

Dr. Jeffrey Brown's Latest Book, *Beyond Bombshells*

By Isabella Maini and Jeremy Wallach



Dr. Jeffrey Brown was hard at work last year with a new book release. In September 2015, he published *Beyond Bombshells: The New Action Heroines in Popular Culture*. The book analyzes the growing prevalence of powerful female characters in mass-mediated narratives. Through a critical examination of current movies, comic books, and television shows, Dr. Brown reveals the underlying, often contradictory cultural energies animating the trend.

Beyond Bombshells is sequel to Brown's previous book, which also

had to do with women in action films and the superhero genre, "It's kind of a follow up book, because I already did one book about women in the action genres and at the end of that, after I took a break, there was still more to say," said Brown. "The genre kept developing. Suddenly there were new movies, and TV shows, comics and all kinds of things. There were new things happening that needed to be explored." The new book picks up where the last left off, as the representation of action heroines continues its rapid evolution.

Some may wonder about the relevance of women to the action genre, but Brown stresses that a long run of male dominance renders the subject crucial. "It's so long been a male-dominated genre. You think of action, particularly in movies, you think of in the 80s and 90s, the Sylvester Stallone's and Arnold Schwarzenegger's and muscular guys... And I think nowadays you still think of... just male characters. It's seen as primarily for a male audience so it's a real step for women in Hollywood...to suddenly put them in a traditionally male place where they get to not be the damsel in distress."

Dr. Brown is well known among BGSU students for the Popular Culture classes he teaches on comic books, movies, and superheroes. The changing interests of his students have helped influence his research and writing. "The older I get, the

NEWSLETTER

EDITED BY JEREMY WALLACH AND ESTHER CLINTON



Jeffrey Brown

students all stay the same age and it's always interesting to see what their responses are and what they like. The class right now on superhero films, I ask them on the first day, what their favorite superhero was when they were younger...And it's fun to see who it is that they liked. As the years have gone on, it's changed. The students are a great test to see what's popular and what they've enjoyed."

Although films like *Batman vs. Superman* and *Captain America: Civil War* have generally disappointed Brown with regard to the portrayal of heroic female characters, he is hopeful films will continue to do more. "Wonder Woman was great and interesting in *Batman vs. Superman*...I wanted to see her movie. Although she was still sexy and pretty... she was at least tough. But all the other women in the film were damsels in distress like Lois Lane, Clark Kent's mother...But we're going to get some [of those films]. We're going to get a Wonder Woman movie. The superhero genre has been around for 16 years now in the current wave, but we've yet to have a good strong solo female character." Perhaps then there will be a third book in the trilogy.

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POPC Bids a Fond Farewell to Dr. Dan Shoemaker

Q: When did you start working at the Department of Popular Culture and what was it like back then?

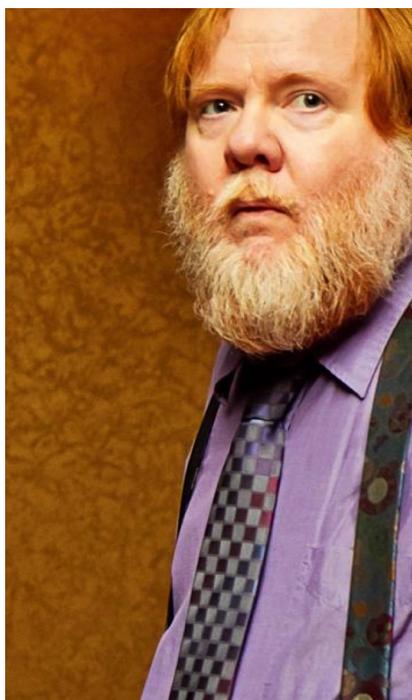
A: I first came to the Department as a grad student, from 1993-1995. My MA peers were intelligent and fun, and the department felt relaxed and familial (a feeling facilitated by being located in the House). Back then, Dr. Nelson was the newest faculty member of only six tenure-track faculty in the department. By the time I returned to the department in 2004, after completing my doctorate at the University of New Mexico, Dr. Nelson was the chair, and there had been both turnover and expansion in the faculty, with the addition of two tenure-track positions (in Youth Cultures and International Popular Culture) and the addition of Non-Tenure-Track Instructors (of which I was the fifth). I felt like I returned at a good time. The department was growing, and was still autonomous.

Q: Who are your all-time favorite popular culture theorists?

A: I have probably been most inspired by Raymond Williams. I find his approach to hegemony from *Problems in Materialism and Culture* to be invaluable. George Gerbner's work on Cultivation is also of great theoretical importance to the way I understand mass media, and Gunnar Myrdal's model of Cumulative Causation has also been helpful in that regard. The theorists who've had the greatest explanatory power for me are David Harvey and Everett Rogers. Other sentimental favorites include Dick Hebdige, Jackie Stacey, E. Ann Kaplan, Stuart Hall, and Roland Barthes. David Cook and Thomas Schatz are my favorite film historians.

Q: What will you miss most about the Department?

A: Without a doubt, my colleagues. All of the faculty in the department have singular talents, personalities, and perspectives, and it has been a privilege to serve alongside them. I will also miss the distinctly Bowling Green approach to popular culture. I know from the time I spent in my doctoral program (and at various conferences) that people elsewhere think neither as deeply nor as comprehensively about popular culture as we do, in the ways that we do.



Dan Shoemaker

Q: Who were your favorite students?

A: There are too many to list here. Many of them I am friends with on Facebook. Some of them have made me proud by going on to distinguish themselves in their graduate studies or in their careers. Many of them feel like family to me, or like members of my tribe. The ongoing, interpersonal relationships I have forged with students have been among the best takeaways from my whole experience in academia (along with the friendships and intellectual camaraderie with peers).

Q: What parting advice do you have for POPC students?

A: Stop worrying about your grade; that's putting the cart before the horse. If you focus on learning the course material, your grade will take care of itself. Education is not about passing a test; real learning is a cumulative process that takes place over time, and that leaves you with something you actually know. Ten years from now, it won't matter what grade you got; it will matter what you remember, and what you can do with the theories and methodologies taught in the course. If you're getting your degree to get a better job, that's fine. But anyone who can give you a job can take a job away from you. If you actually learn something while you're at the university, that's yours forever; nobody can take away what you know.

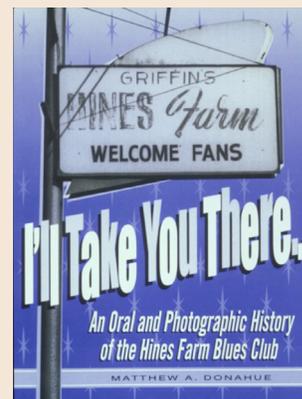
The Blues, the Hines Farm Blues Club and 21st Century Blues with Skip McDonald AKA Little Axe

By Dr. Matthew Donahue

The Blues, The Hines Farm Blues Club and 21st Century Blues with Skip McDonald AKA Little Axe was a two-day event sponsored by the Ohio Arts Council, the Ohio Humanities, the Metroparks of the Toledo Area, WBGU-PBS and BGSU's Department of Popular Culture, the School of Culture and Critical Studies, the Arts Village, the Honors College Learning Community and the College of Musical Arts' Department of Jazz.

There were two parts to this event, with one presentation taking place on campus at BGSU's Student Union Theater, and the other presentation taking place at Oak Openings Metropark.

This was a great opportunity to highlight Ohio's connection to blues music, featuring a presentation about Ohio's Hines Farm Blues Club, which was one of America's premier blues and rhythm and blues clubs in the 1950s and 1960s, located in Swanton, Ohio (outside of Toledo). The Hines Farm Blues Club featured a who's who of blues, jazz and rhythm and blues artists as well as many other events and activities. This club was a cultural cauldron and featured a diverse array of performers and audience members who were a living testament to breaking down racial barriers.



The events also featured a special music performance by Ohio native, blues musician and international recording artist Skip McDonald, aka Little Axe. Additionally, for the event at Oak Openings Metropark, the documentary that I made in conjunction with WBGU-PBS, titled *The Hines Farm Blues Club* was shown.

These events allowed for a whole new audience to be introduced to Ohio's connection to blues music in the past with the Hines Farm Blues Club and in the present with the performance by Skip McDonald, aka Little Axe.

Bowling Green State University Central to Study of Heavy Metal

By Isabella Maini

Not since the early days of Ray Browne has Bowling Green played such a pivotal role in the emergence of a fledgling academic discipline in the United States. When Jeremy Wallach attended the first ever academic conference on heavy metal in 2008 in Salzburg, Austria with his friend Brian Hickam, he wasn't sure what would result from the smallish gathering of enthusiastic but young and far-flung scholars, most of whom had loved heavy metal music as teenagers but had then gone on to become scholars in seemingly unrelated fields. In 2009, he and Hickam were joined by POPC folklorist Esther Clinton at the Heavy Metal and Gender Conference in Cologne, Germany. This was a much more elaborate affair, with concerts and over a hundred participants from as far away as Australia, Brazil and Syria. By then it was clear an international movement was building rapidly. In the spring of 2010, the idea arose to hold the first large-scale heavy metal studies conference in the US.

Hickam, Clinton, Wallach and BGSU POPC colleague Matthew Donahue, along with Amber Clifford and Claudia Avezeda, co-organized the BGSU Heavy Metal and Popular Culture International Conference in April 2013. By that time, a book Wallach had co-edited with Harris Berger and Paul Greene, *Metal Rules the Globe*, had moved from esoteric ethnomusicological oddity to metal studies classic, so Bowling Green was already on the MS radar. All told, more than 150 people attended from all over the globe and the conference was written up in media around

the world, including the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*.

Since the 2013 conference, Drs. Clinton, Donahue, and Wallach have participated in six metal conferences together or separately and been quoted in numerous major media outlets on metal matters. The BGSU conference has become legendary in metal studies circles and further legitimized the field.

The field of metal studies continues to grow, with at least five edited volumes released in the last year. Clinton and Wallach attended the "sequel" to the International Conference in the summer of 2015 in Helsinki, Finland, where they co-presented a paper. There is now a peer-reviewed academic journal and an international scholarly society devoted to metal music studies.

In February 2016, Neil Shah of the *Wall Street Journal* wrote, "The Weird Global Appeal of Heavy Metal" to explain how the genre had globalized.

Like popular culture itself, heavy metal will probably never fully be accepted as a legitimate topic of scholarly inquiry, but it's a lot more difficult now for academics and journalists to ignore or trivialize its global importance. All of this since 2008, and the faculty of Bowling Green's Popular Culture Department has played a significant role from the start.

A record store in Helsinki in June 2015.

Photo by Jeremy Wallach



A Tribute to Lemmy from Motörhead

By Dr. Matthew Donahue



Well, folks around the workplace may have seen me wearing more Motörhead t-shirts than usual. It was with great sadness that I heard the news of the passing of Motörhead's leader Ian "Lemmy" Kilmister, generally known as Lemmy.

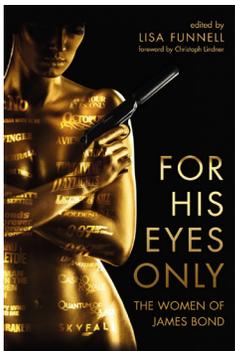
Motörhead and Lemmy are part of the reason that I got so into music, and Motörhead's music helped provide the musical inspiration for my many music projects over the years. I still remember hearing Motörhead's "Ace of Spades" single in 1980, long before the group achieved any popularity in the United States. Through the years I had a few opportunities to meet up with Lemmy at Motörhead shows. Perhaps the most memorable was hanging out with him backstage at Chicago's Congress Theater on Feb. 19, 2011. Motörhead's then record label SPV Records held a "Superfan" contest asking fans to do something creative related to the group. I made a short documentary titled "Motörhead Matters," highlighting the background, cultural influence and their inspiration on me. For my efforts, I won the contest and was dubbed the grand prize-winner of the Motörhead Super Fan Contest in North America. For that I received some Motörhead swag and was given the opportunity to hang out with Lemmy backstage after their show. I will never forget the moment that I told Lemmy, "Your reality helped to inspire my creativity" and he responded with "That's what it is all about"....with my reply...."you got it." I passed him some Matt Donahue swag, consisting of my many creative projects over the years, and wished him well.

Upon hearing about Lemmy's passing on December 28, 2015, I wanted to do a small gesture as a tribute to him in 2016. With that in mind for my POPC 2800 Introduction to Popular Music/History of Rock and Roll course, I decided to sport a different Motörhead shirt for every class meeting; with only a few more class meetings left I will reach that goal. I wanted to do this to show the students in my class that creative inspiration can take many forms and that they should always pursue their dreams and interests.

Thanks, Lemmy, for your years of inspiration, part of me died with your passing and part of me is reborn with your passing, inspiring me to continue working on my academic and creative projects.

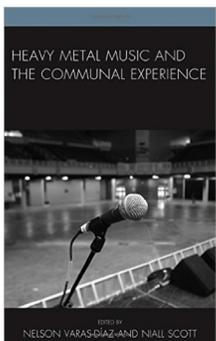
Faculty Notes

In addition to “Beyond Bombshells,” (see cover story) **Dr. Jeffrey A. Brown** also published two book chapters: “Superdad: Luke Cage and Heroic Fatherhood in the Contemporary Marvel Universe,” in *Marvel’s Civil War: How Comics Defined the Post 9/11 Era*, Scott, Kevin M., editor, McFarland Press, New York, N.Y. and “Who Is Salt? The Difficulty of Constructing a Female James Bond and Reconstructing Gender Expectations,” *For His Eyes Only? The Women of James Bond: Feminism and Femininity in the James Bond Franchise*, Lisa Funnell editor, Wallflower, Columbia University Press (2015).



He also published a journal article, Brown, Jeffrey A. (2016) “Superhero Film Parody and Hegemonic Masculinity,” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, Vol. 33, No. 2 pp.131-150. On March 12, 2016 Dr. Brown was the keynote speaker at the

“Superheroes: The Colors of Justice – Diversity in Comics” Conference at the University of Michigan. A few days later, on March 15, 2016, Dr. Brown delivered the prestigious BGSU Arts and Sciences Distinguished Faculty Lecture “Girl Revolutionaries.”



Niall W. R. Scott, eds.) Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, pp. 37-55, 2016.

• “Recoloring the Metal Map: Metal and Race in Global Perspective.” In *Modern Heavy Metal: Markets, Practices and Cultures* (Toni-Matti Karjarlainen and Kimi Kärki, eds.). Helsinki: Aalto University School of Business, pp. 274-282, 2015.

She gave the following conference presentations:

• Co-Presenter with Jeremy Wallach, “Talking Metal: The Social Phenomenology of Hanging Out.”

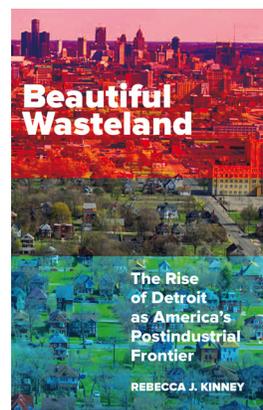
Presented at the International Association for the Study of Popular Music—US/Canada Chapters Combined Annual Meeting, Calgary, Alberta, May 2016.

- “Noise Breeding Silence: Heavy Metal Voices, Heard and Unheard.” Invited Panel Discussion. Experience Music Project, Seattle, Washington; March 2016.
- “Race and Metal in Global Perspective.” Presented at the Society for Ethnomusicology 60th Annual Meeting, Austin, Texas; December 2015.
- “The Horror and the Allure: Heavy Metal, Gothic Fiction, and Multisubjectivity.” Presented at the Legions of Steel Metal Festival and Conference, Berkeley, California; October 2015.
- Co-Presenter with Jeremy Wallach, “Re-Coloring the Metal Map: Metal and Race in Global Perspective.” Modern Heavy Metal Conference, Helsinki, Finland, June 2015.
- She was also an invited speaker at the BGSU Summer Research Workshop and the UC Berkeley Office of Resources for International and Area Studies (ORIAS) Summer Workshop.

To date, she has served on 31 completed thesis committees at BGSU, including five that have been singled out for commendation.

Dr. Rebecca Kinney

It has been a good year for Dr. Rebecca J. Kinney. She was busy completing final edits for her book, *Beautiful Wasteland: The Rise of Detroit as America’s Postindustrial Frontier*, which was published in November 2016 by the University of Minnesota Press. On campus she started an organization called the “Women of Color Alliance,” a group focused on building community among BGSU faculty, staff, and graduate students who self-identify as Women of Color. She was thrilled to be nominated by a student for the Women’s Centers annual “Favorite Professor” luncheon. Dr. Kinney was recently awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Seminar fellowship to



participate in the Mapping, Text, and Travel Institute at the Newberry Library in Chicago from July 11 through August 12th. In addition to participating as a member of the Institute, she will be doing archival research for her next book project, *Culinary Tourism and Contemporary Urban Slumming: Narratives of Race, Place, and Desire*. She was awarded an ICS Scholar-in-Residence fellowship for 2016-2017 and will be spending spring semester 2017 completing research for *Culinary Tourism and Contemporary Urban Slumming*.

Dr. Montana Miller

The students in Dr. Montana Miller’s graduate seminar “Folklore and Folklife” participated in an Easter egg hunt staged by Dr. Miller before the holiday—several of our international cohort had



never experienced this tradition before. The following proverbs were written on the Easter Eggs:

Wealth and eggs are best when they are fresh.

(Russian)

In a broken nest, there are no whole eggs. (Chinese)

Eggs and oaths are easily broken. (Danish)

You can’t make pancakes without breaking eggs.

(Spanish)

You cannot unscramble eggs. (American)

Opportunities, like eggs, come one at a time.

(American)

Bad bird, bad egg. (German)

Bad egg, bad chicken. (Dutch)

By persevering, the egg walks on legs. (Ethiopian)

If you want your eggs hatched, sit on them yourself.

(Haitian)

You can’t hatch chickens from fried eggs. (Dutch)

Better an egg today than a hen tomorrow. (French)

An egg thief becomes a camel thief. (Persian)

If you were born lucky, even your rooster will lay eggs.

(Russian)

Faculty Notes

continued

Dr. Miller worked with the Children's Museum of Indianapolis as an advisor in 2015 to help develop a grant proposal. In March of 2016, the Director of the Museum, Chris Carron, wrote: "The Children's Museum of Indianapolis was awarded \$40,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities to support the planning of our new *Galleries for American Art and Popular Culture*. We are excited to move forward with the planning of this exhibit/gallery concept for an opening in 2017." Dr. Miller will continue to serve as an advisor on this project.



Dr. Miller is also the captain of "Blocksmiths," the only all-female competitive 8-way formation skydiving team in the world today, based near Fort Bragg in North Carolina, and in March the Blocksmiths successfully defended their gold medals with a decisive victory in the intermediate division of the National Indoor Skydiving Championships, a competition that takes place in the only wind tunnel large enough for 8-way formations, at Skyventure Paraclete in Raeford, NC.

Dr. Kristen Rudisill

Dr. Kristen Rudisill writes: I've had a busy year this

year. It was my first as Chair of the Department of Popular Culture and there was a fairly steep learning curve. The biggest thing I did (with a lot of help from other faculty, especially Drs. Wallach, Clinton, and Shoemaker) was write a proposal to the Trustees Innovation Fund for a grant to start an online MAS program in Popular Culture, which we have been awarded. Now we start the work of developing courses, marketing, and navigating the bureaucracy of the state legislature. I helped bring in two special guests in the fall, Dr. Uma Vangal from the LV Prasad Institute of Television and Film in Chennai, India, and choreographer

Jeya Raveendran from London. In addition, my article "Pritham Chakravarthy: Performing Aravanis' Life Stories" came out in the Fall 2015 issue of the *Journal of Asian Theatre*. I also helped to start the *Indian Theatre Journal* with scholars in the UK and India and will be traveling to the UK for our first editorial board meeting in June. We are holding a symposium there, at the University of Lincoln, then hosting a special panel at the International Federation for Theatre Research conference in Stockholm, which I will also participate in. Then we start work on the first issue!

In personal news, my son Surya Vela was born March 5, 2016, so it has been a very busy year on that front as well! I'm looking forward to my FIL in Fall 2016, when I will travel to India and Sri Lanka for research, as well as make my first visit to Japan! See you all next spring.

Dr. Jeremy Wallach

Dr. Jeremy Wallach published two essays with Dr. Esther Clinton over the past academic year and presented or co-presented three conference presentations. He is serving as acting chair while Dr. Kristen Rudisill is on leave.

Congratulations to Jamie Clements, recipient of this Year's Stoddard-O'Neill Thesis Prize.

Beer Can Collection Featured at a Local Museum

By Dr. Matthew Donahue

You never know where your pop culture collection may end up.

Many, many years ago, around the age of 9, I got heavily into beer can collecting. This was back in the mid to late 1970s and was a huge trend that swept the country, with many beer can collectors holding conventions and collectors swapping cans. I grew up in Maumee, Ohio, which at the time had many drinking establishments. Through this period, I visited many of these establishments, dumpster diving and making friends with some of the beer truck drivers on their routes in Maumee. By doing so, I amassed a very large beer can collection. I stopped in the early 1980s, moving on to collecting records and guitars.

Recently, the staff at the Wood County Historical Center and Museum learned about my beer can collection and asked if I would be interested in exhibiting them in their exhibit titled "Be Your Own Museum: Our Community's Collections." I had to do a bit of searching and cleaning them off, but the collection was proudly displayed in their exhibit which closed December 16.



AY 2015-16 in Photos

Dr. Rebecca Kinney and Bincy Samad (American Culture Studies) take a moment for a selfie at the 2016 Ray Browne Conference.



Martin Muthee takes a group selfie of the Fall 2015 Theory and Methodology class.

Dr. Michael Marsden, BGSU emeritus professor of popular culture, and BGSU alumna Jane Caputi, professor of women, gender and sexuality studies at Florida Atlantic University, lead a discussion at the first PCA/ACA Popular Culture Research Workshop held in May at BGSU.



Dr. Stephanie Kolbey, who teaches writing at Boston University, participated in the PCA/ACA Popular Culture Research Workshop and focused her research on gender depictions in greeting cards.



Dr. Angela Nelson gives a talk on gospel music at the BGSU College of Musical Arts.





Scott Ian from the band Anthrax poses with Jeremy Wallach in Helsinki. Fellow metal scholar Dr. Niall Scott lurks in the background.

Gary Hoppenstand presents at the PCA/ACA Popular Culture Research Workshop.



Drs. Wallach, Shoemaker, and Clinton are photographed by visiting scholar Dr. Jean Gregorek the day of her POPC Colloquium talk.

