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Julia Sneeringer. *A Social History of Early Rock 'n' Roll in Germany: Hamburg from Burlesque to The Beatles, 1956-69.* New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. 304 pp. $114.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-350-03438-9.

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Julia Sneeringer focuses on the places, the people, and the circumstances that brought "Beat" or rock 'n' roll music to the dockside clubs and bars of Hamburg. ***Early Rock 'n' Roll*** presents 1960s Hamburg, and specifically its dockside district of St. Pauli, as the matrix of new modes of entertainment, tourism, and capitalism, as well as generational norms and the shifting concerns of the developing postwar West German state.

Sneeringer's approach to what historians of German-speaking Europe call ***Alltagsgeschichte***, or the history of everyday life, is based on what musicologist Christopher Small calls "musicking." Like Small, Sneeringer discusses music history through the actions of "everyone in the space when music is created: musicians as well as audiences, technicians, managers, even bartenders, waiters, and cleaners" (p. 7). This book draws memorable portraits of the drunken impresarios, exhausted young band members, and the sailors, sex workers, and students in the rowdy audiences. But it moves much farther afield. Sneeringer's energetic, thoughtful text places Beat musicking in its local, national, and international contexts, moving throughout the city of Hamburg (and its sister Beat city, Liverpool) to consider German national concerns and US cultural influences.

The book begins with a discussion of St. Pauli, the port district where the Beat clubs flourished, "a place that was 'not Germany'" (p. 66). Like so many ports, St. Pauli was both problem and synecdoche for the city of Hamburg, itself described as a collectivity of people for whom "mammon is their god, the belly their prophet, the beer barrel their gospel, and the pubis their altar" (pp. 12-13). St. Pauli's openness to global commerce and to different sorts of revelry had rendered it Hamburg's lucrative "wild west" since the fourteenth century and made it central to Germany's encounters with transnational and racialized Others. After the war, the area continued to be seen as a "crisis district" because not quite enough of it had been bombed to allow for orderly reconstruction, separating residential and commercial space.

Hamburg hoped that postwar culture might help it leave behind its traumatic wartime experiences. City officials and business leaders hoped to rebuild and rebrand Hamburg as "industrious and open-minded, an old place with a young heart and a healthy sense of fun" (p. 34). The early years of the ***Wirtschaftswunder*** granted Germans disposable income and more leisure time in which to spend it, especially on alcohol and entertainment consumed in St. Pauli. Hamburg's reinvention as a center of West German media culture, including a

new recording industry, also helped drive the creation of new clubs and sites of popular entertainment. City authorities wanted to rein in bad behavior and crime while remaining careful not to endanger the revenue St. Pauli contributed to city coffers.

This music and the culture that grew up around it was transnational from the beginning. It drew on American rock, with its origins in African American and Appalachian sounds. It was often played by young Brits, many of them Liverpudlians, who brought their own city's Irish and African diasporic influences into the Hamburg scene. Beat's main audiences were young people, specifically baby boomers, part of an increasingly self-aware transnational youth culture joined together by music, fashion, and other global trends. The relationships forged in the clubs, whether artistic, sexual, musical, or a combination thereof, also underscored the transnational nature of Beat as a phenomenon. The Beatles' shaggy haircuts, for example, came from German "Exi" students (p. 98), who had found them in existentialism's call to abandon bourgeois convention and seek authenticity. In a typically elegant sentence, Sneeringer notes "these musicians from battered, polyracial Liverpool played American rock 'n' roll … in a cultural border zone in West Germany, then thrust those subterranean impulses onto the world" (p. 82).

Rock 'n' roll arrived slowly in St. Pauli. Different kinds of jazz had constituted the district's most popular form of music during the '50s, when rock took hold in the United States. In Hamburg, where rock became known as "Beat," St. Pauli club owners helped popularize it. Sneeringer tells the story of various clubs' creation and failure—specifically the Kaiserkeller, the Top Ten, and most famously the Star Club, where Swing Kids had danced in the 1930s and 1940s, later transformed into a rock joint with profits drawn from the owner's strip clubs.

In its heyday St. Pauli hosted hundreds of bands, all playing long sets every night, drinking beer, and abusing amphetamines to serve as "living jukeboxes" (p. 74). For the musicians, the district's "24-hour culture of sex, speed, and sleaze represented an opportunity to earn money playing music, as well as a school of life" (p. 68). Alongside local German bands like the Rattles and other British bands like the all-girl Liverbirds, the Beatles played at all of the St. Pauli clubs between August 1960 and December 1962 and figure prominently throughout the book. Audiences and club owners pressured the musicians; violence often awaited them on St. Pauli's streets. Within the clubs, the atmosphere was often kinder. Other rockers and club staff became a sort of family; the more permissive West German context, as opposed to the constraints of Liverpool, often allowed for exploration of premarital sex. John Lennon's oft-quoted comment about being born in Liverpool but having grown up on the Reeperbahn constitutes a useful summary of the English musicians' experiences. Lennon's adventures provide Sneeringer with some of her best anecdotes, such as her stories of Lennon performing with a toilet seat around his neck or calling one of the St. Pauli club owners a Nazi (p. 81).

Predictably, Hamburg municipal authorities worried about controlling the clubs, the musicians, the young fans, and the climate of licentiousness and exploration they promoted, while also wanting to benefit or profit from them. The authorities hoped to attract "big-spending adults" as tourists rather than adolescents, seen alternately as vulnerable and as troublemakers (p. 122). In particular after youth riots in 1956-58, "youth appeared here both as threat—to order, propriety, morality—and threatened—by negligent adults and greedy producers of low entertainment who preyed on their lack of impulse control" (p. 126). The creation of *Jugendschutztrupps* (youth protection squads) to search parks, clubs, art students' costume balls, public jazz concerts, and snack bars corresponded to this set of fears. Boys

were regarded as criminals, girls as hypersexualized proto-prostitutes, and foreigners as dangerous. Parents were absent or blind. Hamburg authorities waged a long battle against the Star Club and its owner, Manfred Weissleder. Weissleder won in court, but exhaustion from the fight contributed to the club's closure on New Year's Eve 1969.

Sneeringer's marvelous chapter about Beat's audiences focuses on the necessary accompaniments to rock 'n' roll—that is, sex and drugs—but offers a skillful tour of related concerns such as gender, emotion, consumerism, and relations to authority. Fandom was translated through consumerism—purchasing American Levi's or bullet bras for weekend wear, going to great lengths to acquire records—but also through rebellion against convention and tolerance of the unusual. Gay men, African Americans, and Germans of different class and social status rubbed elbows at the St. Pauli clubs. Fandom demanded connoisseurship of the music, and knowledge of English. It could also be viewed as suspiciously feminized or sexualized behavior. For girls, occasionally fandom led to transgressive promiscuity, but more frequently female fans wanted to be like the musicians—"independent, witty, guilelessly sexy"—than to be with them (p. 111).

The Hamburg "scene" collapsed in 1969 with the closing of the infamous Star Club and the scene's transfer to Berlin. Beat's demise stemmed from the musical and cultural changes of the late 1960s. Beat music and culture had gone mainstream and was available at record stores, on the radio, and on television, especially via the program ***Beat-Club*** starting in 1965. St. Pauli's music no longer epitomized subversion; instead, it had become a "national cultural asset" (p. 148). The teens who had crowded the early Beatles concerts were growing up now; their successors were into psychedelic rock, poetry-jazz evenings, and folk; they danced at discos, not clubs. Even the Beatles no longer relied on the sounds of early Beat when they returned briefly to Germany in 1966. St. Pauli's music scene shifted toward the "experimental German-language sound that came to be known as Krautrock," limiting its transnational impact (p. 163). Meanwhile, the rise of organized prostitution and porn shops along the Reeperbahn in the late '60s, an increased drug trade focused on cannabinoids and LSD, and the ***Gammler***, a German hybrid of traveling beatniks and hippies, made St. Pauli increasingly unpleasant for residents and visitors alike.

One of the book's many strengths is Sneeringer's authorial strategy of weaving themes throughout chapters, so that the reader rediscovers them in different forms across place and time. Gender and sexuality, for example, are a constant undercurrent of her discussion. Female fans, musicians (the brief story of the Liverbirds is wonderful, pp. 82-4), waitstaff, and secretaries speak, while pundits and authority figures speak about and to them. Female knees, experts feared, were not suited for doing the Twist. Male musicians' parents "saw [Hamburg] as a place to 'make men' of their boys" (p. 73); girl players had different experiences, thanks to the "lingering power of traditional frameworks of marriage and monogamy" not to mention lack of access to contraception (p. 90). The photographer Astrid Kirchherr, who became close to the Beatles through her relationship to Stuart Sutcliffe, epitomized the significance of women in the Beat world as well as its refusal to integrate them as equals: "she dressed her new lover in her clothes and styled his hair like hers," which later became the Beatles' androgynous early look. Her photos of the Beatles on Hamburg's Heiligengeistfeld from the late 1960s helped build her, and their, global reputation. Kirchherr "was the musicians' creative equal, but her relationship with Sutcliffe also defined her role" (p. 109).

Sneeringer notes that focusing on the history of Beat grants her freedom from standard political narratives of West Germany and twentieth-century Europe. There is no mention in her

sources of the Berlin Wall. Nazism and its legacy exist in this text mainly as absence; the history of popular entertainment remained relatively consistent beyond both 1933 and 1945, until the far more significant changes of 1960 dislodged previous conservative preferences and media. I would add that it also allows her to think regionally and in terms of urban history, emphasizing Hamburg's cultural closeness to Liverpool and Berlin rather than its relationship to Bonn.

Sneeringer's presentation of consumerism and popular culture acknowledges their tendency toward colonialism, "a calculating culture industry manipulating an undiscriminating audience," but reminds the reader of the importance of creativity and authenticity. Beat-era consumerism, she writes, was not "conformism with cooler clothes" but rather a consumerism dependent on and coordinating with the tastes of those to whom it sold (p. 171). While Beat clubs and music were always commercial, they were also genuine. Sneeringer encourages us to think in nuanced and place-based ways about cultural production: "pop culture is not by definition repressive or emancipatory … to understand what culture does at specific moments we must consider ***where*** it does it" (p. 172).

My lone complaint is that the book could have used a bit more editing. Sneeringer's prose ranges from engaging to somewhat overstuffed. She is never less than interesting, but when her paragraphs are too full, she tends to bury the lede—important insights are tucked into the middle of overlong paragraphs.

Early Rock 'n' Roll will be a valuable addition to undergraduate classrooms, not to mention a staple for experts in the field. It offers a model for contextualizing the history of music in that of the world which shaped it. This text makes important contributions to many literatures—among others, to work on popular culture, music, gender, urban history, and transnationalism, ***inter alia***. Both the engaging writing and the careful choice of subjects make the text accessible to a wide variety of readers. Sneeringer balances careful historiographical analysis with anecdotes about black leather and beer. And she ends the book with a figurative invitation to readers to imagine themselves taking selfies with the life-sized Beatles statues finally installed by Hamburg city leaders at the intersection of Grosse Freiheit and the Reeperbahn: "Beatles-Platz."

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