

BOOK REVIEW
Andrew F. Jones,
*Circuit Listening:
Chinese Popular Music in the Global 1960s*
(Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2020)

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Andrew Jones' 2020 monograph, *Circuit Listening: Chinese Popular Music in the Global 1960s*, is a groundbreaking study of the musical and media history of 1960s Hong Kong, PRC, and Taiwan.¹ Starting with the question: how can we speak of such sonically distinct music as quotation songs, Taiwanese-language (*taiyu*) pop and the Beatles as belonging to the same historical moment? the book reinserts Chinese popular music into the musical history of the 1960s, and by doing so, proposes a new way to conceptualize the globality of the 1960s and its local mediations. Stories about 1960s popular music, Jones reminds us, often revolve around urban metropolises such as Paris, London and San Francisco; while there have been efforts to complicate these stories by exploring how musical styles and political events in the Third World influence the sound of the metropolises, due to their focus on the Anglo-American and the urban, they are unable to account for the global surge of musical styles in this period, which entailed "the nearly simultaneous efflorescence and proliferation of folk revivals across a stunningly diverse range of locales, irrespective of all the usual East-West and North-South divides" (136), and the "nearly ubiquitous emergence of newly electrified musical genres that transported folk idioms into urban circuits by electrifying and resculpting their sonic profiles in the recording studio" (136). These musical simultaneities, Jones argues, cannot simply be explained by the wide reach of Anglo-American media networks, but rather are indicative of more profound structural changes in the global media landscape.

And the book locates one of these structural changes in transistorization. Invented in 1947 by American scientists at Bells Lab and mass produced in the

1960s, the transistor, according to Jones, is what "distinguishes the 1960s from all earlier musical and medial epochs" (5). Replacing bulky thermionic vacuum tubes in electronic circuits as a signal switch, this miniature-sized, inexpensive, durable and energy efficient device revolutionized the world of electronics and gave rise to a whole range of new industries from consumer electronics to communications satellites, yielding the "complex integrated circuits and microelectronics that have irrevocably transformed every aspect of our world and media environment" (5). More specific to the world of popular music, a range of portable devices such as transistor radio, television and portable record player became available worldwide, contributing to a boom in popular music and youth culture from the late 1950s; mass-mediated musical networks started to reach places previously unreachable, from rural hinterlands to the space to millions of private households. In short, transistorization "made new ways of producing, disseminating, and listening to music" (6) possible. Following Michael Denning's *Noise Uprising*, which argues that the electrical recording technology afforded the worldwide music revolutions during the interwar years,² Jones proposes that we think of transistor electronics as the fundamental media technology that changed and shaped the sound and space of the world of popular music from the 1960s on, and the central goal of the book is to study how this change unfolded through the examples of Chinese-language popular music from Hong Kong, PRC, and Taiwan.

However, transistorization did much more than just opening up new musical possibilities, and the "revolution in miniature" resulted in not only the emergence and expansion but also the extinction of

different musical “circuits.” The concept of “circuit” comes directly from electronic circuitry and serves as the book’s core metaphor to examine popular music’s circulation in the transistorized age. Just like electronic circuits, which “employ both capacitors (to pool potential energy) and resistors (to reduce the flow of current, divide a voltage, and reroute or terminate the transmission of signal)” (8), musical circuits – networks of people and sounds embedded in specific media ecologies – Jones argues, also enable and delimit circulation at the same time. Transistorization “did not and could not effect an Aquarian age of open borders” (7), and this is where we encounter “another kind of circuit – the particular linguistic, ideological, and economic pathways, cut by the historical time, along which particular genres of music could (or could not) travel” (7). Furthermore, Jones argues that it is problematic to focus solely on the newly emerged transnational musical circuits in the 1960s, and ignore the fact that they exist in tandem and often in competition with existing local musical circuits. Every locale and historical moment, in Jones’ conceptualization, is “a palimpsest of overlapping but not always contiguous or contemporaneous circuits” (37), and another important goal of the book is to study the difficult relationship between the local and the global.

The book has six chapters, each dealing with one type of “circuit,” and together they tell a story of the Cold War trajectory of Chinese popular music. Chapters one and two, on Hong Kong musicals and quotation songs in PRC, set up the Chinese 1960s to a double beginning. Chapters three to five are on Taiwan, studying respectively the *taiyu* musical cinema, the pirate music industry and Taiwanese folk. The common theme of these chapters is the modes of cultural production particular to Taiwan, a frontier of the Cold War. The last chapter is on Teresa Teng’s dissemination in the PRC in the late 1970s and 1980s, which brings together the three separate threads in the previous chapters, serving as the finale of the story.

Chapter One studies Hong Kong Mandarin musicals together with *taiyu* musicals in the early 1960s, and tells the story of the rise of a new transnational Mandarin popular music circuit and the downfall of *taiyu* pop. Following the star trajectory of Hong

Kong’s pop diva and movie actress Grace Chang (葛兰) from prerevolutionary Shanghai to Los Angeles, and close listening to the musical and narrative spectacles of mobility showcased in two musicals Chang starred in, *Because of Her* 教我如何不想她 (1963) and *Air Hostess* 空中小姐 (1959), the chapter argues that, instead of the product of one single place, Grace Chang and her music are better understood as embedded in “a complex and multiply mediated circuit” (35) that stretches from colonial Shanghai to Hong Kong, Southeast Asia and Taiwan all the way to Hollywood, New York City and Caribbean islands. This transnational circuit is powered by the far-reaching media networks of corporate giants such as EMI and the Cathay Organization, and its success is facilitated further by Grace Chang’s use of Mandarin Chinese, which “allows her music to fly free of Hong Kong and of the patchwork of mutually unintelligible languages and dialects that divides Chinese diasporic space” (41). Compared with, and partly due to, the rise of this highly capitalized, globe-hopping circuit, the poorly funded, locally-distributed Taiwanese-language entertainment circuit became increasingly marginalized and finally fell into oblivion in the early 1970s. By close reading the only remaining feature film of *taiyu* star Hong Yifeng 洪一峰, *Lingering Lost Love* 旧情绵绵, Jones shows how, in contrast to the sky-roaming aesthetics of Grace Chang’s films that express desires for mobility and modernity, Hong’s film shows how “modernity leaves a disenfranchised working class behind” (50). The juxtaposition of the two attests to the point that “all circuits are not created equal, nor do they have access to the same power sources” (125), and together they tell two very different versions of the Chinese 1960s.

Chapter Two examines yet another version of the Chinese 1960s through a study of quotation songs and the socialist media infrastructure in which it is embedded. The core question of this chapter is how we can speak of quotation songs – short, repetitive and catchy melodies that set Mao’s quotations to music, promoted nationally during the Cultural Revolution – as belonging to the same historical moment as pop music from other parts of the world. Despite their very different sounds, the book argues that quotation songs, just like their Western counterparts, are also part and parcel of a

transistorized media landscape. Introduced into the PRC in the late 1950s, transistors, Jones argues, played a crucial role in expanding the reach of socialist media network. The CCP had been intent on building a radio broadcast network ever since the founding of the People's Republic; from 1949 -1955, an extensive system of local relay stations was built across the country, and beginning from 1955, the CCP decided to further expand the reach of mass media by building a wired broadcasting network in rural areas that could rediffuse signals from relay stations to in-line loudspeakers. Although the wired broadcasting system had various advantages such as low cost and limited customizability, because the majority of Chinese villages lacked electrical power, local engineers faced severe challenges in powering the loudspeakers and had to come up with creative solutions such as using donkeys "yoked to a rudimentary pulley and crankshaft generator" (65) to generate electricity. The introduction of transistors was helpful against this backdrop, because transistor devices could run for an extensive amount of time from batteries and are therefore convenient for rural users who lacked access to electrical mains. By the time of the Cultural Revolution, "battery-powered portable transistor radios, microphones, portable public announcement systems, and self-powered loudspeakers not only were widely available but also had reached remote rural areas" (68), and it is within this media landscape that quotation songs made its appearance and achieved a remarkably wide circulation.

This particular media landscape also had its bearings on how quotation songs sound. The aesthetics of the Cultural Revolution music is famously characterized as "high, fast, hard, and loud" 高快硬响 by musicologist Liang Maochun, and Jones argues that this aesthetics is formed partly in order to facilitate unison singing and to "wring the maximum aural impact from limited technical means" (72). The horn reflex loudspeakers, or high-frequency loudspeakers 高音喇叭 in Chinese, that dominated the outdoor spaces during Cultural Revolution are able to produce loud sound that travels far on relatively low energy, but unable to reproduce low-frequency band in sound with fidelity. These technological features, Jones argues, contributed to "the lack of stereo separation and internal space between instruments or

individual voices" (73) in how quotation songs were engineered in recordings.

Chapter Three, "Fugitive Sounds of the Taiwanese Musical Cinema," focuses on the music and films of *taiyu* stars Kang Ding 康丁 and Wen Shia 文夏, especially the 1969 film *Goodbye, Taipei* 再见台北, one of the most important *taiyu* films from the period in which the two collaborated. The chapter traces the "prewar trans-Pacific popular musical circuit, routed through Japan" (87) in which *taiyu* pop ephemera were embedded, and reevaluates their oft-criticized "mixed-bloodedness" – creative tactics such as setting Japanese songs to Taiwanese lyrics, modeling artistic persona after Japanese stars, or using covers of Japanese and American popular songs on soundtracks. In contrast to readings that deplore their derivativeness, Jones sees them as the manifestation of a mode of local cultural production that consciously embraces its own marginality: "any articulation of the local was of necessity global: to be Taiwanese meant to cover" (82).

Chapter Four, "Pirates of the China Seas: Vinyl Records and the Military Circuit," focuses on Taiwan's pirate music 翻版音乐 industry, its relationship with the U.S. military bases, and the role it played in helping a local youth culture to germinate. Taiwan's piracy business, Jones argues, was "the dominant model for record production in Taiwan from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s" (122); directly spurred by the presence of U.S. military bases on the island since 1955, it enabled an "efflorescence of youth culture centered around Anglophone 'hit music' in the late 1960s and 1970s" (117). This mode of transmission, in which the U.S. military bases serve as the "gating mechanism or switch through which the currents of Anglo-American music became widely audible in Taiwan" (117), Jones suggests, mirrors an electric circuit's terminal-emitter-collector composition, which is why the circuit could serve as an effective metaphor for "the geopolitical dispositions of Taiwanese and East Asian popular music in the postwar period" (116). The legacy of Taiwan's piracy industry, according to Jones, is profound and complex: on the one hand, it helped shape local musical sensibilities through introducing world popular music idioms at an affordable price, and provided a prototype for a

later flourishing popular music industry in Taiwan; on the other hand, the pirate circuit not only piggybacked upon existing military infrastructure and trade routes but also “plugged directly into existing forms of social inequity” (124) by catering to an urban middle-class audience, excluding rural youths and people speaking Taiwanese and Hakka.

Chapter Five, “Folk Circuits: Discovering Chen Da”, revolves around the legendary “discovery” of the rural itinerant performer and *yueqin* (月琴 moon lute) player Chen Da 陈达 by ethnomusicologists Hsu Tsang-Houei 许常惠 and Shih Wei-liang 史惟亮 on their field trip during the Folk Song Collection Movement 民歌采集运动 in 1967. Through closely studying Hsu and Shih’s fieldwork process and close listening to Chen Da’s recordings that came out of this encounter, Jones shows how both Hsu’s preservationist project and the Chen Da that we know today are very much the product of the media environment of 1960s Taiwan. The media landscape of 1960s Taiwan defined Chen Da’s discovery and dissemination every step along the way: the portable magnetic tape recorder was essential for Hsu’s field work, and it was the pirate label Huimei Records 惠美唱片 that recorded and pressed Chen Da’s first LP. The transistorized media ecology also confined the extent to which Chen Da’s songs could cross over into urban mass media. The form of his songs, long ballads with digressive improvisations, did not translate well into the forms of LP, radio or television, and was barely intelligible to young listeners raised in the three-minute pop song form; the sound of his voice and *yueqin*, “firmly situated in a relatively narrow midrange band” (163), while transmitting well in the open air of the countryside, was not compatible with an acousmatic listening environment, in which “a wider dynamic range was a prerequisite for a fuller sound” (163). It was due to these reasons, Jones argues, that Chen Da became a symbolic icon of the Taiwan folk revival movement in the 1970s without substantially influencing the latter’s aesthetics.

Chapter six, “Teresa Teng and the Network Trace,” focuses on the dissemination of Teresa Teng’s music in a newly formed transistorized circuit in late 1970s PRC. Studying how a new acoustic infrastructure “produced new sounds, new ways of listening, and

new affective interiorities” (172), the chapter also proposes a way to think about timbre in terms of the media network it is embedded within. Timbre, Jones argues, is shaped by media infrastructure in many ways. In the sound-media-listener triangle that constitutes a sonic event, we often attribute timbre to the sound itself, and think of the role of the media and listener as merely transferring and capturing it. By contrast, Jones shows that media environment and listening practices also have bearings on timbre, leaving on it “something like a ‘network trace’” (174). For instance, what is described as the warm and intimate timbre of Teresa Teng’s voice, Jones argues, should be understood as the product of a larger transistorized, privatized media ecology: at the performance and recording stage, it was the product of multitrack recording studio, microphone and close-miking, as well as the singing technique of crooning that developed concomitantly with electric recording in the 1920s; at the production stage, Teng’s voice was located “within a spacious stereophonic sound stage” (191) and her records were engineered explicitly with the two-channel home stereo system and the domestic consumers in mind; on the reception end, the increased ownership rates of transistor radio and portable radio-cassette recorder in private households in PRC in the mid- to late 1970s was crucial to how Teng’s voice was perceived. By introducing “stereo sound and a wider frequency range, with far fuller bass sound than Chinese listeners had heretofore enjoyed” (193), these devices contributed to the warmth and intimacy often associated with Teresa Teng’s voice. While Chinese listeners “may have heard Teresa Teng’s voice as an emblem of a long-disavowed interior world of sensuality and privatized affect, that timbre was as much a trace of the advent of a new acoustic ecology forged by cassette tapes and portable electronics as it was of the resonating body of Teresa Teng herself” (194).

In summary, *Circuit listening* is an important contribution to Chinese popular music history and cultural studies, popular music studies, 1960s studies and media studies. Through a breadth of in-depth case studies, the book convincingly shows how transistorized technology changed the way popular music sounded and disseminated in the Chinese-speaking world in the 1960s, in ways that are often unpredictable and bound by local contingencies. If I

were asked to pick two most memorable takeaways from the book, it would be the framework of transistorization and the method of circuit listening. Transistorization opens up a way to think about popular music and media cultures from the 1960s from a technological perspective and on a global scale. The method of “circuit listening” practiced throughout the book, a way of retracing the media infrastructures and cultural networks a sound or subject is embedded within by close listening to the traces the former leave on the latter, is a productive approach to contextualizing artistic form, and is methodologically inspiring in fields outside of popular music studies as well. Grounded in the premise that every musical product is a node bringing together different media and social circuits, circuit listening challenges modes of listening that try to pin down and connect a sound to essential categories such as location, nation, race, ideology, and so on. It also offers new ways to think about musical concepts such as genre and timbre not in descriptive and essentialized terms, but as “effects of the circuits in which they moved” (12).

The two questions that I would like to hear Professor Jones’s thoughts on have to do with the two chapters on the PRC. The first one is about the method of studying quotation songs. It is my general impression that the foci of chapters on Taiwan and Hong Kong and the ones on PRC are a bit different. From the chapter on quotation songs, we mainly learn about the network in which the songs were disseminated, and not so much about their musical influences, writing and recording processes, or the different cultural agents involved in the making of these songs. In contrast to this focus on dissemination, we get a more multifaceted discussion on *taiyu* pop about its interactions with Japanese and Anglo-American pop music, the life trajectories of major *taiyu* stars, in addition to its distribution. This contrast gave me the impression that while popular music in Taiwan and Hong Kong are part of a larger, global musical circuit, popular music in 1960s PRC is almost an isolated artefact coming out of nowhere. In other words, the chapter on quotation songs does not seem to challenge the idea that socialist art is merely a tool for propaganda or that the socialist

media network is a closed circuit. I wonder if Professor Jones could talk a bit more about the musical circuits in which quotation songs are embedded, and how we can think about the question of musical circulation and exchange in the case of quotation songs.

My second question has to do with the problem of “musical privatization” in the chapter on Teresa Teng. The portable radio-cassette recorder, the chapter argues, played a different role in PRC’s musical infrastructure than in the developed world: in the United States, boom boxes brought popular music “out of the home and into urban streets and public spaces” (192), while in the PRC, Jones suggests, “they were largely, if not entirely, domestic appliances, serving less as instruments of musical mobility than as tools of musical privatization” (192). I wonder if this contrast could be further nuanced. Portable cassette recorders were not entirely domestic appliances in PRC; similar to the U.S., they were also an important part of urban street subcultures in the late 1970s and 1980s and served as an aural and visible index of youth identity.³ When used at home, they were also often listened to collectively: because not many households could afford recorders, neighbors would gather with families equipped with one and listen to music or radio together; in many testimonies of the first encounter with Teresa Teng quoted in this chapter, in fact, the protagonists are not listening alone in a room, but together with friends. What I want to suggest here is that while I agree that there was a sea change in listening culture with the introduction of consumer electronics, I wonder if “private” and “domestic” are the most accurate terms to capture this change, because it seems that the emergent listening cultures cannot be solely defined by the unit of individual or family.

¹ While there have been a few transregional studies on Chinese-language popular music after the 1990s such as Marc L. Moskowitz's *Cries of Joy, Songs of Sorrow: Chinese Pop Music and its Cultural Connotations* (U of Hawaii P, 2009), Yiu Fai Chow and Jeroen de Kloet's *Sonic Multiplicities: Hong Kong Pop and the Global Circulation of Sound and Image* (Intellect, 2013), Jones' book is the first book-length study that brings together popular music from 1960s Taiwan, PRC and Hong Kong under a global framework. For essays that take a transregional approach to 1960s Chinese language popular music, see Hon-Lun Yang, "Gendering '1968': womanhood in model works of the People's Republic of China and movie musicals of Hong Kong." in Beate Kutschke and Barley Norton ed., *Music and Protest in 1968* (Cambridge UP, 2013); Hyunjoon Shin and Tung-Hung Ho, "Translation of 'America' during the early Cold War period: a comparative study on the history of popular music in South Korea and Taiwan," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 10.1 (2009). For an edited volume published after Jones' book that studies East Asian popular music within the framework of the Cold War, see Michael K.

Bourdagh, Paola Iovene and Kaley Mason ed. *Sound Alignments: Popular Music in Asia's Cold Wars* (Duke UP, 2021). For studies of popular music from 1960s PRC, see Bonnie McDougall ed., *Popular Chinese Culture and Performing Arts in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979* (U of California P, 1984). For studies of popular music from 1960s Taiwan, see Eva Tsai, Tung-Hung Ho and Miaoju Jian, ed., *Made in Taiwan: Studies in Popular Music* (Routledge, 2020). For studies of popular music from 1960s Hong Kong, see Yiu-wai Chu, *Hong Kong Cantopop: A Concise History* (Hong Kong UP, 2017).

² Denning, Michael. *Noise Uprising: The Audiopolitics of A World Musical Revolution*. Verso, 2015.

³ I'm referring here to disco, break-dancing (霹雳舞) and rock subcultures in the 1980s, in which portable cassette recorders would be carried around on the streets, playing music publicly. For film representations of these youth subcultures, see for instance Tian Zhuangzhuang's *Rock Kids* 摇滚青年 (1988).

Response

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I would like to thank the journal for commissioning this review of *Circuit Listening*, and Siting Jiang for reading my work so carefully and with such insight. The review provides a lucid characterization of the narrative arc and the major arguments in the book. Indeed, some of those arguments are more pithily put than I myself could have managed, and draw out patterns and facets of my thinking that are only implicit in the original. I am also grateful for the productive questions that Jiang raises at the end, and for the opportunity to engage in what I hope becomes an ongoing conversation about music, media, as well as research methodologies.

Jiang's impression that the chapter on "quotation songs" (and perhaps also the introductory chapter in which I provide an account of the development of the revolutionary anthem "The East is Red" from its origins as a folk song to its transmission by a communication satellite in 1970) differs in some respects from the later chapters on Taiwanese music is surely correct. To some extent, these differences reflect the practical contingencies with which all researchers must contend. Some archives and institutions are user-friendly, and others far more difficult to access. Some voices have been lost to history or suppressed, and others preserved. I was fortunate to be able to speak with a musician like Wen Shia before his death last year at age 94, yet never managed to track down the uncredited engineers who participated in recording quotation songs in 1966. I need not belabor the point that research on the Maoist 1960s presents certain unique challenges in terms of the availability and reliability of archival sources, and the continuing political "sensitivity" of the period. Tragically, many of the most important figures I write about here – including the musician He Luting, who arranged and recorded the "The East is Red," and the composer of the first eight "quotation songs," Li Jiefu – suffered persecution in those years. Doing justice to the political complexity and human pathos of their

stories, I believe, would require a very different kind of book, one I was not prepared to write.

Another, perhaps more salient, way to put the problem: just as the musical artifacts of the period are marked by what I have called a "network trace" comprised by the particular media ecologies from which they emerged, archives (and thus the kinds of stories we can tell) also bear the traces of various historical, institutional, material, and discursive exigencies. One particularly thorny example in the cultural history of Maoism is the practice of collective authorship. Who "really" authored songs like "The East is Red" or "Revolution is Not a Dinner Party"? The anonymity, active suppression, or even fabrication of the identities of cultural producers in the late 1960s was part and parcel of a larger effort to stimulate new forms of proletarianized creativity. The imposition of new copyright and intellectual property regimes in the post-Mao period, in turn, has led to retroactive claims and counter-claims with respect to authorship. In recounting the tangled and still contentious story of such songs, I opted to focus more on the institutional and technological context from which they emerged, as well as their dissemination and reception, rather than dwelling exclusively on the individual agency of any particular musician.¹ And this approach, I believe, reflects the actual conditions of cultural production in the period: much music-making was in fact the product of collective efforts, conducted in conjunction with the imperatives of the socialist state, and shaped by the unique affordances of its media system. For this reason, I strive to describe something like a "distributed agency" in which individual actors (including composers, Red Guards, newspaper editors, recording engineers, and cadres tasked with building rural radio networks) are actively involved, yet also constrained by technical and political infrastructures. This is not to reduce phenomena like quotation songs to the status of "mere" propaganda. (Although it certainly *was*

propaganda: loudly, avowedly, and self-consciously so.) On the contrary, I am keen to show the formal ingenuity and innovation that allowed these songs to resonate throughout China, and indeed, across the globe.

One of the virtues of “circuit listening” as a method is that it allows me to cast my net broadly through time and space, and across national or linguistic borders. This work can be risky, however. Circuit topologies can ramify quickly, requiring one to venture into ever denser descriptive thickets in order to capture their multiple historical determinations, path dependencies, and conditions of possibility. Completism and narrative clarity usually don’t come hand- in-hand. The more comprehensive the mapping, the less distinct the trajectory. One often has to draw the line somewhere, excluding some material in order to delineate a particularly salient storyline.

Quotation songs, as with the revolutionary music of the Maoist era as a whole, can indeed be situated within a broader circuit that stretches back to the imperial diffusion of European military bands and their marches, and of choral music by Christian missionaries in the 19th century. The adoption of Soviet music by Chinese leftist musicians like Nie Er and Xian Xinghai beginning in the 1930s was also a crucial milestone. I have touched on some of these stories in my earlier work. Epoch-making songs like “The East is Red,” as I show in the introductory chapter of *Circuit Listening*, originated from within insistently local circuits of folk music-making in northwest China, before being taken up by, rewritten, orchestrated, and amplified at ever greater volume and scale by the socialist media system after 1949. There are, finally, many interesting stories yet to be told about the “socialist cosmopolitanism” (to invoke Nicolai Volland’s term) of musical life in the People’s Republic.

In this book, however, I chose to emphasize a more properly 1960s story –ß not so much the complex historical antecedents of this musical form (some of which have already been traced by other scholars), but how Maoist music resonated within a newly globalized media circuit through which “The East is Red” and other aural images of the Chinese revolution reached youthful radicals across the world via vinyl records, the “Little Red Book,” shortwave broadcasts on Radio Peking, and satellite transmissions. This is why the chapter on quotation songs concludes with a close reading of Jean-Luc Godard’s 1967 film about a cell of self-styled Maoist radicals in Paris, *La Chinoise*.

By the late 1970s, and especially by the 1980s, China’s media ecology had indeed experienced a sea-change, effected in part by the new affordances of consumer electronics, including the boombox. Jiang is absolutely right to point out that the boombox was not restricted to domestic use at that time. I myself still remember hearing imported Taiwanese and Hong Kong pop, the folk-disco sounds of the “Northwest wind,” and emergent rock musicians like Cui Jian percolating out from improvised open-air storefronts in Beijing in the late 1980s. Chinese listeners were quick to adopt all of the new possibilities afforded by cassette players, including youthful public displays of subcultural street-credibility. But that kind of open-air consumption of popular music was not yet permissible throughout most of the 1970s, and this is why I make a distinction between listening indoors – whether individually, or in the company of family, friends, and neighbors – and the sort of collective listening to wired loudspeakers more typical of the 1960s.

¹ This is also broadly true of my approach to iconic performers in Hong Kong and Taiwan like Grace Chang, Teresa Teng, and Chen Da.