

Sounding Out! Podcast #47: Finding the Lost Sounds of Kaibah

Sounding Out! Authors

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Abstract

<https://soundstudiesblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/finding-the-lost-sounds-of-kaibah.mp3> **CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD : Finding the Lost Sounds of Kaibah** **SUBSCRIBE TO THE SERIES VIA ITUNES ADD OUR PODCASTS TO YOUR STITCHER FAVORITES PLAYLIST** In the early 1960s Native American women had few opportunities and rights as citizens.

Keywords

Music (Subfield), Indigenous Studies, Music, Podcast, Race, Sound Studies

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In the early 1960s Native American women had few opportunities and rights as citizens. During this politically charged era, a young Navajo woman, Kay Bennett, or “Kaibah”, defied those restrictions by recording and releasing her own albums. Almost fifty years later, we present this conversation with Rachael Nez, a Navajo scholar and filmmaker, whose research explores “Songs from the Navajo Nation” through Kaibah’s records. Kaibah self-published her own albums until she was signed by Canyon records, wrote and published her own books, and traveled the world performing Navajo music everywhere from the Middle East to Europe. Rachael looks at how Kaibah’s music acts as a site for the circulation of Indigenous knowledge, oral history, and resistance.

In this podcast Marcella Ernest speaks with Rachael about the scarcity of materials relating to Kaibah’s history. Although there is no archive of her work, and no coherent trace of her story in one site, she explains how we can piece together a story of Kaibah based on her albums and songs. This dialogue considers the ways in which Indigenous erasure can be recuperated through sound. The project of finding the lost sounds of Kaibah is a fascinating story of how sound can be used to reconstitute indigeneous identity. What social and cultural norms conspire to obfuscate a Navajo woman of such prestige and talent? Finding the lost sounds of Kaibah is a conversation about (re)searching to find a lost sound.

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Marcella Ernest is a Native American (Ojibwe) interdisciplinary video artist and scholar. Her work combines electronic media with sound design with film and photography in a variety of formats; using multi-media installations incorporating large-scale projections and experimental film aesthetics. Currently living in California, Marcella is completing an interdisciplinary Ph.D. in American Studies at the University of New Mexico. Drawing upon a Critical Indigenous Studies framework to explore how “Indianness” and Indigeneity are represented in studies of American and Indigenous visual and popular culture, her primary research is an engagement with contemporary Native art to understand how members of colonized groups use a re-mix of experimental video and sound design as a means for cultural and political expressions of resistance.

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