to the development of local music scenes (e.g., Oarfolkjokeopus/Treehouse Records in Minneapolis). Related to this is the record store as subcultural space, how these clubhouses for music fanatics were, at times, genre-specific sanctuaries for “outsider communities” such as punk, metal, and hip-hop. Independent record stores have often served as a public sphere for such “outcasts,” providing a space for them to gather where, to paraphrase Jurgen Habermas, opinions take shape and are circulated, and decisions are made without violence. These accounts would fall under the heading of auto-ethnographies in which participants would reflect upon the centrality of a specific record store and its impact on a city’s cultural vitality. American record stores are a feature of village life, but the same has been true in almost every other part of the world, only more so. In Eastern Europe, jazz and punk records were prized by outspoken political radicals. In the UK and Australia, record stores are – or were – places that brought the glad tidings of big city doings to the faraway towns, allowing scenes to coalesce, bands to form, and individual fortunes to prosper.

This volume will be framed by a foreword historicizing the creation of the record store as cultural nexus. Important stores such as Randy’s Record Shop (Gallatin, TN), Ernest Tubb’s Record Shop (Nashville), and Skippy White’s Records (Boston), provide the template for the record store’s emergence as community center and shared cultural space (e.g., Ernest Tubb’s shop was also a performance venue and began hosting the informal post-Grand Ole Opry live music show “Midnite Jamboree” in 1947). An afterword will address the so-called “afterlife” of record stores, the ramifications (both positive and negative) of “Record Store Day” to resuscitate presumably moribund independently-owned record stores, the record store’s transformation into a postmodern haven for vinyl connoisseurs (both young and old), and what new narratives are being created at shops like Jack White’s Third Man Records. Lastly, the editors do not see this project as geographically delimited,

rather our hope is to generate a wide-ranging history with a global perspective. While there have been recent monographs on record stores and their cultural significance (e.g., Bernd Jonkmmans *Record Stores* [2016]; Eilon Paz's *Dust and Grooves: Adventures in Record Collecting* [2015]; and Garth Cartwright's *Going for a Song: A Chronicle of the UK Record Shop* [2018]), the editors see this anthology as a more comprehensive and diverse approach to the subject.

Authors are invited to submit a 300-word proposal (including a brief biography) by August 15, 2020 to John.Dougan@mtsu.edu

The Editors

Gina Arnold is a professor, author, and music journalist. As a writer for *Rolling Stone*, *Spin*, the *Village Voice* and many other publications, her work has been excerpted in many anthologies, including *Shake It Up: Great American Writing on Rock and Pop from Elvis to Jay-Z* (Library of America), *The Rock History Reader* (Routledge), *Rock She Wrote* (Rolling Stone Press) and numerous other collections. She is the author of four books, *Route 666: On the Road to Nirvana* (St. Martin's/Picador), *Kiss This: Punk in the Present Tense*, (St Martin's/Picador), *Exile in Guyville* (Bloomsbury), and most recently *Half a Million Strong: Crowds and Power from Woodstock to Coachella*, part of the University of Iowa Press's New American Canon series. She is the co-editor of *Music/Video: Histories, Aesthetics, Media* (Bloomsbury Academic) and is now editing on the *Oxford Handbook of Punk Rock*. She is currently on the advisory board for the Euro-Punk project of Horizon 2020, the EU's Commission for Research and Innovation, and the KISMIF (Keep It Simple Make It Fast) Conference. She holds a Ph.D. from Stanford University in Modern Thought & Literature and teaches courses in Critical Race Studies at the University of San Francisco

John Dougan is professor of music business and popular music studies in the Department of Recording Industry at Middle Tennessee State University. He received his Ph.D. in American Studies from the College of William & Mary. A former music critic, he spent 15 years as a freelancer contributing essays and reviews on music and popular culture to numerous magazines and newspapers including *Rolling Stone* and *Spin*. He has published dozens of artist biographies and discographies for the *All Music Guide* series of books and website, as well as essays and reviews in *American Music*, *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, *Appalachian Journal*, *Journal of Southern History*, *Minnesota History*, the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, and online publications *Salon*, *Popmatters*, and *Perfect*

Sound Forever. He has written two books: *The Who Sell Out* (Bloomsbury) and *The Mistakes of Yesterday, The Hopes of Tomorrow: The Story of the Prisonaires* (University of Massachusetts), the latter named “Best Music Book of 2013” by the *Nashville Scene*. In 2015, he edited a special edition of *Popular Music and Society* on the Sex Pistols, and in 2017, his essay “Don’t Know Much About History - And We Don’t Care! Teaching Punk Rock History” was included in the anthology *Punk Pedagogies: Music, Culture and Learning* (Routledge). Currently, he serves on the editorial boards of the book series *Tracking Pop* from the University of Michigan Press and the academic journal *Punk & Post Punk*.

Christine Feldman-Barrett is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science at Griffith University, Australia. She received her Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Pittsburgh and is the author of *‘We are the Mods’: A Transnational History of a Youth Culture* (Peter Lang, 2009), the first scholarly book dedicated to the history and global reach of Mod culture. She has been featured as an expert commentator on BBC Television (*Mods and Rockers Rebooted*, 2014) and Australia's ABC radio (on Hipsters and Rockabilly). An interview about her edited collection *Lost Histories of Youth Culture* (Peter Lang, 2015) was also nationally broadcast on the popular Australian radio show *RN Breakfast*. Her interdisciplinary research on youth culture history has been published in numerous collected volumes and journals such as *Popular Music and Society*, *Feminist Media Studies*, and the *Journal of Youth Studies*. Her forthcoming book, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, will be published with Bloomsbury Academic in 2021.

Matthew Worley is professor of modern history at the University of Reading (UK). He has written widely on British labor and political history, including books on the Communist Party of Great Britain, Labor Party and Sir Oswald Mosley’s New Party. His more recent work has concentrated on the relationship between youth culture and politics in Britain, primarily in the 1970s and 1980s. He has published articles and essays in such journals as *History Workshop*, *Twentieth Century British History*, *Contemporary British History*, *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, *Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies*, *Punk & Post-Punk* and chapters in collections such as the Subcultures Network’s *Fight Back: Punk, Politics and Resistance* (2015). A monograph, *No Future: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture, 1976–84*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2017.

Contact Info:

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