



Song Means: Analysing and Interpreting Recorded Popular Song (Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series)

Allan F. Moore

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The musicological study of popular music has developed, particularly over the past twenty years, into an established aspect of the discipline. The academic community is now well placed to discuss exactly what is going on in any example of popular music and the theoretical foundation for such analytical work has also been laid, although there is as yet no general agreement over all the details of popular music theory. However, this focus on the what of musical detail has left largely untouched the larger question - so what? What are the consequences of such theorization and analysis? Scholars from outside musicology have often argued that too close a focus on musicological detail has left untouched what they consider to be more urgent questions related to reception and meaning. Scholars from inside musicology have responded by importing into musicological discussion various aspects of cultural theory. It is in that tradition that this book lies, although its focus is slightly different. What is missing from the field, at present, is a coherent development of the what into the so what - of music theory and analysis into questions of interpretation and hermeneutics. It is that fundamental gap, that this book seeks to fill. Allan F. Moore presents a study of recorded popular song, from the recordings of the 1920s through to the present day. Analysis and interpretation are treated as separable but interdependent approaches to song. Analytical theory is revisited, covering conventional domains such as harmony, melody and rhythm, but does not privilege these at the expense of domains such as texture, the soundbox, vocal tone, and lyrics. These latter areas are highly significant in the experience of many listeners, but are frequently ignored or poorly treated in analytical work. Moore continues by developing a range of hermeneutic strategies largely drawn from outside the field (strategies originating, in the most part, within psychology and philosophy) but still deeply relevant to the experience of song.

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