From the Desk of the Director

This issue of Liner Notes appears as the Archives of African American Music and Culture (AAAMC) moves forward into a new millennium. Over the past 12 months, we have sponsored lectures and concerts, and developed exhibits (one of these exhibits is described within). Through these exhibits, AAAMC continues to bring the public to the forefront of contemporary interpretations of African American music and culture through the lens of those involved in its creation, dissemination, preservation, and documentation. We will continue to offer these exhibits in the twenty-first century and develop new ones that will bring together performing artists, and music industry personnel. Through these programs, we will explore various issues (technological, business, social, political, and cultural) of importance to the legacy and future of African American music and culture. AAAMC will also continue its development of educational materials and has begun collecting materials for the creation of educational programs inclusive of video documentation.

To facilitate these and other goals, AAAMC is in the process of establishing a digital-based processing lab to collect and store materials in the highest quality format possible. Such a lab will enable us to provide our patrons with high-quality research materials as well as more efficient services resulting from increased processing and duplication in formats. As we become more self-sufficient, we will also be able to produce small production projects in-house. Moving into the twenty-first century, AAAMC anticipates bringing more exposure to the rich legacy of African American music and culture and related professions.

Portia K. Maultsby
Director

In the Vault

The DMC DJ Competition Video Collection

"Hip-hop humanizes technology and makes it tactile. In hip-hop, you make the technology do stuff that it isn't supposed to do, get music out of something that's not supposed to give you music quite that way. You separate it, rip it at, and do other things with the equipment that most succinctly with your warranty."


Hear that? That's the deejay scratches, skramp, sizzle, scratches' right now. Cutting the record back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, making it scratch. Making it scratch. Scratching is just one of the possible techniques used by a deejay in the construction of a mix. It is perhaps the most familiar sound effect known by name to the general hip-hop audience. But as a technique in the larger world of turntablism, I have learned that it is a relatively small component of a deejay's performance. So, how did I become so knowledgeable? Read on.

I am not a deejay, nor have I tried to deejay at a party, or even in the privacy of my own home. However, I was exposed to the views of deejays on the art of "turntablism" by watching a series of videos on turntablism at the Archives of African American Music and Culture. The AAAMC recently received a very generous gift from DMC USA, The DMC DJ Competition Video Collection. This collection will prove to be an invaluable resource to students of hip-hop culture. The videos consist primarily of mixing battle competitions in the U.S. and the world, and the world's greatest deejays and turntablism champions from 1987 to 1998. These videos offer eyewitness accounts of deejays in action—mixing LPs, manipulating the mixer board, dueling with other deejays, scratching, and so forth. The videos also do something that audio media cannot—they demonstrate the dialogue between deejay and producer that is necessary for the creation and performance of this musical form.

While the function of the deejay is to keep the flow of the dance floor moving, these gladiators of groove show that the process is as important as the final product. Movements are coordinated with the drum patterns that are being created, turning, twisting, arm crossing, and spinning backwards, using the elbows, the feet, the nose, the forehead, and even the tongue to scratch and cut-back. With no deeper meaning behind his actions, do his tricks in the tradition of Grand Master Flash, back in the day. These techniques, among others, were the art of deejaying into a stylized, choreographed dance that makes its own music in the process. Turntables, keyboards, and vinyl can be bought, but style must be bought.

Included in the DMC DJ Competition Video collection are a few instructional videos. The video titled So You Want to Be a DJ is a compilation of various tips and tricks from world-renowned club deejays. The collection also contains interviews that explore the perspectives and the everyday lives of these artists, information that is important to students of hip-hop music and culture. The instructional video, The DMC B-Boy Foundations, not only teaches the viewer how to perform, etc., but also contains information about the history of hip-hop and hip-hop culture. The instructional video, The DMC DJ Competition Video Collection, helps viewers better understand hip-hop culture and its context, because deejaying is an art form and is very much physical and bodily phenomena and demand the attention of our ears, eyes, hands, feet, mind, and spirit.

Fernando Oropeza

Fernando Oropeza is a doctoral candidate in folklore, minstreling in society and ethnomusicology. Oropeza is the assistant instructor for a rap music class.

AAAMC MISSION

The AAAMC is devoted to the collection, preservation, and dissemination of materials for the purpose of research and study of African-American music and culture.
AAAMC Collection Highlights

In each issue of Linnet Notes are provided brief descriptions of selected existing and new collections.

Michael Woods Collection. A collection of jazz and rhythm and blues scores by Woods. Includes a taped interview with the composer, and the interview transcript.

Vivian Hagens Collection. Recordings, complete script, book, photographs, poster, and promotional materials for the gospel musical Mama. I Want to Sing Mama. I Want to Sing Him, and Born to Sing! Mama is written and produced by Vivian Hagens and Ken Wydro.

Recent Donations (1998–99)

This AAAMC would like to thank the following individuals and corporations for donations made during the year. Where some are new collections, others are additions to existing collections. These additions are indicated by an asterisk (*).

Harry Allen*: Articles, audio, and videotapes on hip-hop culture, photographs, videotapes, and transcripts of interviews with and lectures by Harry Allen.


Ted Fox: Book, Soundtrack at the Apollo.

Charles Frideric*: Posters of jazz and blues musicians: hip-hop magazines.

Lucenia George: Beyond Category, a Duke Ellington educational kit prepared by the National Museum of American History/Smithsonian Institution.

Jack Gibson*: Photographs, videotapes, and transcripts of interviews and lectures related to black radio.

Johnny Griffin*: Books of various genres, 1950s-80s.


Johnny Otis*: Photographs and videotapes of the Johnny Otis Show, interviews with and lectures by Johnny Otis.


Robert Simo*: Compact disc.

Mike Wilks*: Photographs of Miles Davis and research materials on hip-hop culture.

Michael Woods*: Original jazz and rhythm and blues scores.

DMC USA*: Videotapes, DMC—Doug Jewell Muzic Competition.

Mad Rhythm*: Back issues of Mad Rhythm magazine.

Vibe Magazine*: Back and current issues of Vibe magazine.

Alligator Records: Compact discs, LPs.

Arista Records: Compact discs, LPs.

BMG: Contract discs, LPs.

Malaco: Compact discs, LPs.

Warner Bros.: Compact discs, LPs.

(*Selected collections will be showcased in the "Featured Collection" and "Collection Highlight" columns of upcoming issues of Linnet Notes.)

Collaborative Projects

"Something in the Water: The Sweet Taste of Dayton Street Funk" The AAAMC collaborated with the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center (NAAMC) at Wilberforce, Ohio, on the development of the exhibition, "Something in the Water: The Sweet Taste of Dayton Street Funk.

Portia K. Maubdy*: director of the AAAMC, participated in the opening ceremony on Saturday, October 3, 1998, as co-curator for the project. Collaborating with Michael Sampson, public information coordinator of the NAAMC, Maubdy conducted the research and wrote the narrative for the development of the exhibition. Sampson coordinated the interviews, recorded and collected the artifacts and memorabilia (costumes, photos, musical manuscripts, original recordings, instruments, posters, promotional materials, etc.), and supervised the mounting of the exhibition.

Johnny Otis Collection Exhibitions, October 19–26, 1998

Photographed by BM Photograph Service

Johnny Otis also drew a full house. The audience jammed the dance floor, swinging to big band sounds and rhythm and blues hits from the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. After this electrifying performance and an evening of good times, conference attendees concluded that the Johnny Otis Show was the highlight of the conference.

In recognition of Johnny Otis’ musical achievements, the mayor of Bloomington proclaimed October 25, 1998, as Johnny Otis Day. Indiana University also inaugurated the Johnny Otis Collection of radio shows on rhythm and blues. (For a description of this collection and exhibition, see the next issue of Linnet Notes, see "AAAMC Lincoln Notes, No. 4, Inaugural Issue.

Two rhythm and blues exhibitions developed by the AAAMC and co-sponsored by the African American Culture Center library, complemented Otis’ lecture and performance. One focused on Johnny Otis, the other on the rhythm and blues era. They were displayed in the Indiana Memorial Union and in Indiana University’s main library, respectively. Both exhibitions featured photographs, album and book covers, and other relevant memorabilia. According to Deba Bennett, a doctoral student in ethnomusicology who researched the project and wrote the narrative and captions, her work on this exhibition "was truly a worthwhile and enjoyable experience that has greatly enhanced [her] academic endeavors.

Extensions of the Tradition, 1998

The AAAMC annually collaborates with the African American Arts Institute and the School of Music to sponsor the Extensions of the Tradition Concert and Exhibition. For a program that showcases the works of a selection of African-American classical composers. The 1998 Extensions of the Tradition concert and exhibition took place March 26, 1999. The concert featured performances of David Baker’s “Through This Vale of Tears,” the Debussy Quartet also performed Patrick Rushing’s “Psalms” and William Birtwell’s “Comb Tunes.”

The Extensions of Tradition exhibition was mounted at the School of Music Library by Maxi Richardson, AAAMC archivist. It featured photographs and scores by Lena J. McLain, a Chicago-based composer, arranger, vocal teacher, pianist, and singer. McLain also conducted the McLain Ensembles, a concert chorale.

"Something in the Water: The Sweet Taste of Dayton Street Funk" Exhibition

Photographed by Wendy Adler, March 109
Lectures

HARRY ALLEN—MEDIA ASSASSIN AND HIP-HOP ACTIVIST

"Allen's presentation provided an impression of musical history. Instead of his usual, students observed its documentation."—Indiana Daily Student, November 11, 1998

In November 1998, media assassin and hip-hop activist Harry Allen gave a series of lectures at Indiana University Bloomington. The program was sponsored by the AAMAC in conjunction with the School of Journalism, the Department of Communication and Culture, the Department of African American Studies, the American Studies Program, the Folklore Institute, the Ethnomusicology Program, the Honors Division, and the Horizons of Knowledge Lecture Series.

Allen's public lecture, titled "Hip-Hop, Race, and Reality," drew a responsive crowd of university students, faculty, staff, and community members, as did his classroom presentations in the Department of Afro-American Studies and the School of Journalism. The former publicist for the rap group Public Enemy, Allen is a well-known writer on hip-hop culture who grew up with the culture. In 1983, as a college student at Adelphi University on Long Island, New York, Allen wrote his first critical article on the tradition. In 1986, at a Black Music Association conference, he presented a paper that outlined six points for enhancing our understanding of hip-hop. Since that time he has written for Vibe, Billboard, Spin, Essence, Essence, New York Magazine, Matron, XXL, and the Village Voice.

In his public lecture, Allen recounted his initial exposure to hip-hop culture and the early history of the tradition. He cited the contributions of deejays Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash, and Keith Wiggins. He also explained that rap is a fully urban expression form, in contrast to the rural roots of blues, jazz, and gospel music, because the African American community is rooted in the urban landscape. He emphasized the importance of understanding the historical context of hip-hop, which emerged as a reaction against the political and social conditions of the time.

During the 1998-99 academic year, several scholars visited the archives. Some of them are profiled below:

GILBERT A. WILLIAMS
Gilbert Williams, a professor of telecommunications at Michigan State University, visited the AAMAC to conduct research for his book Legendary Performers of Black Radio (1998). As well as listening to and examining the raw research documentation from the "Telling It Like It Was" series. Williams located photographs that "put a face to the disc jockeys covered in this book." Williams had not seen some of these photographs—such as a large, early photograph of Al Bernard and a photograph of Eddie Castelberry and Eddie O'Jay together—anywhere else. On the acknowledges page of his book, Williams expressed his gratitude to Marie Richardson, AAMAC archivist and head of Public and Technical Services: "Marie has been a joy to work with and assisted in identifying and locating many of the photographs in this book.

KEVIN SEAL
Kevin Seal, a graduate of IU's School of Journalism, who is presently in the master's program at the University of California, Berkeley, spent a week at the AAMAC in December 1998 examining the Johnny Ons Collection. A description of the Johnny Ons Collection appears in the inaugural issue of Liner Notes. Seal became interested in the material because of its importance to his master's thesis, which involves the production of "an interactive radio documentary on the life and manifold careers of Johnny Otis.

PETER DAVENPORT
In 1998, Peter Davenport, a Microsoft consultant, began work on a CD-ROM project for Harvard University's W.E.B. Du Bois Institute. The project is titled Encomia Africana: Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Black History. Davenport visited the AAMAC to discuss his work on the project and to explore AAMAC resources for future volumes of the project. Specifically, he was interested in "historically and stylistically significant jazz, blues, and rhythm and blues artists." The first volume of Encomia Africana: Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Black History was released in January 1999.

CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
A student in the master's program in Black Studies at Ohio State University, Christopher Johnson visited the archives for a week in March 1999 to conduct research for his thesis on black radio. The thesis focuses on the black disc jockey as a verbal performer. Johnson came to the AAMAC on the advice of his academic advisor and the staff of the Smithsonian Institution. In particular, he found useful the "Black Radio: Telling It Like It Was" series, and the interviews from that project.

Johnson expressed his impressions of the AAMAC: "From the staff, to the resources, to the experience of being able to track down information, this has been a phenomenal experience.

For a description of this collection and more details about Gibson, see AAMAC Liner Notes, No. 1, Inaugural Issue.
RESEARCH ASSOCIATE HIGHLIGHT—JOHNNY GRIFFITH

As part of its organizational structure, the Archives of African American Music and Culture maintains a group of resident research associates who act as resource consultants to the staff and the patrons of the archives.

During the 1988-89 academic year, the AAAMC enjoyed the presence of former Motown pianist Johnny Griffith as a resident research associate. Griffith also served as acting director of the Indiana University Soul Revue, visiting lecturer in the Department of Afro-American Studies, and artist in residence at the College Living-Learning Center.

As a research associate for the AAAMC, Griffith contributed his skills and knowledge to the growing Motown collection that is supervised by Charles Sykes, AAAMC research associate and director of the African American Arts Institute. Over the years, Sykes has been working on an exciting CD-ROM project that focuses on Motown’s Detroit era. Griffith has been a valuable resource for this project, which should be complete and available for use in the archives by 2001.

At Motown, Griffith played on his many top-charting singles, including the Temptations, the Supremes, Jackie Wilson, and Marvin Gaye. He also freelanced with other Motown artists, including Edwin Starr, the Chi-Lites, and the Four Tops.

Griffith has been not only a pianist and session man for Motown and others, but also a jazz recording artist in his own right, a jazz record store owner, a manager and producer of gospel and rhythm and blues groups, and a radio music director.

With parents who hailed from Georgia and Mississippi, Griffith was raised in Detroit, Michigan. He has vivid memories of growing up during the height of the racial tensions in Detroit. It was also in Detroit that his interest in music was sparked early in life. While Detroit was best known as an auto industrial town in the 1950s and 60s, it was also well-known as a cultural testing ground.

Griffith’s father had a reasonably good job at Ford; his mother was a housewife who spent many hours teaching her children how to play the piano, focusing mainly on classical music repertoire. That laid the foundation for Griffith’s musical performing, writing, and arranging career. He played trumpet in the school band as well as other classical and jazz bands outside school, but later returned to the piano.

By the late 1950s, though Griffith’s primary love was jazz, the special Motown sound of rhythm and blues was beginning to gain popularity. Griffith was invited to play on what would become Jackie Wilson’s big hit, “Lonely Teardrops,” written by Burt Gaddy. That was the start of a thriving career at Motown for Griffith. He continued to work as a keyboardist for many musicians, returning in 1962 to his love—piano—and becoming Motown’s first jazz recording artist. Griffith has set out to develop a “listening band” with a groove and a funky beat. Black, white, Asian—that’s our soul revue.”

Griffith’s experience and direct involvement in the music industry has helped the Motown collection and inspired the creation of the Johnny Griffith Collection held at AAAMC. For more than four decades, Griffith has collected numerous albums and memorabilia that cover jazz, rhythm and blues, pop, gospel and, of course, Motown recordings. He has donated his collection to the AAAMC. At present, he has deposited more than 40,000 albums dating from the 1950s through the 1980s.

With its varied and colorful background, the AAAMC looks forward to working with Griffith as the Johnny Griffith Collection grows and becomes available for use by our patrons.

—Stephanie Shoresman

Stephanie Shoresman is a doctoral student in folklore and ethnomusicology specializing in the biographical study of African and African American musicians.

AAAMC STAFF

P. Maxie Richardson, archivist and head of public services

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