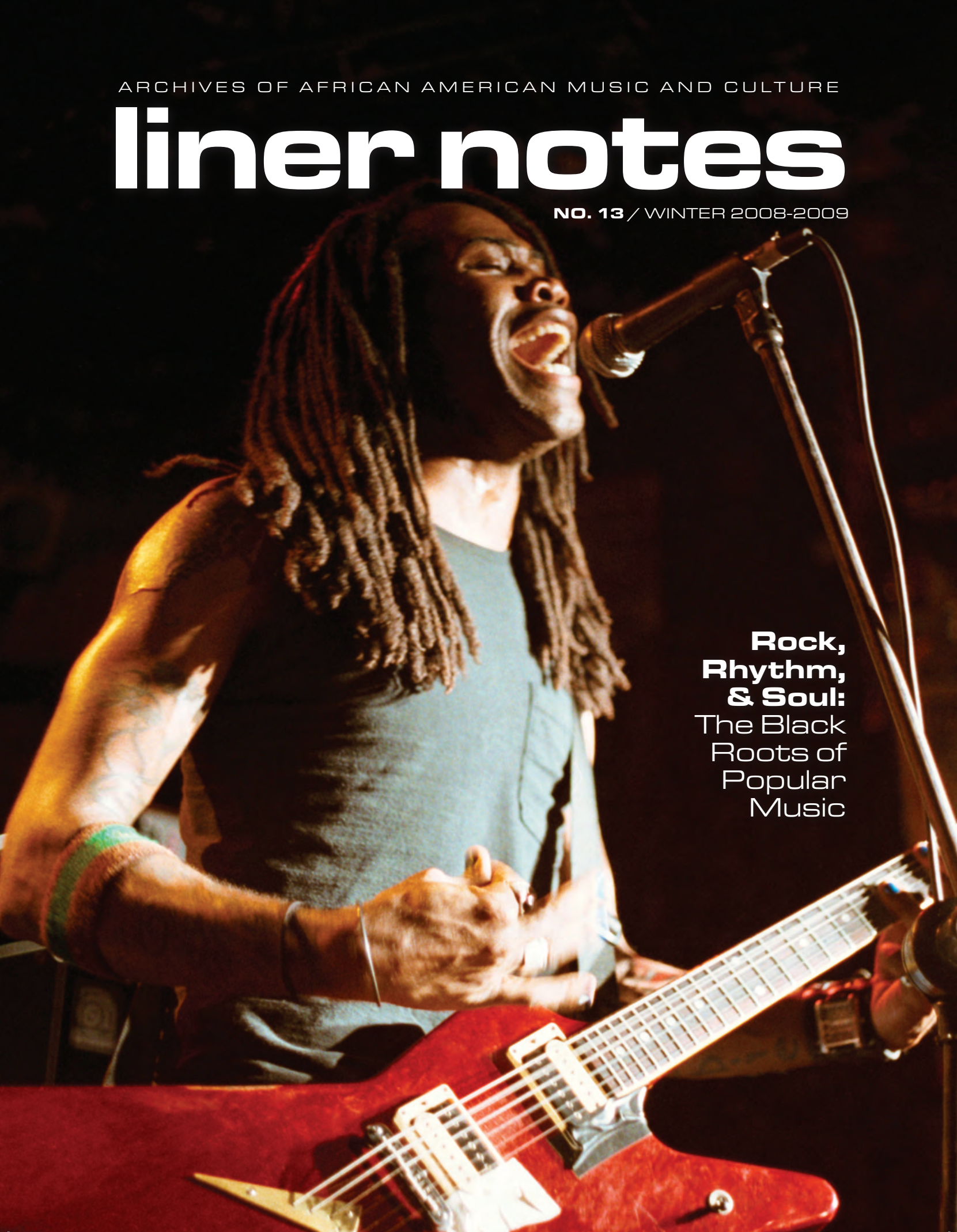


ARCHIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC AND CULTURE

# liner notes

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**Rock,  
Rhythm,  
& Soul:**  
The Black  
Roots of  
Popular  
Music



Reception for *Rock, Rhythm, & Soul* at the Bloomington City Hall Atrium on Jan. 15, 2009. PHOTO: Stan Gerbig

# Rock, Rhythm, & Soul:

## A New Exhibit Traces and Shares the Influence of Black Musicians on Popular Music

In August 2007, the AAAMC received a grant from Indiana University's Moveable Feast of the Arts initiative to design a modular traveling exhibit on African American popular music. Created through a generous gift from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., the Moveable Feast of the Arts program was initiated by the IU Office of the President in 2004 with administrative and financial oversight provided by the Office of the Vice Provost for Research. The program's mission is to showcase and extend IU's cultural resources to Hoosier communities and IU campuses across the state.

The result of this grant is *Rock, Rhythm, & Soul: The Black Roots of*

*Popular Music*, a display consisting of nine double-sided banner stands, each highlighting specific genres and issues related to the history of African American popular music. Drawing on materials from the AAAMC's collection, each banner presents viewers with stunning images, a narrative highlighting central issues and personalities, and a concise timeline of key historic events.

The title banner provides an overview of the exhibit on one side and an introduction to the AAAMC on the other, while the remaining eight banner stands focus on specific topics including soul, funk, hip hop, gospel, rhythm and blues, rock 'n' roll,

black radio, and the freedom songs of the Civil Rights Movement. In most cases, one side of the banner stand addresses the early origins of the genre, while the verso showcases more recent developments. The entire staff worked on the project throughout the spring, summer, and fall of 2008, while the final execution of the banners was left in the capable hands of the AAAMC's longtime graphic designer Dennis Laffoon.

The Moveable Feast of the Arts grant allows the *Rock, Rhythm, & Soul* exhibit to be displayed not only on the IU campus, but also at other non-profit institutions in Indiana at no additional cost through August 2009.



**Rock, Rhythm, & Soul staff, left to right:** Langston Wilkins, Fredara Hadley, Ann Shaffer, Aditi Deo, Portia K. Maultsby, Brenda Nelson-Strauss, Ronda L. Sewald, Tyrone Cooper; **left inset:** former administrator/coordinator Sunni Fass; **right inset:** graphic designer Dennis Laffoon  
PHOTO: Stan Gerbig

Additionally, the AAAMC has made the exhibit available for display by other institutions outside of Indiana for a fee. Because of the modular design of the banners, all or part of the exhibit may be displayed, which makes it highly adaptable to different themes and space requirements.

Two banner stands from *Rock, Rhythm, & Soul* debuted last spring as part of Bloomington's ArtsWeek 2008, a celebration of artistic and creative activity sponsored by IU and the City of Bloomington that centered on the theme of politics and the arts. The AAAMC's contribution was the exhibition *A Change is Gonna Come: Black Music and Political Activism*, which illustrated the role of music in African American communities during the Civil Rights Movement and subsequent Black Power Movement. The "Soul" and "Civil Rights Movement" banners from *Rock, Rhythm, & Soul* stood at the core of the

exhibit, while additional wall panels and artifacts from the AAAMC, the Stax Museum of American Soul Music, and several private collections added depth to the story told by the banners. *A Change is Gonna Come* was hosted by the Mathers Museum of World Cultures from February 22 to April 27, 2008, and was curated by Sunni Fass, the AAAMC's former Administrator and Project Coordinator.

*A Change is Gonna Come* had its second campus showing at the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center's Bridgwaters Lounge in October 2008, this time in a joint exhibition with IU's Black Film Center/Archive (BFC/A). Subtitled "Black Music and Film from the Civil Rights and Black Power Eras," the banners were augmented by five display cases featuring artifacts from the collections of the AAAMC and BFC/A. Curatorial assistance was provided by AAAMC intern Langston Collin Wilkins and BFC/A archivist

Mary Huelsbeck. The exhibition formed part of *Politics and Presidents*, a month-long celebration of archives and special collections sponsored by the Indiana University Libraries. Occurring just a month before the historic 2008 presidential election, the exhibit, along with those from other IU archives and special collections, provided a timely reminder of the role that archives play in preserving artifacts that shape and exemplify American political history.

The off-campus debut of *Rock, Rhythm, & Soul* also occurred in October when the Brightwood Branch of the Marion County Public Library in Indianapolis displayed the "Black Radio" banners. Emphasizing the role of black radio stations and deejays in supporting and disseminating black popular music, as well as communicating with and rallying African American communities, the "Black Radio" exhibit proved to be one of the highlights of the Brightwood

## Gospel



**"When I started to sing like myself, as opposed to imitating Nat Cole, which I had done for a while... it had this spiritual and churchy, this religious or gospel sound. It had this holiness and preachy tone to it."**  
—Bill Charles

A gospel gained in popularity; it began to influence and expand the horizons of Black popular music. Artists and their managers such as Ray Charles, Little Richard, and James Brown copied their songs with gospel's fervent style of delivery, pioneering the new "soul" sound. Many gospel artists also branched out to soul in the 1950s, including Aretha Franklin, Sam Cooke, and Curtis Mayfield.

In 1968, the crossover single "I'll Stay 'Til I Die" by the Edwin Hawkins Singers launched the contemporary gospel music era. Aretha Church and the Winans continued that trend in the 1980s, employing popular music production techniques. Kirk Franklin gave the genre an urban edge in the 1990s, blending gospel with rap, hip hop and funk on his albums *God's Property* (1997) and *The Nu Nation Project* (1999).

Gospel music continues to thrive, shaping and being shaped by popular music. Many contemporary R&B singers, such as Kelly Rowland, Fantasia, and Beyoncé, have been deeply influenced by gospel's performance style. And gospel artists, including Yolanda Adams and The Winans, continue to chart, new directions and expand their audiences through collaborations with R&B, soul and hip hop artists.

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## Funk



**"James Brown formulated funk. Sly Stone created it. But still it took of American life in the late '60s to give life to their funkmeister, the collision of art, culture, politics and music."**  
—Tom Tompkins (New York Times)

Funk grew from the post-industrial era of protest and optimism that characterized the 1960s, including the African American Civil Rights Movement and the spirit of the 1960s, the birth of soul, the technology of rock, and a pervasive use of electric instruments to create a new form of polyrhythmic dance music.

Lyrically, funk branched from protest and commentary to commentary on Black lives and urban life. Visually, performers used costumes, funk choreography, and special effects to produce full-scale spectacles.

Over time, artists incorporated new elements into funk. George Clinton created P-funk by mixing the funk aesthetics of Jimi Hendrix, Earth, Wind and Fire and the avant-garde genres and jazz elements George the Lizard drew from disco.

Starting in the late 1980s, hip hop artists revived the funk aesthetic by sampling and borrowing funk vocabulary and lyrics. While Black artists found inspiration through funk and funk-inspired beats, sampling of funk (especially funk) has become a staple in the mainstream of popular music.

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## Black Radio



Black radio has played an essential role in shaping and disseminating Black music and culture in the United States. For African Americans in the mid-twentieth century, radio was the most popular medium of mass communication. Programs targeted specifically to Black audiences created a sense of community and forged a new Black identity. Today, radio personalities such as "Hot 97.5" continue this tradition.

Since its early days, the jockeys—on daytime—have been an inseparable part of Black radio. These men and women were the stars of the airwaves. They played a wide range of music, sold products, discussed politics, and entertained listeners as they advanced their own careers in the industry.

In the late 1980s, Black artists were developing their own unique styles and identities, and were an essential part of the music they heard. They rapped and raved, their words in street slang, others carried their own vocabulary. All brought the Black and traditions of story telling, improvisation, and emotional delivery to the radio.

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## on the air

1920s: White-owned radio stations began to broadcast to Black audiences, but the programming was often segregated and the quality was poor.

1930s: The first Black-owned radio station, WABD in Chicago, was established.

1940s: The rise of the "jock" personality on Black radio, with figures like Redd Foxx on WABD.

1950s: The emergence of "rhythm and blues" programming on Black radio.

1960s: The rise of "Black Power" radio, which emphasized Black music and culture.

1970s: The rise of "Black radio" as a distinct genre, with stations like Hot 97.5 in New York City.

1980s: The rise of "urban contemporary" radio, which blended Black music with pop and R&B.

1990s: The rise of "hip hop" radio, which focused on hip hop music and culture.

2000s: The rise of "Black radio" as a mainstream genre, with stations like 107.7 The Beat in New York City.

2010s: The rise of "Black radio" as a diverse and inclusive genre, with stations like 102.7 The Love in New York City.

Library's fall events program. Brightwood manager Rhonda Gordan noted that the exhibit drew a large number of patrons, particularly young African American men, into the library. In November, seven of the banner stands traveled outside of Indiana for the first time to the University of Michigan-Dearborn for a display sponsored by UMD's African American Studies Program and hosted by the Mardigian Library. UMD's exhibition was organized in conjunction with a

six-week residency and lecture series by acclaimed jazz musician, composer, and educator Kenn Cox, who was awarded the State of Michigan's King/Chavez/Parks Visiting Professorship for 2008. In January 2009, the full exhibit debuted at Bloomington City Hall in conjunction with Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and the Presidential Inauguration. A public reception for the exhibit was hosted by City Hall on Jan. 15th and featured entertainment by local musician Curtis Cantwell Jackson and remarks by AAAMC Director Portia Maulsby. On Jan. 26th, the City's Community and Family Resources Department partnered with the Bloomington Entertainment and Arts District to sponsor a closing celebration complete with an enthusiastically received performance by the IU Soul Revue and a Gallery Talk by Maulsby. Future plans for the *Rock, Rhythm, & Soul* exhibit are already falling into place. During Black History Month,

the full exhibit will be on display at the Indianapolis Public Schools' Crispus Attucks Museum in Indianapolis. The exhibit will also travel to Purdue University in March and April 2009 and the Evansville African American Museum in May 2009. Additionally, a large portion of *Rock, Rhythm, & Soul* will be on display at the San Diego County Fair from June 12 through July 5 as part of their Music Mania exhibition. Arrangements are also underway to send banners to the Indy Black Expo in July 9-19 and Indiana University Southeast in August. If you would like to display *Rock, Rhythm, & Soul* at your institution, contact Ronda L. Sewald, the AAAMC Administrator and Project Manager, at 812-855-9960 or rsewald@indiana.edu. Additional information about the exhibit is also available on the AAAMC's website at: [www.indiana.edu/~aaamc/rock\\_rhythm\\_soul.htm](http://www.indiana.edu/~aaamc/rock_rhythm_soul.htm).

- Ann Shaffer, AAAMC Graduate Assistant

## Rock, Rhythm, & Soul Schedule of Future Events:

**Mar. 23—Apr. 24, 2009**  
Purdue Black Cultural Center  
Purdue University  
West Lafayette, IN

**May 5—30, 2009**  
Evansville African American Museum  
Evansville, IN

**June 12—July 5, 2009**  
Music Mania Exhibit  
San Diego County Fair  
Del Mar Fairgrounds  
Del Mar, CA

**July 9-19, 2009** (tentative)  
Indiana Black Expo  
Indianapolis, IN

**late-July—Aug. 2009** (tentative)  
Indiana University Southeast  
New Albany, IN