

Print Run

New music books and publications

Home Is Where The Heart Strives

Philipp Rhensius/Ali Gul Pir/Hannes Liechti/Theresa Beyer (Editors)

Norient Pbk 314 pp

In the introduction to this book, editor Philipp Rhensius paraphrases Hannah Arendt, who writes in *The Human Condition* that “places are political stages; they enable freedom and agency by bringing people together to actively shape the world”. This framing introduces the central concern of *Home Is Where The Heart Strives*: the entanglement of place, home and truth. Identities are often mapped onto real locations, but what ultimately matters is how those locations shape inner experience.

Home brings together 85 artists and authors from 38 countries tracing what might be described as the phantom heartbeat of belonging. Structured as a series of vignettes, the essays navigate fractured temporalities and unsettled geographies, challenging the reductive and static narratives of place that continue to dominate the public imagination. Throughout, the contributors complicate ideas of home and belonging, positioning sound as a living carrier of memory, displacement and anticipation. These reflections resonate with Europe’s ongoing, self-moulded cultural anxieties and the political backlash that emerges in their wake.

The opening pieces map the untidy realities of migration. Abhishek Vidyarthi Singh’s poetic chronophotograph on the banks of New Delhi’s Yamuna river displays a dense cluster of migratory birds reflected in the water. Faravaz Farvardin’s “A Song Unbound: From Tehran To Berlin” portrays Favardin as a bird with its beak sewn shut. Her voice, stifled at home, struggles to sing in exile.

The focus shifts toward digital and speculative spaces: Vinzent Maria Preuß’s “Close Encounters In The Third Space” (the concept of third space is attributed to Indian theorist Homi K Bhabha and his 1994 work *The Location Of Culture*) articulates how digital communities facilitate a search for meaning. Andra Ivănescu further speculates on the clichéd sonic environments created in video games, raising questions about how imagined sounds affect real world expectations.

These constructed landscapes give way to harsher realities, engaging directly with sonic trauma. Devangana Kalita and Natasha Narwal, two activists imprisoned in India in the course of a peaceful protest, document the cacophony of prison keys and the bird calls echoing through barred windows – temporal anchors in the unbearable monotony of incarceration. Writing on the Azores in “It’s A Bird, It’s A Plane”, Lendl Barcelos contrasts “friendly” US warplane sounds with local birdsong, evoking belliphonic histories. Barcelos’s text echoes

the BBC’s Second World War field recording of cellist Beatrice Harrison accompanied by nightingales and passing bombers, which proposed pastoral living as reliant on Western violence elsewhere.

Finally these considerations are relocated to domestic and metropolitan spaces. Majd Shidiac’s contribution from Beirut explores the sonic landscape defined by infrastructural collapse: power generators, water pumps and drones persistently humming. Birdsongs are nearly drowned by human-made noise, underscoring sonic ecology as an index of geopolitical intervention and economic siege. Ytasha Womack’s insightful essay “Vibrations Off The Lake” is one of the book’s highlights, thoughtfully positioning Chicago as a seismic catalyst for Black American music from Sun Ra to house as part of one “vibrant plane of wisdom” that “draws the abstractions of heaven to Earth”.

Like birds, people carry acoustic knowledge across borders. In Aristophanes’s *The Birds*, a chorus of winged creatures satirises Athenian democracy. Truth emerges through polyvocality, even Hannah Arendt got that. Yet Europe’s inward-looking policies threaten its own progress. Against the myth of cultural homogeneity and universalism, sonic knowledge – relational rather than essentialist, as Édouard Glissant argues – moves through migration. What we hear becomes a form of remembrance, and ultimately, a way of knowing.

Xenia Benivolski

*Independent As F***: Underground Hip-Hop From 1995–2005*

Ben Pedroche

Velocity Press Pbk 318 pp

London based writer Ben Pedroche builds a focused examination of the indie rap scene in the US from 1995–2005 – a decade where an awful lot shifted within the industry. Becoming disillusioned with the major label dreams they had been sold previously, more and more artists decided to strike out on their own, either as DIY rap merchants, or with the help of independent labels.

Pedroche is a thorough researcher, as acknowledged by Public Enemy legend Chuck D’s quote on the front cover referring to “an archivist of the highest regard”. His comprehensive detailing of the explosion of indies within those ten years shines a light on not only the artists themselves, but also the albums, labels and even record shops that played their part in moulding the scene into what it is today.

The book gives credit to a wide array of players and projects, including many that might well have gone under the radar of anyone not as fully immersed in the genre as Pedroche himself. So as well as nods to the likes of El-P, Kool Keith and MF DOOM, there are also mentions of artists like Siah and

Yeshua DapoED, INI and the pseudonym king, Sir Menelik. And labels like Big Dada, Fortress Entertainment and Lewis Recordings are honoured alongside more notorious outfits like Definitive Jux, Rhymesayers and Stones Throw.

If New York and Los Angeles were the most infamous spawning grounds for the music being made back then, the book reminds us, areas such as Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts also made significant contributions to the cause.

Among *Independent As F****’s highlights are backstories and behind the scenes dramas that Pedroche brings into his analysis, sometimes revealing new information that creates a different perspective on established events. For example, the near-death experience of Oakland rapper Saafir, when he escaped the flaming wreckage of an airplane in 1992, or the blow-by-blow account of Rawkus Records’s tainted history that reveals fresh insight into an already well documented story.

The book brackets the decade in question with an overview of the eras either side of it, paying homage to the artists who laid the foundation for the surge of self-determination that followed, as well as those who are still flying the flag today. Of course it’s open to subjective criticism for omitted names and misinformed anecdotes, but as we read in the closing pages, it was all fact-checked under the fastidious eye of Boston journalist, writer and historian Dart Adams. In all, Pedroche has done a first class job of chronicling ten years of underground rap.

Tim Fish

The Lost Folk: From The Forgotten Past To The Emerging Future Of Folk

Lally MacBeth

Faber Hbk 352 pp

Lally MacBeth’s *The Lost Folk* is a travelogue through time as well as space, roaming through hugely varied aspects of folk culture. The author, an artist and writer who has been running The Folk Archive for several years, has a skittish enthusiasm which makes her a perfect custodian of what she sees as folk culture. This is an expansive term, for chapters of *The Lost Folk* are themed around people, collections, objects, customs and worlds.

Folk, to MacBeth, is the unappreciated parts of vernacular culture which are often in danger of getting lost. Sometimes these are outsider art, or handmade, and sometimes they are mainstream, but they are always driven by the people. Talking about everything from Mummers’ plays to pub signs, MacBeth is a personable, chatty narrator with an infectious enthusiasm and an ear for a perfect anecdote. This is folk as everything, as a way of being, not just music, performance and customs.

The Lost Folk has a sense of fun and discovery, but MacBeth’s endeavour is a serious one. She knows that keeping folk culture means keeping it alive, and embracing