



Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age

Andrew F. Jones

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Yellow Music is the first history of the emergence of Chinese popular music and urban media culture in early-twentieth-century China. Andrew F. Jones focuses on the affinities between "yellow" or "pornographic" music—as critics derisively referred to the "decadent" fusion of American jazz, Hollywood film music, and Chinese folk forms—and the anticolonial mass music that challenged its commercial and ideological dominance. Jones radically revises previous understandings of race, politics, popular culture, and technology in the making of modern Chinese culture.

The personal and professional histories of three musicians are central to Jones's discussions of shifting gender roles, class inequality, the politics of national salvation, and emerging media technologies: the American jazz musician Buck Clayton; Li Jinhui, the creator of "yellow music"; and leftist Nie Er, a former student of Li's whose musical idiom grew out of virulent opposition to this Sinified jazz. As he analyzes global media cultures in the postcolonial world, Jones avoids the parochialism of media studies in the West. He teaches us to hear not only the American influence on Chinese popular music but the Chinese influence on American music as well; in so doing, he illuminates the ways in which both cultures were implicated in the unfolding of colonial modernity in the twentieth century.

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