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in mind. By ‘markets’, we are concerned with both the size and construction of the country music market (or industry) and also how it is marketed” (iv). ‘Margins’ refers not only to the economic viability of the industry and its position in relation to other contemporary genres, but also “those Australian country musics that operate at the periphery of both the country industry and the broader industry, or Australian society more generally” (iv).

In their rather provocatively titled ‘Wrangling the Figures: Marketing an Industry at the Margins’, Evans and Denis Crowdy further set the tone for the chapters that follow in their examination of country music sales. Here Evans and Crowdy produce an informative account of the marketing difficulties faced by the country music industry in a culture dominated by pop and rock music sales. However, underlying their discussion is the assumption that marginality is an essentially negative aspect of the industry. For example, Sony’s indifference to country music is cited as a symptom of economic marginality (4). Though sales are obviously very important to any music industry, Sony’s current artist list suggests that their interest in Australian music is limited to pop and that Sony Australia’s *raison d’être* is to sell mainstream American music. Sony’s input into debates about Australian country music marketing strategies therefore seems incongruous when we consider the commercial successes of the industry over 60 continuous, mostly profitable, years of country music releases (Brent Hampstead of Sony Australia was the keynote speaker at the 2004 Australian Country Music Conference).

While it is important to include industry experts in academic forums, the inclusion, in Gramscian terms, of “organic intellectuals” (Gramsci, 1971) from within the industry is imperative to understanding country music’s marginal position in contemporary music and culture. Where an outsider might view marginality as a disadvantage, those within the industry may take an entirely different view. On the surface at least, it appears that the country music industry resists becoming mainstream in several important areas of its operation, particularly in the systems of production and distribution outlined by Evans and Crowdy. Even so, *Markets & Margins* is undoubtedly a significant resource that addresses itself to a readership of academics and fans alike and that’s quite an accomplishment!

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**Brackett, D (ed) (2005) *The Pop, Rock and Soul Reader: Histories and Debates*, New York: Oxford University Press**

In the introduction to this reader David Brackett offers the following explanation (and perhaps, disclaimer):

*Works of journalism and criticism convey reactions to important musical developments at the moment they began to receive public*

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*attention ... Journalistic criticism is particularly useful in communicating a sense of unfolding events ... (xv)*

Capturing snapshots of major popular music events at various stages of their evolution is the primary task of Brackett's collection, and the sheer volume of material (120 articles ranging from 1926 to 2003) makes this collection an impressive piece of archival archeology if nothing else. Unlike existing collections of popular music key readings, such as the seminal *On Record* (1990), *Key Terms In Popular Music* (1999) and more recently *The Popular Music Reader* (2006), here the scholarly popular music academy takes a relative back seat, featuring most in Brackett's extremely detailed editorial notes before each section. This is not to say that these readings are of little consequence to tertiary popular music studies however, with the inclusion of work from key publications (*The Village Voice*, *New York Times*, *Billboard*, *Time*), and influential journalists and commentators (Cameron Crowe, Lester Bangs, Irvine Welsh) serving as great primary sources to support opinions that have since been well understood in the popular music canon.

A great joy in a collection like this is finding the clangers as well as insightful, almost crystal ball-like predictions of greatness. For example, the 1963 article from *The Times* in which journalist William Mann tackles Beatlemania and, more importantly, the sound of the Beatles, is particularly telling (172-173). Although Mann is unsure the fab four will actually go anywhere (he questions "if their next record will wear as well as the others"), this piece importantly shows a view of the band at the time that is often forgotten. Mann explains his increasing impatience with an industry built on a songwriter first, performer second model that had become increasingly predictable and formulaic at the time, and argues that the Beatles' strength was in their self-sufficiency, and, somewhat curiously, their use of Aeolian cadences in their harmonies. Although it reads as perhaps quaint to a contemporary audience, this perspective helps to strip away the canonical stereotype attached to the band.

Cameron Crowe's 1976 interview with David Bowie, originally published in *Playboy*, is another example of a piece that when considered in wider historical and social contexts becomes quite remarkable (277-282). Beginning with Crowe asking Bowie: "How much of your bisexuality is fact and how much is gimmick?" (277), the interview demonstrates Bowie as one of the first self-styled popular music media players. Scandal, or as Bowie puts it, a willingness to "do absolutely anything to bring me through" (278) is orchestrated first hand rather than through (or importantly, by) a publicist, manager or small army of both. With Bowie declaring himself to be his "own medium" (ibid), the article shows a change in both access to artists and perceived audience acceptance of the media's role in promotion. When Bowie is asked if he has trouble "deciding who is the real you?" (279), his response suggests that he clearly knows what is expected of him and what is likely to be disregarded by the machine. Following a quip about Elton John, intellectualism in music and pretentiousness, Bowie continues, "That was a thoroughly pretentious statement. True or not. I bet you'll print that ...

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[Preentiousness] is the only thing that shocks anymore” (ibid.). It’s good to see Mr Bowie has been listened to by so many in the industry since.

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**Smith, G (2005) *Singing Australian: A History of Folk and Country Music*, North Melbourne: Pluto Press**

*Things do change and they change again; and just because at this moment we have no great body of fine folksong that is bound close to our social life and the times we live in and the way we go about our work, that is not to say there never will be any more.* (Lloyd, 1944: 68)

The quote from the conclusion of Bert Lloyd’s wartime pamphlet *The Singing Englishman* pointed to the possibility of the yet-unborn folk song revival in Britain. Lloyd based his prediction on what he saw as the musical needs of a population attempting to build a fairer society. Smith, in his similarly titled book, describes how the folk revivalists in particular came to regard themselves as a creative entity in the political and musical history of Australia. Where Lloyd was reasoning that folk song might not die out, and why a revival might be on the cards, Smith analyses the history of the folk revival in Australia and its connections with contemporary political history, particularly its connections with radical activism:

*Ideas such as the folk community and the folk process are not just about cultural production in simpler, bygone communities, but are ideals through which contemporary activists and participants understand their own cultural activity and develop their commitment to maintaining the possibility of ‘authentic’ and unmediated cultural creativity in modern urban societies.* (13)

Smith argues that country music and world music producers make many similar claims to be Australia’s true guardians of national song; the voice of the people:

*The musics discussed in this book all self-consciously distance themselves from the mass popular music industry, with its reliance on recorded sound and its shallow consumerism. They all invoke the term ‘community’ to describe themselves. The folk and country talk of themselves as ‘the folk community’ and ‘the country community’. Multicultural music activists see themselves as working with or on behalf of various ethnic communities.* (195)

Throughout the book Smith unravels the connections between folk and country as genres, as well as the way they have been differentiated. He also points to a coming together of not just those strands but the more recent offshoots of world music: