Popular Music Genres offers a different introduction to the study of popular music. Key to the book, as the authors themselves declare and as can be immediately observed from the table of contents, is the notion of genre. The reader will neither find the usual 'Subcultural Theory - subheading', nor a lengthy explanation of the Frankfurt School's ideas of the culture industry or Derridean deconstruction. As such, it is a welcomed addition to teachers of popular music who have problems getting their undergraduate students, who would rightly or wrongly much rather learn about 'popular music itself', interested in the complicated and sometimes obscure theories of cultural studies and popular music research.

The broad subject of popular music is explored by taking a close look at eleven different genres: soul, funk psychedelia, progressive rock, punk, reggae, synthpop, heavy metal, rap, indie and jungle. In the case of some of these generic labels, the various subgenres and different musical styles, which fall under their larger umbrella, are also elucidated. For instance, in the chapter on jungle, there is a short description of hip house, hardcore, 'toytown' rave, dark core, ragga jungle, jazz step, techstep, jump, up and drill 'n' bass. Similarly, progressive rock is divided into European, folk, classical and psychedelic progs. In addition to the layer-cake of musical typology, the diversity of the visual styles connected to these genres is also acknowledged. A case in point can be found in the section presenting the visual styles of reggae. Here, one finds dreadlocks and the different fashions of the English skinhead reggae style and the Jamaican dance hall style. In some chapters hairstyles and poster art also get their own coverage, as do album covers, and videos.

Each chapter follows a similar structure, where even the subheadings are replicated and recycled from one chapter to the next. The different genres are firstly explored in terms of an initial general overview, detailing and describing the specific historical background and elucidating the social and political context of its emergence. This is followed by an examination of the genre's musical and visual elements, with the chapters ending in the form of an overview of more recent developments. As a postscript to each chapter, the authors have included a list of recommended readings and recordings. This makes it easy to really sink one's teeth into a particular genre, even without any previous knowledge about it. Here, as in many other books dealing with popular music, a CD would have added an enriching dimension and made the reading experience much more vivid; however, with the current state of copyright laws this would obviously have been impossible. In addition to the 'useful links' section, there is also a small glossary of key terms at the end of the book clarifying the theoretical concepts, such as subculture, bricolage, auteur, contextualism and carnivalesque, that the authors have used.

Instead of advocating what they call a uni-disciplinary approach to popular music, the authors insist that their desire is to "promote an examination that is situated in the interdisciplinary space between a range of separate academic fields of enquiry" (p.1). This approach follows as a consequence of their understanding of popular music studies, according to which there is no singularly correct method for examining popular music. Nevertheless, they also note that there are some tactics that can be rejected, such as those of a purely musicological or purely historical approach, which although telling us a great deal about music's inner meanings, or, alternatively, about its position in various historical situations cannot divulge much about the relationships between musical texts and societies, nor about the actual meanings of a particular genre. As such, the approach to popular music espoused in the book contextual, in a very wide sense, and renders music, in the increasingly accepted way, as something framed within particular cultural and social situations.

Although the decision to approach popular music through different genres is in itself justifiable, with the similar structure of each chapter making the book easy to access, the actual content of the chapters was a small disappointment. Far too often learning about popular music is equated to "knowing facts" about who started which band, in which record company, who produced this and that album and so on. Popular Music Genres tends to reproduce rather than challenge this idea of knowledge and learning. Each genre is researched in a painstakingly detailed way and there is no doubt about the writers' more than thorough knowledge of the genres they have chosen to write about. However, the strong emphasis on the names of the labels, musicians and their records, in the examination of different genres makes the book feel more like an encyclopaedia than a textbook from which to start learning about popular music studies. It is of course important to know the main players within genres, to get a bigger picture of different trajectories, developments and changes within the multiple histories of popular music, but smaller pop trivia facts can always be checked from the various encyclopaedias and discographies already available. Accordingly, and approach that would concentrate neither on the events and factualities nor solely on various theoretical approaches, but would efficiently combine the two, might provide better starting point for teaching critical and reflective thinking about popular music.

In tackling the content further, it would of course be possible to comment lengthily on the choices to include and exclude different genres. Disco, for instance, is not examined in a separate chapter: According to the authors, it is, unlike funk, (which does get its own chapter), a refinement of soul rather than a radical departure from it. Without wanting to fuel the aforementioned discussion about what should be included and what excluded, the dismissal of disco seems especially unfortunate since so little has been written about it. However, as the authors themselves aptly point out "dispute is central to genre based study" (p.3). On a more theoretical not, what appears to be slightly more problematic is the process of canonisation that is the inevitable bi-product of the
Popular music is defined as music with wide appeal. This contextualisation is indeed crucial to any genre based approach, as the authors themselves also argue. Without this grounding it might appear that genres emerge from thin air and remain more or less the same throughout the years. The authors rightly emphasise the importance of historical grounding when examining genres. As they write, genres "are intrinsically tied to an era, a mode of production a zeitgeist and a set of social circumstances" (p. 3) This is also made explicit in the quite generous space given to the examination of social and political contexts within which particular genres can be thought to have emerged. The writers bring up economic and political developments, mainly in Britain and US, in order to shed light on the circumstances that, in one way or another, influenced the emergence of the various musics examined in the book.

Although the book does not explicitly rely on subcultural theory, it seems to draw rather heavily at places from the notion of structural homology. In places this legacy is also quite explicit, as is the case in the chapter on punk, where the writers argue, that "there was a homology between musical text, visual text and the subjectivity espoused by punk groups and punk fans" (p.99). Some reference to the various critiques and also reworkings of subcultural theory, especially since a lot of the criticism has been directed toward this idea of a "fit" between the different constitutive elements of a genre or subculture, which rests on a very homogeneous understanding of subcultures and genres. In addition, the structuring of the chapters actually reinforces rather than deconstructs the feeling of a "gap" between the musical and non-musical. When the social and political context are described under a subheading of their own, separated from the examination of musical texts, visual styles, historical precursors and subsequent developments, it is not always clear what kind of relationship is been constructed between the social and aesthetic worlds. Too often the examination of musical texts remains on the level of mere description, which does not help to create closer connections between the aesthetic and the social.

Although the book, at least according to the back cover text, is meant as an "accessible introduction to the study of popular music", the various theoretical and methodological approaches to the popular music research are only scantily mentioned. The decision to omit various ways of approaching popular music as a research object is explicitly acknowledged in the introduction. As a reader, however, one is left wondering why such a decision was made in the first place. Would it not have been possible to include short review of the discussions about authenticity, for instance, in the chapter dealing with punk or synthpop? Similarly, many of the chapters would have greatly benefited from an examination of the wider discussions that exist around issues of race and gender. In addition, albeit that the author's statement that the book is first and foremost "concerned with analysing eleven specific popular music genres, rather than reflecting critically upon the different approaches that can be taken to study these genres", it is also crucial to realise that this book does have an approach that has guided the authors’ choices. Unfortunately, this is left largely implicit and undisclosed. As a result, there is an illusion that popular music and popular culture exist somewhere as facts and agreed developments floating "out-there", waiting for a researcher to reveal them, or that one can produce knowledge about popular music without having to consider methodological and theoretical issues and, furthermore, without having a particular approach. In this sense, the authors could have, at least in their introduction, spent a little more time examining the underlying assumptions and the consequent effects of their chosen approach and, through this, made the book’s theoretical, methodological and ideological choices more transparent.

Having said all that, it has to be noted that the authors seem well aware of the limitations of their approach and emphasise, in their introduction that the book should not be read at the expense of getting into a more theoretically rigorous studies of popular music. As an addition to the canonised readings of the genealogies of popular music studies this book might just function brilliantly. It might make it easier to get into and interested in popular music studies even for those students who shy away from heavy and slow-reading theoretical texts that often require a lot of background knowledge and rigorous reading discipline. I at least, even with my somewhat critical thoughts, am definitely going to try it out in my class!
There are thousands of genres in the world of music today. How did they originate? Read on to know more about some of the major musical genres in the world. Popular music is music with wide appeal that is typically distributed to large audiences through the music industry. These forms and styles can be enjoyed and performed by people with little or no musical training. It stands in contrast to both art music like Western classical music or Indian classical music, and traditional or "folk" music. A music genre is a conventional category that identifies some pieces of music as belonging to a shared tradition or set of conventions.