

The Holy Profane: Religion in Black Popular Music

By Teresa L. Reed

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Winner of the 2004 ARSC Award for Best Research in Recorded Rock, Rhythm & Blues or Soul, *The Holy Profane* explores the strong presence of religion in the secular music of twentieth-century African American artists as diverse as Rosetta Tharpe, Sam Cooke, Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Earth, Wind & Fire, and Tupac Shakur. Analyzing lyrics and the historical contexts which shaped those lyrics, Teresa L. Reed examines the link between West-African musical and religious culture and the way African Americans convey religious sentiment in styles such as the blues, rhythm and blues, soul, funk, and gangsta rap. She looks at Pentecostalism and black secular music, minstrelsy and its portrayal of black religion, the black church, "crossing over" from gospel to R&B, images of the black preacher, and the salience of God in the rap of Tupac Shakur.

Traditionally, west European culture has drawn distinct divisions between the secular and the sacred in music. Liturgical music belongs in church, not on pop radio, and artists who fuse the two are guilty of sacrilege. In the West-African worldview, however, both music and the divine permeate every imaginable part of life?so much so that concepts like sacred and secular were entirely foreign to African slaves arriving in the colonies. The Western influence on African Americans eventually resulted in more polarization between these two musical forms, and black musicians who grew up singing in church were often lamented as hellbound once they found popular success. Even these artists, however, never completely left behind their West-African musical ancestry. Reed's exploration of this trend in African American music connects the work of today's artists to their West-African ancestry?a tradition that over two-hundred years of Western influence could not completely stamp out.

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Editorial Review

Review
"Winner of the 2004 Best Research in Recorded Rock, B&B, or Soul Award."?

"Explores the strong and sometimes contradictory presence of religion in the secular music of 20th century African American artists such as Sam Cooke, Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Roberta Flack, and Tupac Shakur."?*Tulsa World*

"A scholarly yet accessible examination of just how often the sacred and the secular have been interwoven in the popular music of African Americans and how their coexistence has reflected an ever-evolving Black religious consciousness."?*Arkansas Review*

"Her treatment is, of necessity, multidisciplinary, providing data and challenging ideas that will attract the attention of individuals well past the fans of pop culture."?*Choice*

"Should interest all who are curious about the development of the sounds of yesterday and today."?*Marietta (OH) Times*

"Reed examines the link between West African musical and religious culture and the way African Americans convey religious sentiments in secular styles such as blues, soul, funk, and gangsta rap."?*McCormick (SC) Messenger*

"Well told and full of strong anecdotes, Reed's book is a fine example of how the study of popular culture can be informed by the study of religion."?*Publisher's Weekly*

"Students and scholars of African American history, religion, and musicology will no doubt appreciate this timely contribution."?*Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*

"A cultural study that aims to convey the religious consciousness of the African American community through its secular music, examining the expanse of secular genres from blues to gangsta rap. . . . Reed's work is part of a new generation of scholarship making a timely contribution in this area of research."?*American Music*

"Extremely timely . . . this refreshing work is full of intimate insight, critical analysis, and rich research. Teasing the boundaries of the sacred and the secular, The Holy Profane is highly recommended reading for those interested in Black popular music and culture and mandatory for anyone interested in uncovering the hidden essence of American popular music."?*Emmett G. Price III, Northeastern University*

"Filled with insightful deductions and brilliant interpretations of developments and events related to the music of black Pentecostalism, the blues, the word-song of black preachers, and other musical genres, including the God- and Jesus-sprinkled Gangsta-rap of Tupac Shakur. Reed's unique, remarkably well-informed, accurate, well-written book?especially her potent and eloquent interpretive epilogue?will be grist for future interpretive work on contemporary popular and religious music."?*Samuel A. Floyd Jr., founder and Director Emeritus of the Center for Black Music*

About the Author

Teresa L. Reed is associate professor of music and director of the African American Studies Program at Tulsa University.

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Lauren Miner:

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information. The author giving his/her effort to put every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing The Holy Profane: Religion in Black Popular Music yet doesn't forget the main point, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource data that maybe you can be considered one of it. This great information can drawn you into completely new stage of crucial pondering.

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