

Indonesian events, she speaks to analyses of media and politics in other regions. And more, besides. Her account of 2014 presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto employing Rob Allyn, a former advisor to George W. Bush, to run a smear campaign against Jokowi and threatening to bring his masses on to the streets if he lost was disconcertingly prescient; I read it only days after the storming of the Capitol in Washington DC on 6 January 2021, an event arguably incited by President Trump and his refusal to concede he had lost the election to Joe Biden, and characterized by the same kind of crowd-selfies as Jokowi's campaign rallies. At the time of writing this review, uncannily, these elements of Indonesia's emergent and fallible democratic infancy are to some extent being replicated in the United States, and I would certainly encourage Strassler to apply her analytical insights and narrative skills to the United States' freshly fragile democratic processes. I would also encourage any student or scholar of Indonesia or of images—anthropologist or otherwise—to read her work.

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*Sonic City: Making Rock Music and Urban Life in Singapore.* By Steve Ferzacca. NUS Press, 2021. 166 pages.

Steve Ferzacca's *Sonic City* is an intimate portrayal of Singapore's blues scene from 2011 to 2016. The book focuses on Lim Kiang and James Tan, founders of the legendary 1960s band the Straydogs. Ferzacca met Kiang in a guitar shop shortly after arriving in Singapore for a year spent as a research fellow at the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore. The two started a band, Blues77, for which they recruited Tan on drums and some "young gun" Singaporean guitarists (p. 3). Ferzacca deftly explores the network of spaces within the scene and its "cosmopolitan

conviviality” (p. 49): there are jam sessions at The Doghouse; shows at Hood (a venue that relocated in 2013 to a more commercialized space, dubbed New Hood); and after-work parties in the basement of the mall outside the guitar shops. Ferzacca does not shy away from discussing the ribald humour that comes with bonding in this largely male scene, which his interlocutors describe as “talking cock” (p. 46). Reading this during the COVID-19 pandemic—and as a rock drummer myself—I found *Sonic City* spelling out in vivid detail just what the pandemic took away from rock musicians: sweaty shows in tiny dive bars, jamming and happy hour drinking sessions in enclosed spaces, and late-night adventures on tour in an assortment of countries.

A recurring theme of *Sonic City* is that rock music, once deemed a threat by the Singapore government, has since been rebranded as a core component of the country’s cultural heritage. An important event described in the book, for example, is a widely publicized show of 1960s Singapore rock legends, including the Straydogs, held at the Esplanade theatre in 2015. Along the way, Ferzacca covers much material that will be of interest to non-musician scholars of Singapore. For example, he considers how rock helped shape the growth of English as a link language in contemporary Singapore. He also explores class dynamics in the 1960s scene, since the Straydogs’ hometown of Katong was deemed “less classy” than Orchard Road, where a rival singer was based (pp. 61–63). Though the book is not overtly theoretical—a good thing for a text that aims at enthusiasm and nostalgia—Ferzacca provides a theory of “deep sound” that draws on Steven Feld’s notion of acoustemology (p. 14). Comparing Singapore’s blues scene with his prior experiences of sound in a Javanese kampung during fieldwork there in the 1990s, Ferzacca defines deep sound as “centered on the local function of making music as a cultural mode, a performativity used to judge, comment, appraise the dynamic conditions of social relations in the kampung” (p. 14).

The book’s introduction (dubbed an “Overture”) describes Ferzacca’s surprise at finding himself playing with Blues77 in Saigon,

Vietnam, given that city's association with the war he protested in his youth—known in America as the Vietnam War. The Overture describes the formation of Blues77, introduces Kiang and Tan, and provides the elaboration of “deep sound”. Chapter 1, “Crossroads”, uses the image of the crossroads—integral to blues tradition largely from its association with legendary African-American guitarist Robert Johnson—as a way to conceptualize Singapore's blues scene. Chapter 2, “Katong”, describes the importance of that neighbourhood for the Straydogs and how it has changed since the government extended its shoreline. Chapter 3, “Sonic Scales and Urban Life”, provides a “sonic geography of Singapore” (p. 66) that ranges from venues to jam sessions and beyond. Chapter 4, “Sonic Circuits”, follows Blues77 as they tour Vietnam and Malaysia. Chapter 5, “Heritage”, describes the transformation of the Straydogs into national heritage. The Coda, “Tiger, Horse, Dog”, provides another homage to Kiang and Tan, while putting the concept of deep sound into dialogue with Latour's notions of networks and assemblages.

Given what some might consider the fraught legacy of the appropriation by white rock musicians of a black music tradition (and Ferzacca's use of the crossroads metaphor), a discussion of race and the implications of the genre's shift to Southeast Asia is sorely missing from *Sonic City*. Also, while I appreciate Ferzacca's comparison of Singapore's 2010s blues scene to a 1990s Javanese kampung, I must admit I found myself searching for other ways to theorize ‘cosmopolitan conviviality’: one idea that sprung to mind is ‘the globally familiar’, a concept recently explored in a book about Delhi's hip-hop scene by the anthropologist Ethiraj Gabriel Dattatreyan (2020). But these qualms should not discourage anyone from reading *Sonic City*. Rather, such complaints should be enough to show that Ferzacca's book will generate stimulating seminar discussions, such as about generational similarities and differences in the circulation of global popular forms. *Sonic City* opens the door for a peek at a significant domain of social life in Singapore—rock music—that has much importance for the city-state but has been largely ignored by anthropologists.

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## REFERENCE

Dattatreyan, Ethiraj Gabriel. 2020. *The Globally Familiar: Digital Hip Hop, Masculinity, and Urban Space in Delhi*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

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*Mekong Dreaming: Life and Death along a Changing River*. By Andrew Alan Johnson. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2020. 195 pp.

*Mekong Dreaming*, by Andrew Johnson, is useful for demonstrating how people adjacent to the Mekong River in Northeast Thailand are engaging with the multitude of changes occurring from the construction of large dams upstream in China and Laos to the more localized impacts on fisheries caused by illegal fishing using electricity.

Structured into an introduction and five chapters, the book is not a particularly difficult read, although readers are expected to be familiar with key anthropological literature. The introduction presents the issue of how large dams are dramatically altering and damaging the Mekong River and the lives of the people who depend on the river. Johnson also introduces his ideas about dreams and potency, an important concept in the book. He ponders uncertainly, writing,

My focus here is on the productive potential of ‘maybe’. I see ‘maybe’ as a space of possibility. By announcing that a thing may exist, or by asserting that its essential qualities are uncertain, one allows for the possibility that the present order of things might be overthrown.... The uncertainty opened by ‘maybe’ allows for new things to enter into the world. (p. 14)

Johnson then turns to “weird phenomenology”, writing: “The book is inspired by this notion of the weird, and it is for this reason that