

Popular Music, Popular Myth and Cultural Heritage in Cleveland

The Moondog, the Buzzard and the Battle for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

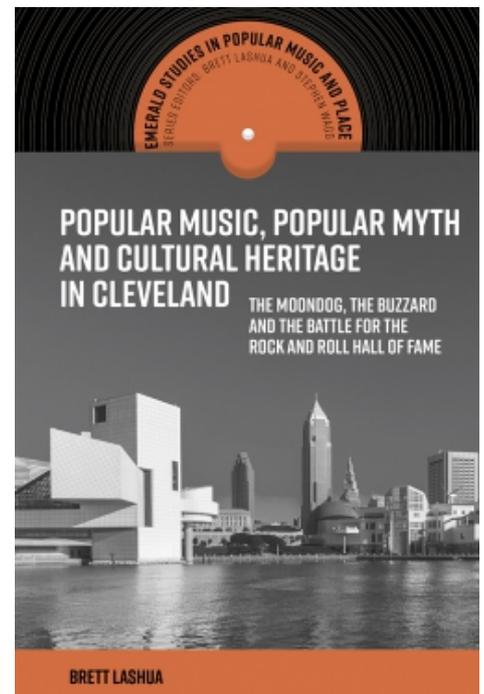
Emerald Studies in Popular Music and Place

Brett Lashua

About the Book

Drawing from research conducted at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame archives, and the author's experience as a local musician, this book offers a micro-historical case study of Cleveland's popular music heritage. Among just a handful of books dedicated to the popular music heritage of Cleveland, it traces myths of "where rock began to roll" in the self-proclaimed "birthplace of rock and roll". Numerous cities have sought to capitalize on their popular music cultural heritage (e.g., Liverpool, Memphis, Detroit, Nashville) as an engine for cultural regeneration. Unusually, rather than a focus on famous musicians and groups, or well-known recording studios and legendary venues, Cleveland's popular music "origin story" is spun from events of the early 1950s, centered on local radio stations, maverick disc jockeys, second-hand record stores, a riotous concert and youthful, racialized audiences at a moment on the cusp of sweeping social changes.

This book untangles the construction of popular myths about "first" rock 'n' roll concert--the Moondog Coronation Ball on 21 March 1952, hosted by legendary DJ Alan Freed--the "invention" of the phrase "rock 'n' roll", and the subsequent rebranding of Cleveland as the "birthplace of rock 'n' roll" by local radio station WMMS "The Buzzard" during the 1970s. These myths re-emerged and re-circulated in the 1980s during the successful campaign to attract the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. The author explores the fascinating and unusual story of Cleveland, uncovering how and why it became the site of a major popular music museum.



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