

**UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL BULLETIN
ANNOUNCEMENT**

Florida International University
University Graduate School

Doctoral Dissertation Defense

Abstract

Born in the U.S.A. / Made in the G.D.R.:
Anglo-American Popular Music and the Westernization of a Communist Record Market

by

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Scholars from multiple disciplines have shown that popular culture factored significantly in Cold War contestation. As a pervasive form of cultural content and unifying medium for baby boomers worldwide, pop music played an important part in the power struggle between the era's two ideological camps. Historical research of the past thirty years has identified initiatives of cultural diplomacy, from radio broadcasting to live concert tours, as key to the dissemination of Western music in Eastern Bloc societies. This research project demonstrates how cultural commerce across the divide of the Iron Curtain familiarized millions of music fans in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) with popular sounds from the United States, the United Kingdom, and other Western democracies.

The dissertation reconstructs the economic development of a state-owned culture industry and measures the popularity of Western cultural commodities in one communist marketplace. Drawing on previously unavailable archival files and oral histories of contemporary witnesses, it traces the evolution of Deutsche Schallplatten (German Records) from a small private firm into a flagship enterprise on the GDR's cultural circuit. It explains how dependency on technology and resources from capitalist countries prompted East Germany's music monopolist to prioritize the westward export of classical recordings to earn hard currencies at the cost of neglecting the low-brow sector of its home market. Empirically evaluating formerly classified production data, it reveals how communist managers through cooperation with capitalist partners escalated the import of Western rock, pop, and dance music to exhaust domestic purchasing power. The dissertation argues that intensifying commercialization and Westernization of its walled-in music market exemplified the GDR's decision to concede the Cold War battle over the cultural preferences and political loyalties of its citizens out of economic necessity.

Date: March 29, 2018
Time: 3:30pm–5:30pm
Place: Deuxième Maison 370

Department: History
Major Professors: Dr. Kenneth Lipartito
Dr. Jenna M. Gibbs