

Music, Radio and the Public Sphere: The Aesthetics of Democracy

Charles Fairchild

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Radio remains one of the most popular mediums through which people experience music. Yet there have only been a few studies examining the dynamic effects of radio on music. In this innovative study of community radio, Charles Fairchild uses a novel combination of critical analysis, interdisciplinary theory and ethnographic writing to compare commercial and community radio institutions and practices. By situating community radio in the dominant context of consumerism, Fairchild shows how people can create democratic discourses by speaking through other people's music. He argues that the social relations produced by playing music on the radio, and the inherent ambiguity of music itself, hold the potential for cultural democracy. The book shows how community radio's aesthetic practices accord with the ideals of an open and equitable public sphere, contributing to civil society and a potentially democratic aesthetics in which the 'old medium' of radio holds profound lessons for 'new media'.



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