



The Unbroken Circle: Tradition and Innovation in the Music of Ry Cooder and Taj Mahal (American Folk Music and Musicians Series)

By Fred Metting

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American folk musicians Ry Cooder and Taj Mahal, once musical partners, have had careers which are at once conservative and innovative, imbuing the best of folk traditions with their own powerful style. In *The Unbroken Circle*, Fred Metting challenges the musical labels that often bind artists as he explores the inspirational sources behind these two men. Cooder was influenced by ragtime-blues, bottleneck gospel blues, Norteño music, as well as epic folk ballads. Mahal surrounded himself with Afro-Caribbean music, Chicago blues and Hawaiian music. Both of these artists created a collage from these sources, resisting categories and always driving for the emotional center of the musical experience.

Metting traces the parallels between the two, in their careers and their musical backgrounds. He demonstrates how American music transcends classification, finding definition in its very fluidity. The result of a study such as this is not only a respect for the earlier musical sources, but also a desire to continue the tradition of adaptation and change. *The Unbroken Circle* is a book well-suited for music students, American folklorists, and fans of the musicians profiled.

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Editorial Review

Review

It's an interesting premise, and Metting offers a lot of information and makes some thought-provoking points...the source material he uses is well researched and thoroughly footnoted. (*Dirty Linen*)

...this is a readable and wide-ranging study, which delves into the music of New Orleans, Memphis and the Caribbean, as well as the roots-rock mainstream. (*Record Collector*)

It is a scholarly study...The author's love for the music is obvious and his descriptions are bang on...an in-depth study of two master musicians, in the context of the American tradition in which they began and the wider traditions in which they continue. It is a work well worth reading. (*Greenman Review*)

About the Author

Fred Metting is Associate Professor of English at the University of New Hampshire at Manchester, where he teaches a variety of literature, composition, and humanities courses.

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