

On Hand-Made Music

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Abstract

I've recently opened up a little online record shop focusing on what I like to call "Hand-Made" music. To me, that ranges from the DIY punk that I grew up with to the oldest kinds of rural music to field recordings from all over to the underground harsh noise tape/CD-R/vinyl scene.

Keywords

Music (Subfield), Music History and Culture (Topic), Article, Music, Recording, Sound Studies, Soundscapes

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I've recently opened up a little online record shop focusing on what I like to call "Hand-Made" music. To me, that ranges from the DIY punk that I grew up with to the oldest kinds of rural music to field recordings from all over to the underground harsh noise tape/CD-R/vinyl scene. I've been thinking a bunch about how something like hand-made music gets heard. I figure that it gets passed around. Here's what I mean.

Right now I'm listening to, get this, The Minutemen's "The Anchor" on a digital copy of side two of a cassette tape called "Afraid of the Dark: 'Garage' Rock 'n' Roll 1965-1981." It's a mix tape made in 2008(?) by a record label/store in Portland, OR called Mississippi Records. Why is this relevant?

The Minutemen exemplify the best of punk rock, three friends who started making music to create, to share, to inspire. "The Anchor" is on a mix tape put out by a record store and label that sells only "dead" media: vinyl and cassette. The store makes the mix tapes to spread the word about music they love. I can discern no other motive. They release reissues of music they love: old-time blues, warbly ragas, creaky punk rock and more—clearly labors of love. A store like this doesn't distribute records and tapes in any broad sense of the word, it only *passes around* music to people who know the store. That's not many people.

It's funny. I have *What Makes a Man Start Fires*, the record that "Anchor" comes from and I could put it on my imachine and listen while I type, but the song, with all the vinyl static intact and squeezed between Richard Hell & the Voidoids and The Petticoats, takes on a new life in the context of the mix tape. I can hear the aha! moment that must've occurred as the tape was being compiled. We can follow "The Anchor" from its LP release in '83 to someone at Mississippi Records hearing it and loving it and passing it on to friends and soon enough deciding that it warrants a place on their mix tape. They gave me the opportunity to re-hear something beautiful. "The Anchor" sounds better by having all these fingerprints on it. I feel more connected to it hearing it through this history, having passed through this many hands.

So I offer it to you, fingerprints and all. Imagine this on a homemade tape:



<https://youtu.be/2hkDZvsewIM>

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