



Beyond the Beat: Musicians Building Community in Nashville

Daniel B. Cornfield



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At a time when the bulwarks of the music industry are collapsing, what does it mean to be a successful musician and artist? How might contemporary musicians sustain their artistic communities? Based on interviews with over seventy-five popular-music professionals in Nashville, *Beyond the Beat* looks at artist activists—those visionaries who create inclusive artist communities in today's individualistic and entrepreneurial art world. Using Nashville as a model, Daniel Cornfield develops a theory of artist activism—the ways that artist peers strengthen and build diverse artist communities.

Cornfield discusses how genre-diversifying artist activists have arisen throughout the late twentieth-century musician migration to Nashville, a city that boasts the highest concentration of music jobs in the United States. Music City is now home to diverse recording artists—including Jack White, El Movimiento, the Black Keys, and Paramore. Cornfield identifies three types of artist activists: the artist-producer who produces and distributes his or her own and others' work while mentoring early-career artists, the social entrepreneur who maintains social spaces for artist networking, and arts trade union reformers who are revamping collective bargaining and union functions. Throughout, Cornfield examines enterprising musicians both known and less recognized. He links individual and collective actions taken by artist activists to their orientations toward success, audience, and risk and to their original inspirations for embarking on music careers.

Beyond the Beat offers a new model of artistic success based on innovating creative institutions to benefit the society at large.



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