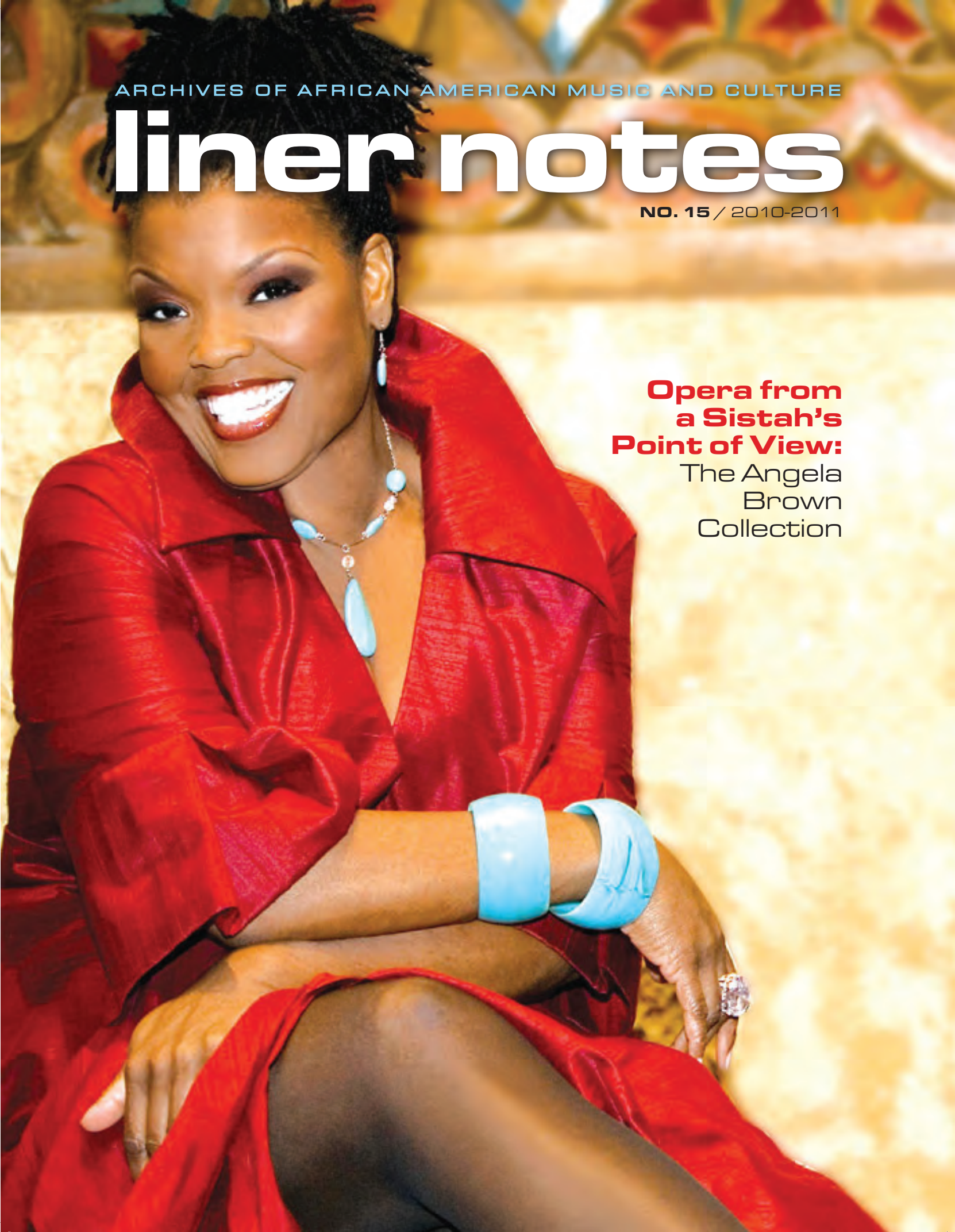


ARCHIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC AND CULTURE

liner notes

NO. 15 / 2010-2011

**Opera from
a Sista's
Point of View:**
The Angela
Brown
Collection



From the Desk of the Director

aaamc mission

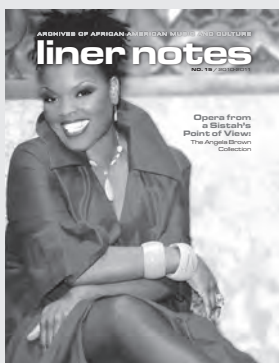
The AAAMC is devoted to the collection, preservation, and dissemination of materials for the purpose of research and study of African American music and culture.

www.indiana.edu/~aaamc

Table of Contents

From the Desk of the Director.....	2
Featured Collection: Angela Brown.....	4
In the Vault: Recent Donations.....	8
Featured Collection: James Spooner.....	9
One-on-One with James Spooner.....	11
Fear of a Bleak Planet.....	14
From Records to Radio: Interview with Kirkland Burke.....	17
Music, Media & Museums..	22
AMGP Book Series.....	25
AAAMC Finding Aids Online.....	26

On the Cover:



Angela Brown. Photo by Roni Ely.

I write this column as we enter into the second decade of the twenty-first century and as I reflect on the political, social, and cultural changes that have taken place during the first ten years of this new millennium. Within this context of change, I marvel at the ways in which African Americans continue to expand and redefine the boundaries for artistic expressions, revealing the diversity of musical creativity among this group. Two major collections acquired in 2010—the Angela Brown Collection and the James Spooner Collection—reveal the ways in which African Americans negotiate their dual identities as performers in Western classical traditions and how they construct and define black identities in popular music genres broadly viewed as non-black.

The first installment of the Angela Brown Collection chronicles the development of the career of an opera singer who has maintained her participation in and allegiance to the African American musical tradition. This collection can inspire others who may have been advised to choose between the world of classical music and that of African American vernacular traditions. Angela's continued success shows us that one music tradition does not have to be sacrificed for the other. It is indeed possible to be Angela Brown the gospel singer, Angela Brown the R&B or popular music singer, and Angela Brown the opera singer.

The Angela Brown Collection complements other AAAMC holdings that document the role of African American musicians in performing and composing music from the Western classical tradition, including the Patricia Turner Collection, the Phyl Garland Collection, and the Black Composer Collection of manuscript and printed scores. We anticipate future donations of materials from Brown, who realizes the importance of archiving materials before they begin to deteriorate or are otherwise damaged.

Brown acknowledged that some of her materials were “yellowing and tearing up in boxes in the basement,” which convinced her that the collection should “be preserved now so that it can

be of use to others.” Although Brown's career continues to evolve, Head of Collections Brenda Nelson-Strauss believes that “starting the archiving process now is advantageous from an archivist's perspective because of the opportunity to evaluate and preserve materials initially, then annually, as new materials are created. I think things are less likely to fall through the cracks if we have a more active role in documenting Angela Brown's career.” We look forward to our ongoing relationship with Angela Brown (see inside story).

Following the AAAMC's November 2009 conference, *Reclaiming the Right to Rock: Black Experiences in Rock Music*, several of the participants donated items ranging from CDs to posters. The most significant donation came from James Spooner, whose film *Afro-Punk* was screened during the conference (see inside story). The materials in this collection explore the issues of race and identity through the experiences, perspectives, and innovations of African American punk musicians. The collection establishes the foundation for research on the black presence in punk and rock. We welcome materials from musicians documenting their contributions to these traditions.

Our online music review site, *Black Grooves* (www.blackgrooves.org), is approaching its fifth anniversary and continues to receive accolades. Since June of 2006, over 600 reviews have been published and the majority of the CDs, DVDs, and books have been added to the AAAMC's holdings. Brenda Nelson-Strauss continues to serve as editor, and reviewers include the AAAMC's graduate and undergraduate assistants as well as our full-time staff, IU students, scholars from other universities, and various guest contributors. We are grateful to the record labels and publicists who continue to support our efforts to promote black music.

We continue to add new titles to the *African American Music in Global Perspective* series published by the University of Illinois Press. I am pleased to announce the release of *Songs in Black and Lavender: Race, Sexual Politics and Women's Music* by Eileen Hayes (see review inside).



Portia K. Maulsby with Angela Brown and Charles Sykes. Photo courtesy IU Jacobs School of Music.

During 2010, our staff worked hard to make the AAAMC's collections more accessible online. Archives' Administrator and Project Manager Ronda Sewald, aided by student assistant Levon Williams, has encoded and uploaded a number of our archival finding aids through IU's Digital Library Program (see inside story), and we continue to add our holdings to IUCAT and WorldCat. At present, the majority of the AAAMC's books, videos, and DVDs are discoverable through IUCAT, while CD cataloging is ongoing. With assistance from graduate student Ann Shaffer, all of the commercial recordings collected in support of the black rock conference were also cataloged.

The AAAMC now has a Facebook page, which we use to draw attention to events, album releases, and other news related to African American music and culture. All those who engage in social networking are encouraged to "like" us and to recommend our Facebook page to their friends. This is one of the best ways for us to connect to the public and spread the word about our collections and activities.

Another development over the past year has been the physical expansion of the AAAMC's operational space. Since 1994, we have shared space in the Smith Research Center with the

Black Film Center/Archive. When the BFC/A relocated to the Wells Library last summer, the vacated space was allocated to the AAAMC, allowing for the addition of new media studios, a screening room, and an enlarged reading room area. Posters that were produced during the creation of the traveling exhibit, *Rock, Rhythm & Soul: The Black Roots of Popular Music*, now line the entrance hall and have been a big hit with visitors. The AAAMC has recently engaged in strategic planning with the Archives of Traditional Music to work towards relocating to the Wells Library.

The AAAMC's staff continues to be active professionally and to provide leadership in the field of archiving and recorded sound preservation. Ronda Sewald's involvement in the IU-EAD Working Group resulted in the recent delivery of our online finding aids. As member of the Association for Recorded Sound Collections' (ARSC) DACS for Archival Sound Recordings Subcommittee, she designed and conducted two surveys—one for catalogers and one for researchers—that explored the challenges of creating and using descriptive catalog records for sound recordings. The surveys were formally distributed through multiple academic and professional listservs and received over 300 responses in less than

two months. She further contributed to ARSC by continuing her service with the Travel Grant Committee. Sewald also published a short commentary piece in the December 2010 issue of *Anthropology News* entitled "The Untidy Reality of Complaints about Music: Reexamining the Power Relations of Sonic Disputes."

Brenda Nelson-Strauss continues her work on the Library of Congress National Recorded Sound Preservation Plan, which will be published in 2011. She also serves as the Conference Manager for ARSC and in that capacity organized the 2010 conference last May in New Orleans, and presented a paper on the LOC project. In addition, she serves as the chair of the Black Music Roundtable for the Music Library Association. Over the past year, she represented the AAAMC on the following committees: Council of Head Librarians, IU Libraries Archives and Special Collections Month, Cataloging Congress, Media Preservation Advisory Board, and the Special Collections Task Force.

My professional activities included giving talks on various black popular music topics at Creighton and Purdue Universities, the University of Houston, and Scripps College. A highlight of the year was my presentation with Howard Dodson (Director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture), "Curtis Mayfield: The Man, The Music, The Movement," for the National Black Arts Festival in Atlanta. The program was broadcast on C-SPAN3. Other highlights were serving as consultant for the development of a permanent exhibition for the Museum of African American Music, Art & Culture (Nashville) and on the advisory committee for the Rhythm and Blues program of the 2011 Smithsonian Folklife Festival.

I conclude by welcoming Logan Westbrooks, former music industry executive with the CBS Record Division of the Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc. and founder of Source Records, as the newest member of the National Advisory Board. He will be featured in the next issue of *Liner Notes*.

Portia K. Maulsby



Featured Collection: Soprano Angela Brown Donates Personal Papers

In October 2010, renowned opera singer Angela Brown, an alumna of IU's Jacobs School of Music, donated her collection of personal papers and memorabilia to the AAAMC. So far, the Archives' staff has processed six boxes of materials spanning the period between 1992—when Brown began performing recitals accompanied by the Dean Emeritus of the Jacob's School of Music, Charles Webb—through her present career on the international opera stage. A complete finding aid to the collection will soon be available on the AAAMC's website. The wide range of materials donated by Brown include:

- A program from her 1996 recital in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
- Thank-you letters from fifth grade students who attended a rehearsal of Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* at the Opera Company of Philadelphia
- A cassette tape of the March 2, 1997, Metropolitan Opera National Council Winners concert at which she sang "O patria mia" from *Aida*
- A copy of the front page of the *New York Times* proclaiming her 2004 Metropolitan Opera debut as *Aida* "a triumph"
- Press clippings documenting her role as Cilla in the Detroit Opera's 2005 world premier of Richard Danielpour's *Margaret Garner*, which is based on the story of a fugitive slave
- Images of Brown performing *Aida* in 2008 at the Cape Town Opera in South Africa
- An official White House proclamation for the 2005 National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for the Victims of Hurricane Katrina, along with photographs of Brown with President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush
- Brown's 2009 Indiana Governor's Arts Award

"I am very excited that the dream of having an Angela Brown collection is coming true through the IU Archives of African American Music and Culture. It is awe-inspiring to think that young people will be able to learn from my life's work as it unfolds. Hopefully they will be inspired by my 'highs' and learn from my 'lows.' A huge thanks to the AAAMC for deeming me worthy of being a part of such a prestigious collection. I am grateful and humbled for this to be in my home state of Indiana."

—Angela Brown

Photo by Roni Ely.



Graduate Assistants Langston Wilkins and Raynetta Wiggins processing the Angela Brown Collection.

Introduction of the Angela Brown Collection

The donation of the Angela Brown Collection was recognized during a press conference and luncheon on October 14, 2010, prior to Brown's first IU performance of her witty solo show, *Opera from a Sistah's Point of View*. The following remarks by Portia Maulsby and Karen Hanson are excerpted from the press conference.

AAAMC Director Portia K. Maulsby

I am honored to announce that the former IU Jacobs School of Music alumna and internationally renowned opera singer, Angela Brown, has designated the Archives of African American Music and Culture as the official and permanent repository for her personal collection. This gift will expand the Archives' holdings in the area of African Americans in opera as well as in the broader field of European classical music. Before describing the Angela Brown Collection, I will make a few remarks about her musical experiences prior to her winning the MET Auditions in 1997, which launched her professional career.

As a youth, Ms. Brown began singing gospel music in her grandfather's church in Indianapolis. After graduating from Crispus Attucks High School in 1982, she sang in musicals and at dinner theaters in Indianapolis. She also appeared on the Indianapolis television series *Hitmakers Showcase* in 1984, singing "And I Am Telling You, I Am Not Going" from the Broadway musical *Dreamgirls*, popularized by Jennifer Holliday [a DVD of this performance was previously donated to the AAAMC by the show's producer, Paul Middlebrook, Sr.].



Angela Brown with Dean Emeritus Charles Webb. Photo by Karen Hudson, courtesy of IU Jacobs School of Music.

In 1986, at age twenty-one, Ms. Brown began her studies in classical music as a student of Ginger Beazley at Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama. Four years later, in 1991, she came to IU expecting to be "a little fish in a big pond." Instead, under the tutelage of IU Distinguished Professor Virginia Zeani, she ended up being "the big fish in the big pond."

While studying and performing lead roles in operas at IU, Ms. Brown maintained her allegiance to the African American musical tradition. For two years, she was an active member of the African American Choral Ensemble under the direction of James Earl Mumford. For six years, she served as vocal coach, occasional lead vocalist, choreographer, seamstress, and make-up artist for the IU Soul Revue, a popular music ensemble in the African American Arts Institute which is offered as a class through the Department of African American and

"Angela seemed to have every attribute that any bandleader or music venue could ever want. She was exceptionally bright. She was a quick study. She could learn material fast and still perform it well. She was ever so versatile. She could sing opera, art songs, or soul and gospel with equal ease. I always held the greatest respect for her because of that.... Above and beyond her singing, I always felt that she was kind. That may be the greatest gift of all—to have a world class skill and still be a giving person. Whatever awards or recognition she gets, she is more than worthy of it!"

—Dr. Mike Woods, former director of the IU Soul Revue

African Diaspora Studies. Ms. Brown's versatility as a performer in two distinct musical realms captured my attention when I met her in 1993. I have followed her career with great interest and pride since that time. Thus, I am pleased that she has chosen the Archives of African American Music and Culture as custodian for materials that document her evolving life's work.

The first installment of the Angela Brown Collection chronicles the development of her professional career and community service activities since leaving IU. It consists primarily of photographs, posters, programs, sound recordings, press clippings, promotional materials, correspondence, certificates, and awards. These materials document her dual musical identity in the European classical and African American vernacular traditions as well as her innovative approach to diversifying the audience for opera. Ms. Brown's performance, *Opera from a Sistah's Point of View*, scheduled for Saturday (October 16, 2010), is illustrative of this approach.

Angela, the first installment of your collection is a fascinating journey through your distinguished career of nearly two decades. Brenda Nelson-Strauss and Ronda Sewald, the Archives' full-time staff, and I, look forward to archiving and sharing this journey as it continues to evolve with the broadest possible audience.

IU Provost and Executive Vice
President Karen Hanson

On behalf of the Bloomington campus, it is a great pleasure to accept the Angela Brown Collection. Mickey Maurer, the man for whom our School of Law is named, wrote about Ms. Brown in his book *19 Stars of Indiana*: "With a voice that reaches the heights and with roots that are set deep in Hoosier soil, Angela Brown has never lost sight of her goal and has never given up. She's a diva with a heart as big and as soft as her magnificent voice." The gift we receive here today demonstrates that Angela's heart is truly as big and as soft as her magnificent voice and we are very grateful to receive it.... One of the chief aims of the AAAMC is to document performers of African American music in Indiana. So this wonderful collection of materials, which chronicles the development of the career of an artist whose roots are set deep in Hoosier soil, is a most welcome addition.... [The Angela Brown Collection] really does represent an exceptional opportunity for our students, for our scholars, to study opera from the perspective of an African American performer, and I know that the materials in the collection will inspire many future generations of students.... It's a generous donation and we're delighted to accept the collection from one of our really, really outstanding alumni.



Photo by Roni Ely.

In the Vault: Recent Donations

Angela Brown Collection:

Programs, press clippings, photographs, recordings, correspondence, and memorabilia (see feature article)

Logan Westbrooks Collection:

Photographs, posters, record company files, and personal papers related to the black music industry and Source Records

CD/DVD/Book Donors:

ACM 360 Artists	Flipswitch	Oklahoma Historical Society
Allegro Music Group	Flutronix	PFA
Alligator	Forced Exposure	Plug Research
AMT PR	Foreign Exchange	Press Here
Archeophone	Four Quarters	Reel Music
Arhoolie	GIA	Rhymesayers
ArtSoul	GodChaserz	Rock, Paper, Scissors
Ballin' Entertainment	Gold Dust	Rojas, Juan Sebastián
Bear Family	Gold Village Entertainment	Rounder
Bellamy Group	Grit	Sacks and Co.
Black Film Center/Archives	Heads Up	Saunders, Jesse
Biz3	Hofrichter, J.	Secret Stash
Blake Zidell & Associates	Houghton Mifflin Harcourt	Secretly Canadian
Blind Raccoon	Idelsohn Society	Sewald, Ronda
Burke, Brandon	iHipHop Distribution	Shanachie
Capital Entertainment	Infinity	Shore Fire
Center for Black Music Research	Institute of Sacred Music, Yale Univ.	Shrapnel Records
Cherry Red	Integrity	SLG
Community Music, Inc.	Island Def Jam	Smithsonian Folkways
Concord Music Group	Jah Works	Soulganic
DaCapo	!K7 Records	Stefan Grossman's Guitar Workshop
Deacon	Lafiya Music	Taseis Media Group
Delmark	Legacy	Telarc
Delta Groove	Lewis, Ron	The Master Plan
Dept. 56	Light Records	Trilateral LLC
DL Media	LN&W	Tum
Document Records	M.C. Records	Tyscot
Domino	Mack Avenue	University of Illinois Press
Dumhi	Malaco	Universal Music Group
Dupetit, Guillaume	Maultsby, Carl	W&W
Dust-to-Digital	Maultsby, Portia	Warp
Eagle Rock Entertainment	Merlis for Hire	Wax Poetics
eByrd Communications	Monkey Media Inc.	Wise, Raymond
EMI Gospel	MVD	Woods, Michael
Entertainment One	Nacional	Verity
Epitaph	Nashville Publicity Group	Yonas Media
Fat Possum	Nonesuch	

The AAAMC welcomes donations of photographs, film and video, sound recordings, music, and research materials on all aspects of African American music.

Featured Collection

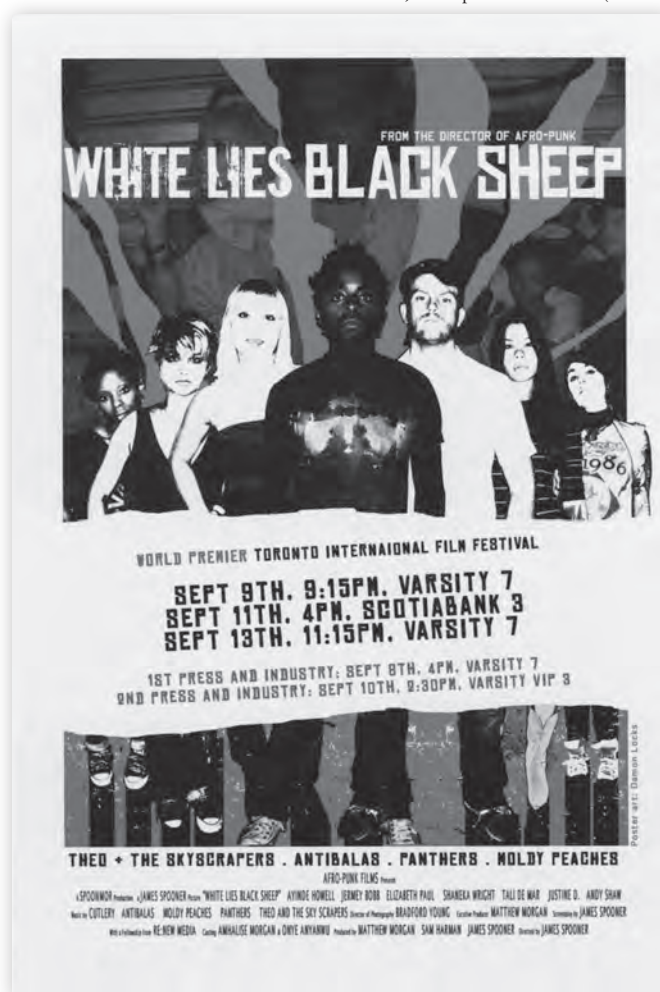


CDs from the James Spooner Collection (SC 154).

Documenting “The Other Black Experience”: The James Spooner Collection

Not long after the *Reclaiming the Right to Rock* conference hosted in November 2009 (see *Liner Notes*, no. 14), artist and filmmaker James Spooner made a considerable donation to the AAAMC. The collection consists of materials from his two films, which explore issues of race and identity as experienced by Spooner and other black Americans in the predominately white punk music scene. Among these materials are over 200 miniDV cassettes of unedited interviews and performances featured in his award-winning documentary *Afro-Punk* (2003), as well as production documents from his second film, *White Lies, Black Sheep* (2007). Also included is a sizeable assortment of magazines and film festival catalogues featuring Spooner and/or his films, in addition to CDs by punk bands with black performers. The CDs range from commercially released albums to self-produced projects. Some of the rarer items include an EP by From Chimpan-A to Chimpan-Z, *The Maryland Independent* by Cutlery, and a few projects from the New York-based group Apollo Heights.

While living in Panama and California, Spooner was introduced to punk music through his heavy involvement in skateboarding culture. After moving to New York with his mother in his early teens, he met other people of color participating in punk rock and became more involved in the music. During his early twenties, however, Spooner



Flyer announcing the world premiere of *White Lies, Black Sheep*.



became dissatisfied with punk and began struggling with issues of identity. In his frustration, he began to place blame on the music that he felt had “raised” him while never addressing the issues he faced as a black person.

The movie *Afro-Punk* grew out of Spooner’s desire to expose punk and to hold punk culture accountable for its lack of inclusion. The documentary features no narration, but rather is composed solely of interviews with African American punk performers and enthusiasts. The film features individuals from many locations across America and includes appearances by more popular performers such as members of Fishbone, Tamar-kali, and Moe Mitchell (lead singer of Ciphur). Interviewees address issues ranging from their interaction with other blacks in the punk rock scene to the process of developing their own identities. Several artists also share details about their introduction to punk rock as well as the way in which their identities inform their production of and relationship to music.

Afro-Punk won numerous accolades, including the Roxbury Film Festival’s 2003 Henry Hampton Award for Excellence in Documentary Filmmaking as well as the Best Feature Length Documentary Award at the 2004 Jamerican Film Festival. The film was subsequently well received and has been screened at universities, colleges, high schools, and film festivals around the world. Billed as “the movie that sparked the movement,” *Afro-Punk*’s popularity has led to the development of a growing online community of Afro-punk music enthusiasts who discuss and promote Afro-punk artists, music, and culture. The film also led to the establishment in 2005 of an annual *Afro-Punk* festival, which includes performances and film screenings.

Following the success of *Afro-Punk*, Spooner wrote and directed another film articulating the issues and emotions of African Americans in punk. *White Lies, Black Sheep* follows the main character AJ as he clashes with his father, discovers his identity, and navigates the predominantly white American punk scene. Spooner states that it addresses many of the same issues explored in *Afro-Punk* but “tells one individual’s experience and gives a voice to a lot of white people, which



Upper left: A rare copy of Tamar-kali’s debut album. Above: Flyer announcing Japanese debut of *Afro-Punk*.

Afro-Punk doesn’t do at all.” *White Lies* was filmed as a documentary. Only a few of the main characters were played by actors, while the rest of cast generally played themselves. Spooner considered this method to be more manageable and forgiving, considering his small budget for production. His collection includes materials from this film such as casting materials, breakdown sheets used during filming, and some small props from the production.

The James Spooner Collection is a part of the substantial educational and research materials that were generated by the *Reclaiming the Right to Rock* conference. These exclusive materials provide insight into Spooner’s process of film creation and offer rare documentation of lesser known and up-and-coming African American musicians. By documenting black rock music, this new AAAMC collection provides important information on another of the multiple facets of the black experience in America.

The James Spooner Collection (SC 154), which includes copies of *Afro-Punk* and *White Lies, Black Sheep*, is open for onsite research, and a finding aid will soon be available online. Only a portion of the interview and performance videos have been transferred to DVD for access purposes; we hope to make the remainder available in the near future.

—Raynetta Wiggins, AAAMC Graduate Assistant



one-on-one

with Afro-Punk Director and Filmmaker James Spooner

On November 13th, 2009, black rock scholar Maureen Mahon (Associate Professor, Department of Music, New York University) interviewed director and filmmaker James Spooner as part of the AAAMC's documentation of the participants in the Reclaiming the Right to Rock conference. In this interview, Spooner discusses the inspiration behind his film Afro-Punk and the impact that it's had on audiences.

Maureen Mahon: Where did you grow up, and what was your family circumstance?

James Spooner: My parents met in New York City. My father's from St. Lucia in the West Indies. My mom is from St. Louis; she's a white lady from the Midwest. They met, and subsequently I was born in New York. We moved back to St. Lucia a couple of times and then back to New York. When I was six, my dad got a job in Southern California in the Mojave Desert, so we moved there. It was like we moved from Flatbush to the tumbleweeds. I had a decent childhood. My parents got divorced when I was around eight, but we stayed

in California. I got into skateboarding. I didn't surf because we lived hours from the beach, but I was like a California kid wannabe. So I was into those things without necessarily thinking of them as alternative. It was just cool California stuff.

Then in seventh grade we moved to Panama. My mom's a teacher, and she got a job there, and about that time I got really involved in skateboarding. I had been listening to rap music for as long as I can remember. That was the music I gravitated towards, but hanging out with all of those skaters in Panama, I started finding and appreciating bands that I didn't know were punk rock at the time. I eventually found Black Flag, The Misfits—"Punk 101" as I call it. When we moved back to California two years later, I was in eighth grade, and the first thing I did was buy Black Flag's *Wasted Again* and Sex Pistols and Misfits and stuff like that. I identified as a punk rocker and really wanted people to know that. So I was looking for punk rock friends, and actually the first punk rock kid I met was this black dude named Travis who was the coolest kid in the school. I was just like, "I want to know that kid." It didn't take more than a week or so, and we ended up becoming friends. He got me into more music and stuff.



A man of many talents, Spooner demonstrates his skills as a tattoo artist.

So my introduction to punk rock was actually as a black kid. It didn't occur to me that I wasn't supposed to be into punk. But very quickly I learned that the town was really just blatantly racist—kids wearing swastikas to school and stuff like that. Even being light-skinned and ethnically ambiguous, I was still called things like “nigger lips” by punk rockers. So it caused some internal confusion for me, and I definitely had some bouts with self-hate in terms of my image. I think my mom started to see that I was hanging out with kids who wore “Speak English or die” T-shirts, and partly for that reason she decided that it would be good for us to move back to New York.

We moved to New York the summer before my sophomore year of high school. I had been involved in punk rock for two years at that point, and instantly New York was a whole other world. There were kids from all kinds of backgrounds there. I had a group of friends, some of whom are in *Afro-Punk*, and it was exciting that they were black punk rockers. Looking back, I tend to realize that a lot of my friends were punk rockers of color, but we didn't want to talk about race.

New York City has a really tough hardcore scene. It was very violent. They were emulating gangster rap in

a lot of ways, and when it came to being a tough guy at the shows, it just wasn't for me. I was straightedge at the time, and there was this huge straightedge scene in the Tri-State area, so I found myself out in Jersey or Boston or Pennsylvania or Delaware every weekend of my junior and senior years. I started a record label, and I put out some of those bands. I just became really, really entrenched in the DIY punk rock scene. I really believed that you could do whatever you wanted. I embraced that freedom and liberation that punk rock gives you as a kid.

MM: What was it about punk music that attracted you?

JS: You know, when you're twelve years old and you're sitting there watching skateboard videos like they're the Bible, you're just totally absorbing everything. At that time, which was like the late '80s, punk rock was the soundtrack for anything skateboarding. There was no hip hop or anything. There was no genre blending at all. It was punk and skateboarding—that's it. I remember what really did it for me was this little known skateboard video called *Ohio Skateout*, which was a skateboarding competition. All of the kids who were skating were doing it to punk music, and it had a little title card at the bottom of each session saying who the bands were. So I'm realizing after devouring this movie over and over and over, that I really like Black Flag. I really dig the Descendants. So I'm hearing this stuff, and I want to skate to it in my garage so I can pretend that I'm Tommy Guerrero or something. At first you have to build up a palette or a tolerance for some of those sounds, but once the bug bit me and I was able to understand what they were saying between the screams, then it became another enjoyable sound just like any other. I'd say that it's pretty much like any other music. You just have to build up an ear for it.

MM: How did you come to make the film *Afro-Punk*?

JS: When I was about twenty, the all-ages punk rock scene wasn't speaking to me anymore. At that point I was living in Seattle, and it was really, really hard to see bands there at the time. I divorced myself from it, and over the next few years just started trying to appreciate other kinds of music. I moved back to New York when I was twenty-two. Then I was fully immersed in the dirty rock 'n' roll scene. That took its toll on me, but I found myself asking questions about my life and had this desire to go back home to St. Lucia. My father was living there at the time, and I don't know what led me to want to go to St. Lucia, but something was calling me. I went, and I can really say that that was a decisive moment in my life. I thought maybe all of those kids in high school who were saying I was trying

to be white and all of the black kids who yelled at me on the street or physically threatened me because I was wearing tight pants—[I thought] maybe those kids were right. I'm looking at my life at that point, and I really didn't have any black friends.

MM: So what were they right about?

JS: I was asking myself if maybe they were right—maybe I was trying to be white. Maybe I didn't know who I was. I was into this white boy shit and obviously I'm trying to be white and all of this stuff and I don't really have a connection with my family. Maybe I am trying to be white.

I didn't really know what it meant to be black at that time. I think that kind of drove me to go home to St. Lucia. I felt like I would go there and everybody would be like, "Oh, welcome home." I got the rude awakening that almost everybody [has] who grows up in America but is from someplace else.... To them I was American and, even more, I was white.... I had brothers and sisters who were like, "Oh, I always knew I had a white brother." They were so excited to meet me, it wasn't like a dis or anything, but it was driving me crazy because I was like, "Wait a minute, we have the same dad."

I think at that point, I had to prove that I was black—if not to the world, at least to myself. I think in that anger I had, I put a lot of the responsibility for my situation on the punk rock scene. I feel like it raised me. The things that I was involved in, the way that I thought, it was like my mom raised me until I was thirteen and then punk rock took over. I was a vegan. I helped women get into abortion clinics. I protested the circus. I was doing all of this stuff for everybody but me. The punk rock scene has never said to me, "Hey, man, what about you as a black person? Let's talk about that." We could talk about feminism and gay rights or animal rights, but no one wanted to talk about race at all. The farthest that conversation would go was "Fuck Nazis." It's like, "Great, but can we talk about something that's relevant to our situation?"

So that's where *Afro-Punk* came in. I wanted to expose punk rock for what it is and hold it accountable. I just started talking to people all around the country and both genders and every generation had the same story. Fourteen-year-olds and forty-five-year-olds were telling me the same story. Clearly it was something that needed to be addressed.

MM: Could you paraphrase what the "same story" is?

JS: Well, everybody was accused of being white or trying to be white, whether it was done as an insult by black people or as a compliment from white people—"You're not *black* black." That was definitely number one. And then there were all kinds of other things that are covered in the film, like being a black kid and seeing another black kid at a show and not being sure if you should talk to them or not. We also covered issues like how your family deals with you. A lot of the stuff that punk rockers deal with is compounded and made more complicated by all of these issues of race. What I found was basically what I always knew: that punk rock is a reflection of society. Clearly we live in a racist society. The punk scene is going to be racist, too, and it's going to deal with race in the same way that America deals with race, which is to try to ignore its existence.

The other thing that I found is that I totally have a black life experience. I remember at one screening in particular, someone stood up who had nothing to do with punk rock at all, and she said, "This movie should have been called *The Other Black Experience* because everything you're talking about is what so many of us deal with." No one talks about it because it's not the mainstream experience; it's the other black experience. It seems like there are only the two experiences: there's the mainstream and then there's everybody who chooses to do something else. For black people, sometimes that something else is just going to college or just having a legitimate job or something. It's unfortunate to say.

MM: What do you think the impact of the film has been?

JS: I know that on an individual level the film has changed people's lives. One woman even told me that after seeing *Afro-Punk*, she no longer thinks about committing suicide. So clearly validation is the key [issue] here. I think on a grander scale *Afro-Punk*, the film, has made its little mark. It is definitely one of those films that somebody is going to be talking about twenty years down the line, just like I talk about *Ohio Skateout* changing my life or the first time I heard Black Flag. It's one of those things that changed people's lives, and that's amazing. I'm psyched to be a life changer.

The video of this interview and the unedited transcript are available as part of the AAAMC's Reclaiming the Right to Rock: Black Experiences in Rock Music Collection (SC 151). For more information on this collection, see Liner Notes, no. 14 (2009-2010) or contact the AAAMC staff.

—Transcript edited by Dave Lewis, AAAMC Graduate Assistant

Fear of a Bleak Planet:

Rapping about Race, Poverty, and the Environment

On October 4, 2010, the AAAMC hosted a discussion panel and exhibit entitled *Fear of a Bleak Planet: Rapping about Race, Poverty, and the Environment*. Moderated by AAAMC graduate assistant Langston Wilkins, the panel featured hip hop scholars Cheryl Keyes and Fernando Orejuela. Dr. Keyes is Professor of Ethnomusicology in the Department of Ethnomusicology at UCLA, and her book *Rap Music and Street Consciousness* (University of Illinois Press) received a CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title award in 2004. Dr. Orejuela is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology and adjunct faculty in the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies at IU. He is currently completing a textbook on hip hop culture to be published by Prentice Hall.

The event was organized around the IU Themester Program's 2010 theme "Sustain-ability: Thriving on a Small Planet." The AAAMC chose to examine issues of sustainability—including social and racial equality, economic needs, and environmental racism—through the lens of hip hop. The overarching goal was to present hip hop as a complex cultural, social, and political movement that emerged during the post-civil rights era when the urban economy was on a steep decline, governmental support programs were being dismantled, drug abuse was on the rise, and violent crime rates reached alarming heights. Through the panel and exhibit, the AAAMC sought to illustrate how, out of this increasingly desolate landscape, rap music arose as a voice of protest, offering commentary on the bleak environment and socio-political issues affecting inner-city communities.



Left to right: Langston Wilkins, Cheryl Keyes, Fernando Orejuela. Photo by Anna Batcheller.



Left to right: Ronda L. Sewald, Brenda Nelson-Strauss, Langston Wilkins, Cheryl Keyes, Portia K. Maultsby, Fernando Orejuela. Photo by Anna Batcheller.

The Panel

During the panel, Wilkins, Keyes, and Orejuela examined various themes of sustainability within hip hop. Their engaging discussion helped to reinterpret environmental activism as advocacy for blighted urban communities. Formatting their discussion around a series of music videos spanning three decades of hip hop, the panelists drew connections among the videos' visual, lyrical, and socio-musical impacts.

Opening with Grandmaster Flash's "The Message," the trademark synth riff set the tone both on the streets where politically conscious hip hop first took hold and for the discussion in the lecture hall. The video's street view of ghetto life dramatizes and exemplifies the lyrics' message and inner-city sentiments: "It's like a jungle. Sometimes it makes me wonder how I keep from going under." Describing the song as a pivotal moment for hip hop, Orejuela explained how "The Message" turned political discourse into commercial success. Keyes addressed the song's environmental themes, pointing to its commentary on inner-city violence, police brutality, and what she termed "the economics of the 'hood."

The next video discussed by the panelists was Doo Dat's "The Dream Reborn," which features the memorable line "My president's black but he's going green." By interlacing images of Barack Obama and Martin Luther King, Jr. with footage of urban renewal projects, Doo Dat's video links the Green Movement to the Civil Rights Movement—both of which, he reminds us, depend on community leadership. While Orejuela bemoaned the fact

that the demographics of those affected by urban pollution haven't changed since 1982, Keyes offered an explanation: environmental racism. She explained how black communities have long suffered the effects of industrial waste from nearby train yards, sewage systems, and trash dumps.

Female artists were also part of the vanguard of progressive hip hop, as demonstrated by Lauryn Hill's video "Everything is Everything." As a record needle plays over the grooves of everyday street life, Hill sings of better days with the naturalistic trope "after winter must come spring." Orejuela unpacked the meaning of this video, claiming that the depiction of the city as a spinning record represents music's power over the environment. Keyes described hip hop sampling as a form of cultural recycling and noted the song's resemblance to Donny Hathaway's "The Ghetto" and Stevie Wonder's "I Was Made to Love Her."

The final video, Arrested Development's "Greener," juxtaposes visual images of a lush greenhouse against the lyric's imagery of urban dumping. While the song's content was topical, Orejuela criticized this selection as "adult contemporary rap," explaining that it did not speak to the majority of hip hop artists or listeners.

The panel discussed the environmental currents within mainstream and fringe hip hop alike. In addition to challenging perceptions that hip hop and rap are primarily concerned with violence and conspicuous consumption, the panel also challenged audience perceptions about environmentalism. Environmentalism is not just about fighting to protect places; it is also about fighting for the people who inhabit them.



Students examining the *Fear of a Bleak Planet* exhibit during the opening reception. Photo by Anna Batcheller.

The Exhibit

Following the panel, the AAAMC hosted an opening reception for the *Fear of a Bleak Planet* exhibit, which was curated by Langston Wilkins with assistance from fellow graduate assistant Raynetta Wiggins and AAAMC Head of Collections Brenda Nelson-Strauss. The first section of the exhibit highlighted R&B and soul records from the 1970s that helped establish the foundations for the conscious stream in hip hop, including albums by Marvin Gaye (*What's Going On*), Curtis Mayfield (*There's No Place Like America Today*) and War (*The World Is a Ghetto*).

Part two presented a regional survey of hip hop albums notable for their sociopolitical commentary and included shelves dedicated to releases from the East and West Coasts and the South by artists such as Eric B. & Rakim, Ice Cube, and the Geto Boys. The exhibit also highlighted underground, female, and international hip hop artists whose rhymes convey sociopolitical messages, as well as activist-oriented releases such as the *Rap the Vote Mixtape*, 504 Boyz's *Hurricane Katrina: We Gon' Bounce Back*, and Public Enemy's "Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos." Hip hop's place within the Green Movement was represented by Seasunz + J-Bless's *Earth Amplified* and Phil Da Agony's *Think Green*.

The exhibit was on display in the Bridgwaters Lounge of the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center from October 4 through November 17, 2010. With the exception of several LPs generously loaned by DJ Top Speed, all material featured in the exhibit is housed at the AAAMC and is available for research. The exhibit, panel, and opening reception were generously sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences' Themester Program, the College Arts & Humanities Institute,

Fear of a Bleak Planet Playlist

The following videos were featured either during the panel or the exhibit opening:

- Grandmaster Flash, "The Message" (1982)
- Lauryn Hill, "Everything Is Everything" (1999)
- Dr. Octagon, "Trees" (2006)
- Mos Def, "New World Water" (2002)
- Doo Dat, "The Dream Reborn: My President Is Green" (2009)
- Doo Dat, "Behind the Video 'The Dream Reborn'" (2009)
- Seasunz + J.Bless, "Global Warning" (features Stic.Man from Dead Prez) (2010)
- Biz Markie, "Earth Day" (for the 40th anniversary of Earth Day) (2010)
- Talib Kweli & Hi-Tek, "Ballad of the Black Gold" (2010)
- Arrested Development, "Greener" (2010)
- Tem Blessed, "Now Is the Time" (2010)
- Shamarr Allen, Dee-1, Paul Sanchez, and Bennie Pete, "Sorry Ain't Enough No More" (about the BP oil spill) (2010)

and the Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Multicultural Affairs. Both events were also a part of the University Libraries' Archives and Special Collections Month.

—Betsy Shepherd, graduate student in Folklore and Ethnomusicology, and Langston Wilkins, AAAMC Graduate Assistant

From Records to Radio: Interview with Kirkland Burke

Kirkland Burke is currently co-owner of the Mondy-Burke-Smith Broadcasting Network along with business partners Elijah Monday, Jr. and Darren Smith. The MBS Broadcasting Network's holdings include Christian-Gospel radio stations KCAT-AM in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and WJIW-FM in Greenville, Mississippi. Burke holds a bachelor's degree from Chicago State University and worked for twenty-five years as both local and Midwest regional promotion manager for Warner Bros. Records. In the following phone interview with AAAMC Director Portia K. Maulsby, Burke discusses his experiences at Warner from 1975-2000; relations between Warner, Elektra, and Atlantic; and the role of radio in music sales. Burke is a member of the AAAMC's National Advisory Board.



Photo courtesy of KCAT-AM.

Portia Maulsby: Let's talk first about your background before your path led into the music industry.

Kirkland Burke: As Bill Cosby would say, "I started out as a child." I started taking piano lessons in Chicago when I was three years old. My brother was five, and he was taking lessons. Wherever he went, I was right there with him. My mother thought I was too young, but the teacher said, "No, he can learn!" and I played into my teens. My brother and I used to do two-piano duets. That generated my interest in music, but I never thought about music as a career.

After I got out of the Navy in 1968, I went to Chicago State University, and then I went into education. I was teaching at Holy Angels Roman Catholic School in Chicago when I had a problem with my throat and was put on vocal rest for several months. During the summer just after that, I was led into the music business. I used to work with Herb Kent, who was the local disc jockey at WVON in Chicago. I would help him with his personal appearances. He knew I wasn't working that summer, so he called and asked if I'd be interested in doing record promotion. A friend of his needed someone to help with the travel part—going to Wisconsin and Indiana—to promote records. And that was really how I got into that part of the business—working independently doing promotion.

PKM: And this particular person was working as an independent promoter?

KB: Yes, [his name was] Bill Lasly, and he represented several labels including Ovation Records, which was

based in Glencoe, Illinois at that time. They handled the Walt Disney line and had various blues and jazz artists. I represented PYE Records out of London. One of the first records I got on the radio was a tune called "Sad Sweet Dreamer" by the Sweet Sensations. I think there may have been an American group by that same name, but this group was out of Manchester, England.

PKM: As a record promoter, where did you take the records?

KB: I went to the radio stations. Remember, back then we had jazz radio and R&B radio, and we also had FM radio, which was emerging from underground radio. The Ovation label also had folk music. So you went to different radio stations depending on what the format was. This is around 1972, so disco had not really exploded out away from the East Coast yet. That was still to come.

PKM: How long were you with Bill Lasly, and where did you go after leaving his company?

KB: I was with him for a couple of years, and then late in the summer of 1975 I got another call from Herb Kent who asked me if I was interested in working for a major label. I told him, "definitely," because the whole reason for staying with an independent label was to hopefully be considered for a position at a major label. Herb said that WEA, which was Warner Elektra Atlantic, had a local position that had been open for almost a year, and he told me that he'd mention my name to Ron Ellison, who was the regional rep for Warner at the time. Ron had seen me at work at the stations, and he thought that it would be a good position for me. That following Sunday, I had a



Top: Graham Central Station, circa 1973 (SC 111). Bottom: Candi Staton, 1979 (SC 8).



meeting with Ron and the Atlantic regional [marketing director in Chicago], Eddie Holland. We sat down and had breakfast at the old Queen of the Sea Restaurant, and they explained what the job entailed.

And that is how I joined the company. The branch manager was out of town for a few weeks, and Ron needed somebody right away because the new Larry Graham project was coming out, so I actually worked for a couple of weeks on the Warner Bros. product before I was even technically hired.

PKM: And how long were you with Warner Bros.?

KB: I was with Warner Communication and Time Warner from August 1975 until December 2000. I started out representing all three labels within the WEA Corporation. Then in 1978, when Ron left and went to Mercury Records, I was promoted to regional. In the interim, as Warner got more and more black music, it was becoming too much for one person. They did eventually split, and I was given a choice between working exclusively for Atlantic Records or for Warner. I decided to stay with Warner.

PKM: So you were the first African American promoter with WEA?

KB: Oh, no, no, no. I know that there was one other local person before I got there.

PKM: But at the regional level...

KB: No, Ron Ellison was regional. He was the one who really hired me with the company. Now he may have been the first in the Midwest because Warner Bros. was relatively new into black music at that time. In fact, when I started with WEA, Atlantic really had the bulk of the product—the big jazz catalog and the big R&B catalog. Warner Bros. had Paul Kelly, who had a record out called *Hooked, Hogtied, & Collared*. Candi Staton was also on the label and Graham Central Station, which was Larry Graham's group. David Sanborn, the jazz saxophonist, had just recently been signed because there wasn't a separate jazz department at that time.

PKM: What would you say were the challenges of working with Warner during this period as they were developing a black music catalog?

KB: The biggest challenge probably was the perception that we were a rock music company. That's what people thought of when they thought of Warner Bros. because the label had Fleetwood Mac, Rod Stewart, and all that. The first gold record for the department was Graham Central Station's album *Ain't No Bout-A-Doubt It*. That was the first project I worked on for Warner Bros., and that was my first gold record with them.

PKM: What led to the signing of black artists on Warner? Was that predicated upon the success of Larry Graham? Was it because of the competition from other labels? What was the impetus for Warner Bros. to develop this department?

KB: It probably was the in-house competition within Warner Communications. Elektra really had no black product at that time. On Atlantic, the Spinners really were exploding, and they were turning out hit after hit. Aretha was on Atlantic. They had the Coltrane catalog. Everything in terms of black music within the company was on the Atlantic label. So at that point, Warner Bros. was just getting into it.

PKM: So between 1975 and 2000, how would you describe the evolution of black music within the major labels, because prior to that time only Atlantic had any significant black product. How did Warner and Elektra evolve? What was the motivation?

KB: I would say the motivation was money, naturally. It's always about the money tempered with the music, depending on who's running the company and the company philosophy. The music is secondary to the money. In some [companies], the money is the only thing; in others, it's the combination of the art form and the revenue. Warner was an artist-oriented company at that time. By that I mean they looked out for the artist first. The needs of the artist were considered paramount.

PKM: Between when you joined Warner Bros. in 1975 and when you left in 2000, did they formally create a black music division?

KB: Yes. My feeling is that it was not good for Warner Bros. Before there was a separate division [in the early 1990s], you were just part of the Warner Records family, so all the money was going into one pot. Nobody is hot twelve months out of the year; nobody is hot for extended periods. If the black department is hot, then maybe country music is cold, but somebody's still hot, so there's never a lot of heat on you because you're not standing all by yourself. Now you sink and swim totally on your own.



MBS co-owner Elijah Mondy and Pine Bluff KCAT radio pioneer J.B. Scanlon.
Photo courtesy of KCAT-AM.

PKM: Did the executive of Warner's new black music division have hiring power, or was it primarily a promotional division?

KB: The signings were always up to the A&R department. I think what hurt black music a lot was that the A&R people tended to be lawyers. They were not really what an A&R person was supposed to be, which was someone who could go in, sit down with the artists, and actually get songs that matched that artists' talent. I think when you started seeing A&R as somebody who could sign the best deal, the quality of black music started to drop off. The success of Motown was matching the right songwriter with the right singer and the right producer with that singer or group. So what Smokey Robinson wrote for Mary Wells may not have worked for Martha and the Vandellas. If you go back and look at Motown, a lot of the hit records were recorded by several groups. They may have said, "Okay, these three artists will record this song, and now we'll see which one does the best job."

PKM: What changes did you see as a promoter working with black product between 1975 and 2000?

KB: Everything changed. Radio changed. The record company changed. I would almost say you started to notice a big change around 1977, which hit with FM radio. With FM radio, new people were coming in. These were new stations. One of the big things the new folks started doing was playing albums at night, uninterrupted. When the record companies went to

them and told them this was killing record sales, their response was, “I’m not in the record business.” But they were in the record business, because if the record business dies and there’s no good music coming out, nobody’s listening to your radio station. They played a lot of music because they didn’t have the commercial load that the AM stations had. They started hiring deejays that were not personality deejays. That meant they basically were giving you the name of the song, the temperature, and the time, whereas on old-style radio the deejay could sell the record. They could make you like a record that you probably couldn’t stand when you first heard it.

PKM: Were the deejays moving into FM radio still black deejays?

KB: At that point some were, some weren’t, because now you’re on the fringes of the conglomerates buying up the stations. People who were buying the stations were really interested in one thing: the bottom line. You also had people coming into the business who were not as sensitive to the overall picture. Black radio generated jobs in the record industry; the record industry generated jobs at the retail level. At this time, Chicago had more black-owned, one-stop record distributors than anywhere in the nation. These were black-owned businesses employing black people. And that slowly started to vanish.

PKM: Because the majors, the conglomerates, began buying up and controlling the sale of music?

KB: Well, the whole business started to shift. The record buying public is really a very small segment of the population. When I first started, a gold record was only 250,000 copies sold and a platinum record was half-a-million. Then all of a sudden in the late 1970s, album sales exploded, and they changed the classification to half-a-million albums for gold and a million for platinum, and there was a great period of unbelievable sales. Prior to that, the other shift was the emphasis from 45 rpm to LP sales. The 45 was really just a marketing tool to sell the album. Warner Bros.’ focus was always on selling the album, and it probably had to do with the fact that they were so heavy into rock music where they had big album sales.

PKM: What changes occurred with the explosion of disco?

KB: I think when disco hit, nobody knew what to do. They started flying in anybody who they thought was a disco artist. It seemed like you were getting a 12-inch disco record every week. There were a lot of things that were big on the East Coast that just never made it in Middle America. We never really had the big explosion of disco that the East Coast had—we still kept that R&B pace. One station even flipped and

went to an all-disco format, and it didn’t work.

PKM: What impact would you say disco had on African American music and traditional artists—on Aretha Franklin, Diana Ross, and Curtis Mayfield, for example?

KB: It almost killed it off because disco was about the music; it wasn’t so much about the artists as it was about the beat, you know, how many beats per minute. Disco was music—and I’ll put this as delicately as I can—disco was music for people who really couldn’t dance so they could get out on the dance floor and look halfway decent.

PKM: What level of involvement did Warner have with disco?

KB: They never really went into it full force. Warner did sign a distribution deal with RFC Records, which was owned by Ray Caviano, and probably their biggest act was Change. Luther Vandross was actually doing the lead singing in that group. They also had the tune “Searching” and a couple of big disco hits. RFC was a straight disco label. That’s all they did. The thing with disco is that now you had white artists doing disco music, and because of the beat, black stations started playing it.

PKM: What was your greatest achievement as a promoter?

KB: There was always a sense of fulfillment in seeing an artist go from unknown to star or superstar—seeing someone like Prince going from stations out-and-out refusing to play his records to having stations begging for exclusive rights on his next single or wanting to give away his next album. And I remember Prince’s first album. The California [branch] was excited. They kept saying they had something special, but nobody knew he was going to be that special. I remember when they first signed him, everybody went to Minneapolis to see him perform and—like it often is when you first see a showcase—from a promotion standpoint people thought, “Where can I get this record played?” And sometimes you look at a new artist showcase and you think, “Boy, I hope they don’t expect me to get *that* played!” because what they’re playing is not in line with what’s happening in radio. We got more of those than we did things you would hear and think, “I can’t wait to go to radio with that.”

Until after *Purple Rain* exploded, Prince’s records were what we call “work records.” You had to work his records on the radio. None of his music was automatic. Even “When Doves Cry” was not played right away. A lot of stations didn’t want to play it. I don’t know if you realize this, but that song has no drum in it. And some programmers listening for

that beat were going, “Where’s the drum?” And then they’re going, “When doves cry? What’s he talking about?” And it got to the point where everybody was trying to psychoanalyze his lyrics and saying, “I need to know what he’s talking about because I don’t want to find out later on...” So even as big as Prince was, he was not an automatic [success].

PKM: I want to return to the earlier question about white promoters promoting at white and black stations.

KB: There were some artists that we worked across the board and other artists that did not get worked at pop radio until they reached a certain sales plateau where the pop stations could no longer ignore them. I should say the company couldn’t ignore the *financial benefit* of not working that record at pop radio.

PKM: Early on, when you first started working for Warner Bros., was there just one division instead of the pop division versus the black music division?

KB: It was the pop department and the R&B department and the country department. Because the focus was on building the artists’ career and the money, if they thought a record would work on another format, you’d give it a shot, see what you could get. There’s always that underlying, unspoken thing that you know is said without being said: if a white artist is played on a black radio station, that’s a slot that’s knocking a black artist out from being on the air.

PKM: And is the reverse true?

KB: They might have felt that way, but I think one of the underlying reasons was that they didn’t want to play black artists. It’s so obvious now with what has happened with the advent of video. They didn’t want young teenage girls in Montana or Nebraska or Chicago going crazy and screaming over black artists. Everybody forgets MTV initially wouldn’t play a black artist. When they first started out, they played a group out of England that was integrated, and I think the first actual all-black group that was in any kind of rotation on there was Musical Youth—the “Pass the Dutchie” song.

PKM: I’ve seen that several times.

KB: And I’ll show you how bad it was. When the pop station here first started playing “Beat It,” they didn’t say it was Michael Jackson, they were saying it was Eddie Van Halen and Michael Jackson because Eddie Van Halen did the guitar solo.

Following some discussion of Burke’s radio stations, which broadcast a Christian-Gospel format, Maultsby asks if there is anything else he wants to mention. Burke replies:



Burke with Lerone Bennett, Jr., author, social historian, and executive editor of *Ebony* magazine, 2007. Photo by Debra Meeks.

KB: I think the color line, as it got blurred, changed a lot of things in the business. My understanding is that the reason there were black promotion people was that black program directors started telling the record companies, “If you don’t send somebody black to promote the records, don’t send the records in.” The program directors had to see some black people getting these jobs, and if they hadn’t taken a stand, it wouldn’t have happened. And then as time went on, the younger generation came in, and they don’t know the struggle. I don’t want to say, “They don’t care,” it’s just that they don’t know or understand it. So to them, they don’t care who [promotes the record]. All they know is, “just send me the music.” There’s no understanding that when I’m strong, you’re strong. That protected a lot of people’s jobs. There were people that the record companies would have fired, but they were afraid of stations dropping their records. If somebody did not get treated fairly, they didn’t have a problem withdrawing their enthusiasm for that company’s product.

—Transcript edited by Dave Lewis, AAAMC Graduate Assistant



Donna Lawrence (front center) and Rachel Grimes (third from the right) with members of the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology. Photo by Anna Batcheller.

Music, Media & Museums: Storytelling in Public Spaces

On November 1, 2010, the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology and the Department of Recreation, Park & Tourism Studies co-hosted a two-hour lecture by Donna Lawrence and Rachel Grimes entitled *Music, Media & Museums: Storytelling in Public Spaces*. Additional sponsors included the Mathers Museum of World Cultures, the Department of Communication and Culture, the Anthropology Department, and the AAAMC.

Lawrence is an award-winning producer of multimedia productions for museum exhibits and the Creative Director for Lawrence Productions. Her company creates media experiences, which extend far beyond your standard cinematic feature, for theatrical environments and visitor attractions in the United States and abroad. For instance, the Alaska Native Heritage Center is home to Lawrence's "Stories Given, Stories Shared," a piece which features seven looped videos on the native cultures of Alaska. Periodically throughout the day, the seven screens synchronize to form a single, unified image depicting a local natural environment or cultural concept. The opening multimedia

piece for the "Freedom Rising" exhibit at the National Constitution Center (Philadelphia, PA) combines film and video projection with a monologue by a live actor. Other productions involve panoramic video and expanding or dropdown projection screens.

Given the nature of the multimedia experiences created by her company, Lawrence doesn't seem the least bit intimidated by the fast-paced consumer media formats that are vying for the attention of young audiences. Even in a world of iPods and 3D cinema, 360° panoramic screens with surround sound remain exotic. Her mix of multilevel storytelling, stellar images, carefully crafted soundtracks, and immersive media has proven capable of captivating and enrapturing even the most unruly of grade school audiences.

Lawrence's work has received awards in almost every national and international festival dedicated to special format, documentary, or permanently-installed media, including the Sundance Film Festival, the International Documentary Association, the New York Festivals, and the AAM's Muse Awards, among many others. Lawrence was elected to the Producer's Hall of Fame by the Association for Multi-Media International (AMI) and has been a guest panelist at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Museums (AAM) as well as the American Association of State and Local History. She holds bachelors and masters degrees in music from the University of Texas and the New England Conservatory, and she studied at the UCLA Institute of Ethnomusicology with special emphases on Latin American and African American music traditions.



Donna Lawrence converses with IU staff/faculty members Cornelia Fales, Mellonee Burnim, and Charles Sykes. Photo by Anna Batcheller.

Due in part to her musical background, each of Lawrence’s creations begins with the soundtrack, whether it’s through the carefully selected interview excerpts that make up “The Motown Sound” and “Kentucky Show!” or the intentionally congruent musical soundtracks for the five looped projections that make up the “Journey of Life” exhibit at the Museum of World Religions in Taipei, Taiwan. From there, she draws on her experience as a still photographer to select ravishing images that further tell and embellish the story. Both sonically and visually breathtaking, it’s no wonder why Lawrence’s work can bring a busload of fourth graders to an instant and attentive standstill.

Rachel Grimes is one of Lawrence’s long-term collaborators and served as her fellow presenter for this event. Grimes is a Louisville composer and pianist with a degree in composition from the University of Louisville School of Music. She first collaborated with Lawrence by performing research for “Kentucky Show!” and has since provided original music, arrangements, and music research on a number of other projects including the Museum of World Religion and Jefferson’s World (Monticello).

During the presentation, Grimes mentioned that “Journey of Life” was one of her greatest challenges as a composer. Since the audio from each of the distinct videos was always audible to exhibit visitors, she needed a soundtrack that captured the traditional musics of the cultures represented by the exhibit while avoiding an utter cacophony of sound. The solution? All five pieces are tied together by a base drone with each piece making use of a

different melody, texture, or set of instrumentation to help distinguish it from its neighbors.

In addition to scintillating teasers for many of Lawrence’s projects, audience members were treated to a preview of a new multimedia installation currently scheduled to open at the New York Historical Society in November 2011. If this exhibit follows the pattern established by Lawrence and Grimes’ previous works, it promises to be a real treat.

Production materials and video footage of Lawrence’s productions are housed at the AAAMC as part of the Donna Lawrence Collection (SC 61) and fill an important role in production and public sector courses offered by the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology. Among the highlights of the collection are materials related to the following productions:

- The *Music as Metaphor* documentary for the “From Victory to Freedom: Afro-American Life, 1945–1965” exhibition at the American Museum and Cultural Center (Wilberforce, OH)
- *Motown Sound*, which is the audiovisual portion of the “Motown Scene” created in conjunction with the Motown Exhibition at the Motown Historical Museum and Henry Ford Museum (Detroit, MI)
- The “Freedom Rising” exhibit from the Kimmel Theater Experience at the National Constitution Center (Philadelphia, PA)

—Ronda L. Sewald



Photo by Anna Batcheller.

Immediately preceding the November 1st *Music, Media & Museums* lecture and presentation, Dr. Portia Maultsby's Media Productions class had the opportunity to hold a Q&A session with multimedia producer Donna Lawrence and composer and music researcher Rachel Grimes. Media Productions students spent the first half of the Fall 2010 semester learning about various roles available to folklorists and ethnomusicologists in the public sector, focusing on the industries of documentary and commercial film, public media productions, and museums and other cultural institutions. Concentrating on issues of minority representation and culturally sensitive programming, the graduate and undergraduate students were exposed to readings on the missions, methods, and philosophies of these various industries. Highly interactive, the course included guest speakers, film screenings, and field trips to both the "America I Am" exhibit in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Donna Lawrence's production studios in Louisville, Kentucky.

During the months of September and October, students were preparing to begin production on their own multimedia projects, and so this visit from Lawrence and Grimes was especially well-timed. Lawrence and Grimes kicked off the Q&A session by relaying the stories of how they came to work in the field of creating multimedia installations and soundtracks for cultural institutions. Lawrence began her career in public radio. Her passion for creating cultural programming was furthered when she began to work in film. "The synergy of what happened when certain music was combined with certain visual images was just exhilarating,"

she recalled. Grimes spoke on how she balances her life as a touring and freelance musician with her work as a researcher and composer for the Lawrence Productions company. Both women agreed that they are unable to "tear themselves away from music."

One student asked Lawrence how she handles sensitive issues of cultural representation in her productions. Lawrence's advice was to "find a guru—someone from the culture, who can talk about that culture articulately. Someone who is a deep scholar of the subject matter, but also 'in' the culture." Lawrence, overseeing a core team of a dozen people and approximately a hundred additional contract staff for each project, faces the challenge of making sure that her production team and researchers are able to present the most truthful representation of a community, despite the fact that her trusted team will not always be "of the culture."

When asked about dealing with community complexities and disagreements within communities, Lawrence advocated for working with museums that already have fostered strong relationships with the community and its leaders. She noted that in her field, the most important personal quality to hold is that of being "a good listener," a quality she says allows large collaborative teams working on public presentations to "get to a place of understanding." Lawrence and Grimes ended with some general advice for the students, noting that the most important thing is that individuals strive to "be in a field where you can bring inspiration to what you do."

—Josephine McRobbie, graduate student in
Folklore and Ethnomusicology

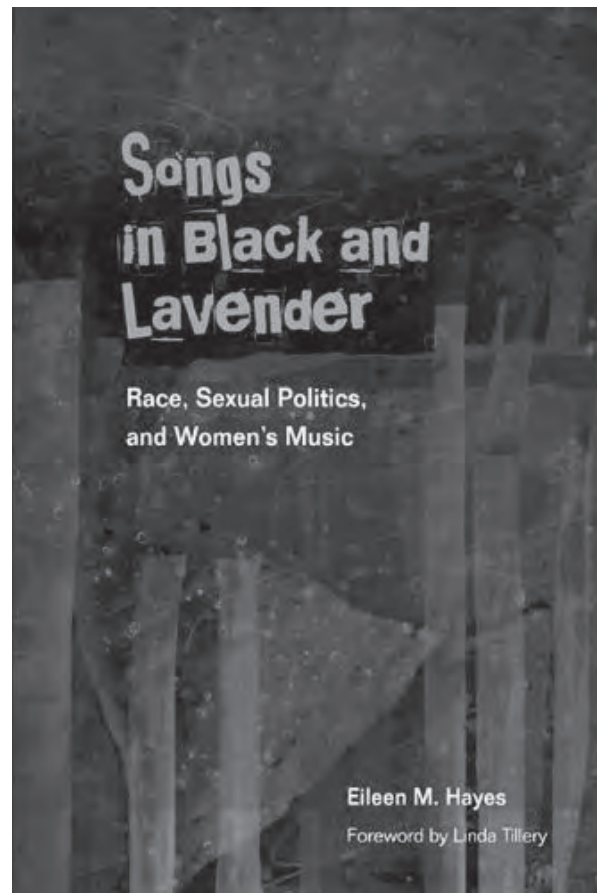
AMGP Book Series: Songs in Black and Lavender

As the newest addition to the *African American Music in Global Perspective* series, Eileen Hayes's *Songs in Black and Lavender: Race, Sexual Politics, and Women's Music* (2010), is a wide-ranging and incredibly witty addition to the ethnomusicological literature. Based on fieldwork she conducted from the early 1990s to the mid-2000s, Hayes's book investigates the women's music movement in the United States. Hayes posits women's music as an important site for the development of black feminist thought since the 1970s, as well as an ongoing musical scene that can illuminate the continued and multi-layered intersections of gender, feminism, and race.

Although her writing is clear and concise as she makes the case for examining the experience of African Americans in women's music, the most striking aspect of this book is her writing style. Hayes is hilarious and congenial, no matter what her topic. For example, while doing food prep work at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, Hayes admits a little crush on her instructor. Hayes then continues: "The uncompensated physical labor of my African American ancestors notwithstanding, I remember thinking that under our instructor's supervision, I could husk corn for the rest of my life." I should note here that Hayes makes these statements as a "straight, black, and, arguably, old-school feminist activist," a reminder that a researcher's identity and her identity-based research interests are not always the same (a reminder that this reviewer shamefacedly needed while reading this work).

I do not lead with the discussion of Hayes's tone to diminish the academic contributions her book makes. Hayes examines the phenomenon of women's music from a number of vantage points: she investigates women's music as a phenomenon associated with (mostly white) music festivals like Michigan and the "all-black lesbian cultural, musical, and political retreat" called Sistahfest. Hayes depicts women's music as rooted in 1970s feminism and marked by the legacy of African American women's music and politics. She also examines it as a scene whose edges can be mapped by examining the ways in which male-to-female transsexuals and drag kings, particularly African American kings, are situated within it. Hayes accomplishes this task through interviews with women's music festival attendees, veteran and upcoming artists, and women who work "behind the scenes" at festivals. Excerpts from these interviews liberally pepper the book.

The organization of each chapter around a different facet of the women's music scene can make the book feel slightly



choppy, although there are certainly thematic threads that run throughout the text. The one item for which this reviewer continually pined was accompanying audio material. While Hayes's book describes in detail the sound of the many performers and genres she includes, immediate auditory gratification and Hayes's curatorial ear would have been preferable to Google searching.

These minor issues aside, *Songs in Black and Lavender* is highly recommended, particularly for scholars and fans of African American popular musics and ethnomusicologists working with gender and feminist scholarship. Because Hayes's writing is approachable and many of her chapters can stand as independent works, selections from the book would function well in undergraduate syllabi. *Songs in Black and Lavender* is an important—and large—step in illuminating the interconnections in black feminism and the women's music movement in the United States.

The AMGP book series is published by University of Illinois Press and edited by Portia K. Maultsby and Mellonee V. Burnim.

—Dave Lewis, AAAMC Graduate Assistant

AAAMC Finding Aids Now Available Online



Al Bell, Executive VP of Stax/Volt Records (SC 8), and B.B. King (SC 129), are featured in the Maultsby, Shearer, and Black Radio collections.

Through the assistance of the Indiana University Digital Library Program (DLP), the AAAMC is now able to digitize its collection finding aids and provide online access to item-level inventories. After several months of preliminary work, the first finding aids went live in June 2010.

The online finding aids are encoded in EAD (Encoded Archival Description), an XML standard specifically designed to make these archival inventories computer friendly. Once the files are uploaded to the DLP's website, users no longer need to wait for the AAAMC staff to send them a copy of the Excel spreadsheet for a collection; they can go straight to the finding aid and browse the item descriptions.

The DLP's website also allows users to perform a full text search within a collection or across multiple collections held by Indiana University. Other IU institutions that currently have finding aids available through the site include the Center for the Study of History and Memory, the Lilly Library, the University Archives, the Working Men's Institute, and the Folklore, Political Papers, and Liberian Collections. In addition to performing full text searches, users can also browse IU's finding aids by creator, subject, and repository name.

Encoding archival finding aids, particularly those for collections with extensive audiovisual materials and/or item-level content notes, can be a labor intensive process. Since each finding aid takes a week to several

months to encode, users will still need to contact our staff about obtaining inventories for many of our collections. We'll be continuously uploading new files to the website over the next few months, however, and finding aids for several of our more popular collections are already available including the following:

Portia K. Maultsby Collection (Music Industry Interview series)

<http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/findingaids/aaamc/VAB9025>

Michael Lydon Collection

<http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/findingaids/aaamc/VAB9026>

Karen Shearer Collection

<http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/findingaids/aaamc/VAB9514>

Reclaiming the Right to Rock: Black Experiences in Rock Music Collection

<http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/findingaids/aaamc/VAB9846>

Black Radio: Telling It Like It Was

<http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/findingaids/aaamc/VAC0316>

Special thanks goes out to Metadata Librarian Jenn Riley for helping us with the preliminary work necessary for bringing our finding aids online and to AAAMC student assistant Levon Williams for encoding the finding aid for the Karen Shearer Collection.

For more details on this project, contact the AAAMC staff, or visit the DLP's finding aid website at <http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/findingaids/welcome.do>.

—Ronda L. Sewald



View options:

- Standard
- [Entire finding aid](#)
- [Printer-friendly](#)

Search within this document:

Contents:

- [Summary Information](#)
- [Access Restrictions](#)
- [Biographical Note](#)
- [Arrangement](#)
- [Scope and Content](#)
- [Indexing Terms](#)
- [Administrative Information](#)
- [Collection Inventory](#)
 - [Music Industry Interviews, 1979-1989](#)
 - [Interviews by Maultsby, 1979-1989](#)
 - [Interviews by Various Interviewers and Miscellaneous Recordings, 1979-1989](#)

Want to learn more?

- Do you have a question about this collection?
- Would you like to view the original items in this collection?
- Are you seeking permission to publish or reproduce items in this collection?

Please contact the holding repository:
[Archives of African American Music and Culture \(AAAMC\), IU Bloomington](#)

Email: aaamc@indiana.edu

Portia K. Maultsby Collection, 1981-1986



Subseries:

Interviews by Maultsby, 1979-1989

Physical Description

137 sound cassettes (9,106 min.) : analog, stereo. + documentation

Abner, Ewart, October 21, 1984

Collector's No(s).
INT 1A-INT 1B

Shelf No(s).
cass 1233-1234

Physical Description

2 sound cassettes (126 min.) + 1 transcript (62 typed leaves)

Content

Interview with Ewert Abner, manager for Stevie Wonder and former president of Vee-Jay and Motown Records, recorded in Santa Monica, California.

Note

Pagination for transcript skips p. 39.

Reference Copies

Preservation master file(s): 24 bit/96 kHz Broadcast Wave File (BWF)
Production master file(s): 16 bit/44.1 kHz Broadcast Wave File (BWF)
Compact disc(s): CDREF 41-42

Allen, Henry, November 1, 1982

Collector's No(s).
INT 2A-INT 2B

Shelf No(s).
cass 1235-1236

Physical Description

2 sound cassettes (133 min.) + 1 transcript (45 typed leaves)

Content

Interview with Henry Allen, record executive for Atlantic Records; recorded in New York, New York.

Note

Interview also has a second, partial transcript (23 leaves).

Reference Copies

Preservation master file(s): 24 bit/96 kHz Broadcast Wave File (BWF)
Production master file(s): 16 bit/44.1 kHz Broadcast Wave File (BWF)
Compact disc(s): CDREF 43-45

Excerpt from online finding aid available through the Indiana University Digital Library Program's website showing the entries for the first two interviews in the Portia K. Maultsby Collection, Music Industry Interviews series.

Archives of African American Music & Culture

Smith Research Center, Suite 180-181
2805 East Tenth Street
Bloomington, IN 47408-2601

Phone: (812) 855-8547
Web: www.indiana.edu/~aaamc
E-mail: aaamc@indiana.edu

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Bloomington, IN
Permit No. 2



INDIANA UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF FOLKLORE
AND ETHNOMUSICOLOGY
College of Arts and Sciences
Bloomington



Black Grooves (www.blackgrooves.org), the music review site hosted by the AAAMC, promotes black music by providing readers and subscribers with monthly updates on interesting new releases and quality reissues in all genres—including gospel, blues, jazz, funk, rock, soul, and hip hop, as well as classical music composed or performed by black artists. To submit material, subscribe, or join our group of volunteer reviewers contact aaamc@indiana.edu.



circle of friends

I would like to join the Circle of Friends of the Archives of African American Music and Culture. My donation will support the activities of the AAAMC.

- Patron Friend (\$25-\$49)
- Supporting Friend (\$50-\$99)
- Sustaining Friend (\$100-\$999)
- Platinum Circle (\$1,000 or more)
- Other _____

Enclosed is my/our contribution of \$_____ to the Archives of African American Music and Culture. *All contributions to the AAAMC are tax deductible.*

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone () _____

Please make checks payable to Indiana University/AAAMC
and mail completed form to AAAMC • Smith Research Center, Suites 180-181
2805 E. Tenth Street • Bloomington, IN 47408-2601

AAAMC Staff:

- Portia K. Maultsby**, Director
- Brenda Nelson-Strauss**, Head of Collections
- Ronda L. Sewald**, Archives Administrator-Project Manager
- Dave Lewis**, Graduate Assistant
- Raynetta Wiggins**, Graduate Assistant
- Langston Wilkins**, Graduate Assistant
- Student Assistants:** Melody Barham, Rachel Wiedner, Levon Williams, Ann Shaffer

Newsletter design & layout by Dennis Laffoon

National Advisory Board

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Harry Allen | Bobby L. Jones |
| Michelle T. Boone | Regina Jones |
| Regina Harris Baiocchi | Michael Lydon |
| Louise Bullard-Garrett | Debbie May |
| Kirkland R. Burke | Barry A. Mayo |
| Charles H. DeBow III | Michael McAlpin |
| Murray Forman | Tom Reed |
| Reebee Garofalo | Robert E. Rosenthal |
| Luvenia A. George | Patrice Rushen |
| Suzan E. Jenkins | Leonard S. Scott |
| | Allan Slutsky |
| | Linda Tillery |
| | Logan Westbrooks |
| | Oly W. Wilson |