

Sonic Borders Virtual Panel: Shana Redmond's "The Sounds We Make Together: Chuck Berry's Onomatopoeia" from IASPM-US

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Abstract

For a song often derided as trite, "My Ding-a-Ling" has much to tell us about the immediate post-civil rights sexual imagination. This imagination was not organized around the puerility of the title but rather the performer's unique history, which he demonstrates through distinct musical and listening practices on stage.

Keywords

Music (Subfield), Sonic Borders Forum, IASPM-US, Popular Music, Sonic Borders, Sound

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For a song often derided as trite, “My Ding-a-Ling” has much to tell us about the immediate post-civil rights sexual imagination. This imagination was not organized around the puerility of the title but rather the performer’s unique history, which he demonstrates through distinct musical and listening practices on stage. Chuck Berry’s 1972 live recording from the Lanchester Arts Festival in Coventry, England, models musical reciprocity as he sings both to and for his co-ed audience. His vocal of the onomatopoeia “ding-a-ling” resonates as a thinly veiled sexual reference while also lingering in the performance space as that which beckons the audience to sing-a(-)long, a practice that he regularly responds to with improvisatory comments. The “harmony” that he notes coming from two women attendees is announced by Berry in the moment as a sexual relation, not only with him as they sing with his “Ding-a-Ling” but also with each other, producing their own queer counterpoint. A number of asides within his performance exhibit the collaborative nature of Black music-making and the play involved in Black crossover to the mainstream. Berry’s project on stage that night also manifests a collision and collusion of popular music and sound studies by erotically traversing a number of performative and sonic boundaries through the exposure of alternative sexual relations. [Reblogged from [IASPM-US.net](#)]

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Sonic Borders Schedule

- 1/21 – [Liana Silva](#), *Sounding Out!* – “I’m on My New York Sh*t”: Jean Grae’s Sonic Claims on the City
- 1/28 – [Regina Bradley](#), *Sounding Out!* – I Like the Way You Rhyme, Boy: Hip Hop Sensibility and Racial Trauma in *Django Unchained*
- 2/4 – [Marcus Boon](#), *Sounding Out!* – One Nation Under a Groove?: Music, Sonic Borders, and the Politics of Vibration
- 2/6 – [Barry Shank](#), IASPM-US – “On Popular Music Studies”
- 2/11 – [Tavia Nyong’o](#), *Sounding Out!* – “Freedom Back: Sounding Black Feminist History, Courtesy the Artists”
- 2/13 – [Theo Cateforis](#), IASPM-US – “No Control, or: How I Learned to Start Worrying About Sound”

Sounding Out! • Sonic Borders Virtual Panel: Shana Redmond's "The Sounds We Make Together: Chuck Berry's Onomatopoeia" from IASPM-US

2/18 – [Tara Betts](#), *Sounding Out!*, [They Do Not All Sound Alike: Sampling Kathleen Cleaver, Assata Shakur, and Angela Davis](#)

2/20 – [Shana L. Redmond](#), IASPM-US – [The Sounds We Make Together: Chuck Berry's Onomatopoeia](#)

2/25 – [Art Jones](#), *Sounding Out!*

2/27 – [Devon Powers](#), IASPM-US