

Routledge Global Popular Music Series



Made in Finland

Studies in Popular Music

Edited by **Toni-Matti Karjalainen**
and **Kimi Kärki**

Made in Finland

Made in Finland: Studies in Popular Music serves as a comprehensive and thorough introduction to the history, culture, and musicology of twentieth- and twenty-first-century popular music in Finland.

The volume consists of essays by leading scholars in the field, and covers the major figures, styles, and social contexts of popular music in Finland. Each essay provides adequate context so readers understand why the figure or genre under discussion is of lasting significance. The book is organized into five thematic sections: Emerging Foundations of Popular Music in Finland; Environments, Borderlines, Minorities; Transnationalisms; Sounds from the Underground; and Redefining Finnishness.

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In memory of Olli Heikkinen



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Preface

Finland, the small peripheral Northern European country, has hosted a lively music scene for decades. The social importance of popular music has been notably high in the domestic context, ranging from live festivals and dance culture in rural areas to the clubs and arenas of the cities, from mainstream *iskelmä* (schlager/adult pop hits), pop, hip hop, rock, and heavy metal cultures to pulsating electronic underground scenes of basement clubs.

Finland's geographical and cultural position, combined with the peculiar Finnish language, has generated quite an intrinsic culture and a mixture of musical expressions that have united Finns and offered one of the most important ways to express Finnish national identity, both domestically and internationally. Being a scarcely populated and remote country with long distances between urban centers, Finnish popular music comprises high doses of eccentric musical experimentation. This has also resulted in peculiar forms of international music exports – from the cello heavy metal of Apocalyptica to the shouted choir rage of Mieskuoro Huutajat – and even contributing to the emergence of globally significant subgenres, such as the symphonic operatic metal expression by Finnish export giant Nightwish, or the love metal ambassadors HIM, not to mention the Eurovision Song Contest 2006 winning monsters Lordi. As further unique anecdotes, Finland has created and hosted the world championships of air guitar playing, hosted a thriving karaoke scene, and witnessed Metal Masses organized in a number of churches around the country.

Many of these examples, and lots of others explored in this book, may be deemed *typically* Finnish in their peculiar expression. In addition to such recurrent peculiarities, the narrative of Finnish popular music has inherently involved a particularly strong connection to the northern location, nature, weather, and four distinctive seasons of the country, its long dark winters, short bright summers, enormous forests, and countless lakes, isolation, and survival in the wilderness. Spiced up with higher doses of melancholy and a twisted sense of humor, this *narrative of the North* crosses genre borders, from tango to melodic death metal. Culturally and politically, the location of the country between East and West is another overarching theme historically present in Finnish popular music.

In this book, rather than trying to give a comprehensive review of Finnish popular music, the selected articles aim to highlight this narrative as well as the diversity of the Finnish cultural context and popular music scenes. By laying down some characteristic genres, artists, histories, and phenomena, the chapters aim to provide the reader with a varied and interesting overview of different Finnish popular music as well as to showcase some directions of popular music studies in Finland, including both historical and contemporary analyses from the 1960s to the present.

Among academic fields, the prospective readership is found among popular music studies, cultural history, cultural studies, and other related disciplinary fields, from undergraduate to post-graduate levels. In addition to academic scholars, the book should also appeal to a wide global audience of music fans and practitioners.

The chapters are organized under five thematic areas. We first explore the emerging foundations and mainstream history of popular music in Finland. Then, we lay out a number of insightful cases from the borderlines by touring some geographical peculiarities and minority perspectives within Finnish music culture. The third part involves a transnational focus and discusses imported influences and exported characteristics, hence illustrating the hybrid quality of Finnish popular music. Part four investigates the strong role of playful underground and DIY cultures, forming a striking feature in Finnish music production that has also become globally recognized. This finally leads to the reconceptualization of a national identity that, as the recent cases of country branding illustrate, can sometimes unfold in rather unexpected ways, from ice hockey to queer feminism.

The authors of the book come from a variety of Finnish universities, including both young promising researchers and highly experienced scholars who are known and well-qualified experts of their respective topics. The authors represent multidisciplinary research environments and different scientific fields, typical for the construction of Finnish popular music research.

Series Foreword

Popular music studies have progressed from the initial focus on methodologies to exploring a variety of genres, scenes, works and performers. British and North American music have been privileged and studied first, not only for their geographic and generational proximity to scholars, but also for their tremendous impact. Everything else has been often relegated to the dubious “world music” category, with a “folk” (or “roots,” or “authentic”) label attached.

However, world popular music is no less popular than rock 'n' roll, r&b, disco, rap, singer-songwriters, punk, grunge, brit-pop, or nu-gaze. It is no less full of history and passion, no less danceable, socially relevant and commercialized. Argentinian tango, Brazilian *bossa nova*, Mexican *reggaeton*, Cuban *son* and *timba*, Spanish and Latin American *cantautores*, French *auteurs-compositeurs-interprètes*, Italian *cantautori* and electronic dance music, *J-pop*, German cosmic music and *Schlager*, Neapolitan Song, Greek *entechno*, Algerian *rai*, Ghanaian highlife, Portuguese *fado*, Nigerian *jùjú*, Egyptian and Lebanese Arabic pop, Israeli *mizrahit*, Indian *filmi* are just a few examples of locally and transnationally successful genres that, with millions of records sold, are an immensely precious key to understanding different cultures, societies and economies.

More than in the past there is now a widespread awareness of the “other” popular music: however, we still lack access to the original sources, or texts to rely on. The *Routledge Global Popular Music Series* has been devised to offer to scholars, teachers, students and general readers worldwide a direct access to scenes, works and performers that have been mostly not much or at all considered in the current literature, and at the same time to provide a better understanding of the different approaches in the field of non-Anglophone scholarship. Uncovering the wealth of studies flourishing in so many countries, inaccessible to those who do not speak the local language, is by now no less urgent than considering the music itself.

The series website (www.globalpopularmusic.net) includes hundreds of audio-visual examples which complement the volumes. The interaction with the website is intended to give a well-informed introduction to the world's popular music from entirely new perspectives, and at the same time to provide updated resources for the academic teaching.

The *Routledge Global Popular Music Series* aims ultimately to establish a truly international arena for a democratic musicology through authoritative and accessible books. We hope that our work will help the creation of a different polyphony of critical approaches, and that you will enjoy listening to and being part of it.

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1

Introduction Between East and West, Local and Global

Toni-Matti Karjalainen and Kimi Kärki

Finnish popular music is characterized as welling up from a rather unique cultural position and context. Finland is, geographically and culturally, part of the European North, a member of the collaborative family called Nordic countries, but it also has a long history of being a region and a “middleman” between East and West. The periods under Swedish and Russian power throughout Finland’s history have left their mark on Finnish culture, especially by strongly pushing to find and define a specific Finnish identity and heritage that was, for instance, highlighted by the quest for national romantic forms of art and culture pre- and post-Declaration of Independence in 1917 and the amplification of the Finnish narrative after World War II. Popular music has played a key role in these cultural negotiations, both leaning on the Slavic influences and Finno-Ugric roots of our language and, at the same time, being very open and receptive to influences from the West; Anglo-American directions in particular, as harsh as this kind of a simplification may seem.

This introductory chapter lays the foundation for what follows in the respective and more detailed chapters of the book. We first offer a general chronological look into Finnish popular music, mainly from the 1950s to the present, providing examples of various musical genres and the slow internationalization of Finnish popular music. In this limited overview, we aim to illustrate the richness of Finnish popular music and, indeed, to show how it has become an original and creative melting pot of international and local influences. Second, we map and showcase some of the research traditions within Finnish popular music.

Presenting a comprehensive review of Finnish popular music would be a big task for a book of its own, but here we aim to provide an overview of some of the main lines. However, our aim is not – by any means – to provide a complete view, either on the popular music or its research in Finland. Concerning specific details and themes, genres and scenes, as well as artists, much more in-depth analyses are found in the remaining chapters of the book.

In terms of bibliographical references within the popular literature, there is a notable lack of English language books, or even one single book, on Finnish popular music history. Even in the Finnish language, the list of comprehensive reviews is relatively short, even though Gronow and Bruun (1968) wrote about a “century of popular music” in their book *Popmusiikin vuosisata* (A century of popular music) over fifty years ago. More recently, a profound review is provided, for example, by Jalkanen and Kurkela (2003) who particularly focused on the history of Finnish popular music in their thick book *Populaarimusiikki* (popular music), which is part of a

multi-volume book series on the history of Finnish music by the Finnish mainstream publisher WSOY. Lindfors et al. (2004a, 2004b, 2004c, and 2005), in turn, compiled a comprehensive four-book series for another major publisher, Tammi. Finnish views are also included in a book on the history of popular music by Janne Mäkelä (2011). Concerning different genres of popular music, specific books on Finnish rock history have been written in Finnish, for example, by Bruun et al. (1998) and Eerola (2016). Aho and Taskinen (2004) also published a book on the history of women in Finnish rock. Concerning different scenes, other works have covered partial Finnish histories of (Finnish slager) *iskelmä* (Rossi 2005), tango (Kärjä and Åberg 2012), punk and hardcore (Similä and Vuorela 2015), and metal (Nikula 2002). Some important local scenes have also been covered: for example, the cities of Tampere in *Manserock* (Rantanen 2012) and Turku in *Toisen soinnun etsijät* (the searchers of the second sound, Grönholm and Kärki 2017). The unique stories of record labels, Love Records (Rantanen 2005) and Poko Records (Kontiainen 2000), also document historically important chapters in Finnish pop music history. Muikku (2001) also reviewed the history of the Finnish record industry.

English-language publications, in terms of more comprehensive articles and historical overviews of Finnish popular music, are rare as well. Mäkelä (2008a) wrote about the history of Finland's cultural policy and music export. The recent *Oxford Handbook of Popular Music in the Nordic Countries* (Holt and Kärjä 2017) includes some Finnish views. In particular, Kärjä (2017) discusses Finnish views in a Nordic context. There are also numerous shorter texts online. For example, *Finnish Music Quarterly* offers many brief, yet good, articles; history reviews have been written, for instance, by Knuuti (2004), Mattila (2005), Välimäki (2014), and Djupsjöbacka and Hiltunen (2014). *Musiikkiarkisto* (Music archive) *Open Access*, in turn, includes rather encompassing timelines by Mäkelä (2008b, 2017), and there are naturally many more casual reviews available, for instance, Wikipedia offers a pretty good (yet brief and selected) review on “Music of Finland” for English-language readers.

Among the popular literature, tens of music books on various Finnish artists and bands, and other music contents, are published every year. Some of the Finnish-language books on internationalized artists have also been translated and published in English. There have been a large number of documentaries, feature films, and television programs made over the years, too. It is not possible to list this vast body of popular contents here, but it provides researchers with an extensive material basis for further analyses. The latter part of this introduction also lists some research on popular music conducted by Finnish researchers.

Brief Overview of Finnish Popular Music History

Preceding modern times and popular music, as we nowadays comprehend the genre, various kinds of folk music, dance music, and music in the military and other special contexts – let alone the personal and family spheres – have naturally been presented and consumed in Finland. Classical music and art music do not have as deep roots as elsewhere in Europe. However, the early 20th century and later success of Jean Sibelius and numerous other names more recently have put Finland on the world map of classical and art music. These genres are outside the scope of this book, including this brief overview. There are also genres of popular music that are left out of this introduction, including electronic music and underground movements that are, however, covered in their respective chapters. We also do not cover jazz or folk music in this review, despite their strong foothold in Finland, too.

The Early Years and Rise of Iskelmä in the 1950s

Let us fast-forward to the period after World War II, which marked the birth of Finnish popular music as a wider phenomenon. A culturally and commercially significant movement – like in many other parts of the world, as a matter of fact – the roots of *iskelmä* (the domestic Finnish form of schlager) can be traced to the 1930s, but the scene grew notably more active after the war. Finnish tango, first appearing mainly as an imported genre, also found its “Finnish” forms in terms of specific cultural contents wrapped around a particular melancholic, we could say Slavic, core and themes. These early forms often presented a type of mash-up of Eastern and Western influences. *Iskelmä*-incorporated melodies and harmonies – often written in minor key like Finnish music in general, as we see in the chapters of the book – had close connections to Russian and Italian counterparts in addition to several Scandinavian and Anglo-American influences. The new dance music appealed to large domestic audiences, particularly the mixtures of tango and *iskelmä*. Artists like Olavi Virta, the “King of Tango,” and Tapio Rautavaara became extremely popular all over the country. A new *tanssilava* (dance hall) culture also began to spread widely across the country. Quite early, female stars like Laila Kinnunen, Annikki Tähti, and Carola started to reach notable success. Finnish women artists are specifically reviewed in Chapter 13. In addition to these and other singers, Reino Helismaa and Toivo Kärki became influential as songwriters with new Finnish contents.

Rock Foundations of the 1960s and 1970s

The first rock 'n' roll concert was held in Turku in 1956, arousing quite a bit of controversial commentary¹ but it first entered the mainstream in the 1960s, particularly through imports. The 1964 Beatlemania peak was also experienced in Finland, followed by hysteria created by British beat group The Renegades. Some international guests also visited the country, like Jimi Hendrix in 1967. Alongside *iskelmä*, rock music also came into the picture in the repertoire of many popular Finnish artists. For example, Irwin Goodman represented a new hybrid form between these styles, providing the public with particularly humorous protest songs written by Vexi Salmi, who also wrote material for many other artists.

In rock as such, there was still less original songwriting involved; artists generally presented lots of cover songs, translated into Finnish, an approach that was also very typical for *iskelmä*. A special trade of influences occurred especially from the West in the early forms of Finnish rock (as shown in Chapters 3 and 7). Roughly speaking, up until the early 1970s, Finnish rock was very much dominated by foreign influences. Rock music got a foothold in Finland in the late 1950s, just like everywhere else, but most Finnish rock was basically copied from the United States. The biggest hits were generally translated into Finnish, and these then became hits in Finland. Local “rock stars” also performed tangos and other kinds of music that were popular in Finland for a longer period. The 1960s also brought along some new supporting activities within the popular music industry in Finland. Love Records started in 1966 and became a remarkable player for smaller and independent local artists. Domestic music literature began to emerge as well, as for example the already mentioned Gronow and Bruun's *Popmusiikin vuosisata* (1968) was published.

The cultural trade between the local and global also emerged early in terms of a division of bands singing in Finnish and those in English; concerning cultural trade-offs, often for commercial reasons, Finnish-sung contents have generally been domestically popular throughout history.

The Finnish language dominated early on, following the decision by most artists to stay domestic instead of trying to reach for any international following. In domestic markets, with only a few exceptions, artists had to sing in Finnish to succeed. Many became extremely popular domestically, and top Finnish popular music artists were highly visible in local media as well. Overall, the Finnish language played a prominent role in terms of the emergence of unique local expressions and the modification and adaptation of global musical trends, contributing to rather distinctive and original scenes.

The idea of Finnish music export was basically not at all realistic due to the domination of Anglo-American content in global popular music and the sheer lack of export knowhow and networks in Finland. More international possibilities started to emerge only decades later. In the late 1960s, however, there was some minor recognition, particularly within progressive rock. Interestingly, the birth of more original Finnish rock music almost coincided with the international progressive rock movement. Finland witnessed the foundation of several ambitious groups, most notably Tasavallan Presidentti (President of the Republic) and Wigwam. The latter (established in 1968), with their English singer Jim Pembroke, particularly managed to gain a small but firm reputation abroad. In the 1970s, Wigwam and Tasavallan Presidentti also appeared in good reviews in the United Kingdom, but a more notable breakthrough did not happen. Hurriganes, with their own kind of hard rock, gained some small success in Sweden in addition to their huge visibility in Finland.

The 1970s, in general, witnessed a fast-growing assortment of different rock activities. The first Finnish rock festival Ruisrock (Rye rock) took place in Turku in 1970, becoming a very big event on the Finnish scale in the following years. In that same year, the first stadium rock concert in Finland was organized when The Rolling Stones played at Olympic Stadium in Helsinki. The Tavastia Club also started in Helsinki and soon became a major venue for Finnish and foreign rock acts; as of this writing, it is still a central hub for rock music in the city.

The 1970s also brought a new lineup of domestically successful rock artists like Juice Leskinen, Hector, Dave Lindholm, and Kirka, to name a few, all of whom were very Finnish in terms of their appearance, narratives, and lyrics. The era also engendered a lot of long-term successful artists like Katri Helena and Danny. *Iskelmä* was still evolving and going strong, including the hugely successful *Finnhits* compilation cassette tape (compilations number 1–10 in the 1970s, and 1–4 in the 1980s) by the Finnlevy recording label, presenting a variety of Finnish popular music. *Humppa*, a kind of a variation of *iskelmä*, was also experiencing its peak in Finland in the 1970s.

The late 1970s punk movement also entered Finland in a rather influential manner, generating many domestic punk artists and manifestations like Pelle Miljoona and Hassisen Kone (Hassinen's machine). Soon one such band, the 1980-established hardcore punk group Terveet Kädet (Healthy hands), also managed to create some substantial underground influence abroad, especially in Brazil, during their almost 40-year-long career. Overall, the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s brought along a stronger youth culture and genre divisions, and new forms of subcultures. Diverse phenomena like disco, rockabilly, and punk started to divide some Finnish youth with new moral and societal discussions entering these scenes. For example, Britain's Sex Pistols were banned from playing in Finland because of rumors of their outrageous behavior. To further strengthen these new youth movements, branches of the *Elävän musiikin yhdistys* (Association for live music, ELMU) were established around the country.

Suomirock and International Influences in the 1980s

In the 1980s, popular music supply and demand rose to a new level in Finland, marking new directions taken in terms of our local–global continuum. On one hand, strong winds from major international pop and rock markets were blowing into Finland, facilitated by domestic and international media as well as internationally powerful record labels. On the other hand, the decade further fortified the domestic popular music scene with new forms and artists getting significant domestic attention. The big decade of (particularly American and British) pop music, hard rock, and heavy music was surely noticed in Finland, too. For example, as discussed in Chapter 4, the import of hard rock and metal music – simply called *hevi* in Finnish – made it a big, even mainstream, genre in music magazines and mainstream media, the biggest youth magazine, *Suosikki*, in particular.

At the same time, a specific form of rock, *suomirock* (Finland rock) with its 1970s foundations, became particularly strong (see Chapters 2 and 3 for more discussions). The name refers to rock music with Finnish lyrics, incorporating many influences from pop, *iskelmä*, punk, and other styles. *Suomirock* remained characteristically local, not even trying to directly imitate or be influenced by international styles, which was a virtue in the early years. In 1980, Ismo Alanko (later named a “father figure” of *suomirock*) won the Finnish Rock Championship, a domestic peculiarity, with Hassisen Kone. Alanko started a new successful band, Sielun Veljet (Brothers of soul), and through further projects he has stayed successful to date. As a representative anecdote, in 2019, Alanko was awarded the title Honorary Doctor of the University of Eastern Finland for his seminal role as a Finnish songwriter.

The city of Tampere and its lively music scene became the acclaimed center of *suomirock* with the hugely successful Eppu Normaali, Juice Leskinen, and Popeda, and the genre continued to further blur the boundaries of rock, pop, and *iskelmä*. The Tampere scene was also fortified by the influential record label Poko Records, which was established in 1977 by local music legend Epe Helenius, who also ran several record stores over the years. Another big domestic name, from Helsinki this time, was J. Karjalainen, who wrote numerous big hits in his own *suomirock* style of blending some folk, country, soul, and other influences with his characteristically Finnish lyrics. The regular rock program *Rockradio* started on Yle (Finland’s national public broadcasting company) in 1980.

Beyond the scene of *suomirock* – the contents and borders of which are debatable in any case – domestic fusions of pop and rock were dramatically gaining popularity, including bands like Dingo and Yö (Night) from the city of Pori. For a short period around 1984, Dingo, a sort of a neo-romantic pop group with a faintly glam rock appearance, created the first large-scale mass hysteria among teenagers by a Finnish band.

Speaking of glam rock, in the hard-rock-oriented vein, Hanoi Rocks became popular during 1982–1985 also outside Finland, especially in the UK, Japan, and the USA. They are considered the first large-scale export success from Finland, many years before any other serious cases, influencing many international bands, too. Unlike *suomirock* bands and other domestic favorites at the time, Hanoi Rocks were not very typically Finnish in their music, lyrics, or style. Their influences were drawn from international, especially Anglo-American, rock trends, and the band represents one of the pioneers of the new glam rock current, which soon created different side streams including the hugely popular glam metal scene of the US West Coast.

Overall, the Finnish hard rock scene created more small openings on the export front in the 1980s, especially by bands like Smack, Peer Günt, Havana Black, and Gringos Locos. There also were domestically recognized heavy metal bands like Zero Nine and Tarot, as well as an emerging speed/thrash metal scene toward the end of the 1980s led by Kerava-based band Stone. In the latter, their gaze was directed to the West and the internationally popular US-based thrash scene led by Metallica and others, thus having very few Finnish characteristics. The new metal scene, in addition to other new rock and underground movements, started to form, gathering in the lively youth center Lepakko (meaning “bat,” established in 1979) in Helsinki, for example.

Toward Globalization in the 1990s

Around the turn of the new decade, the world was changing, both music-wise and politically. The geo-political position of Finland was also transformed in new directions, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the 1980s Cold War between East and West. The period also witnessed new, dramatically paced forms of globalization, especially in the latter part of the decade, boosted by the rising importance of the internet. The big economic recession in the first half of the decade may have affected the activities of Finnish popular music circles as well, but the new global era that followed marked the start of a remarkably new era for Finnish music, particularly in terms of exports. A transformation from local to global, and the first strongly toward the West, started, as described by Välimäki (2014):

From the Eastern bloc’s next-door neighbour to EU Member State, from Cold War to globalisation. From Walkmen and a choice of two channels on TV to digital music and the vast expanse of the Internet. From hymnal reform to heavy metal mass, from spectral music to sound art, from Suomirock to Sámi rap. It is mind-boggling to think just how much Finland and Finnish music have changed over the past 30 years.

In the 1990s, many existing domestic acts continued, with varied success, but new styles were also created. On the export front, possibly the biggest international success from Finland thus far was the group Leningrad Cowboys, who toured in Europe and also played at the 1994 MTV Music Awards in New York. The idea followed from the humorous band Sleepy Sleepers, which appeared in the 1989 Aki Kaurismäki movie *Leningrad Cowboys Go America*. The band performed several times with the Red Army Choir of Russia, including the MTV performance with a cover of the 1974 Lynyrd Skynyrd song “Sweet Home Alabama” – which although humorous and anecdotal, was an interesting narrated reference to the cultural trade between East and West in Finnish popular music. And most certainly, this performance added to the reputation of Finns doing something unique and strange, which began to emerge with many new exported bands and artists in the 1990s and later in the 2000s. Still, Leningrad Cowboys was a rare example of “MTV era” success for a Finnish band. Hanoi Rocks came out and called it a day a bit too early, just before glam rock and metal started to attract global TV coverage on a large scale. However, there were bands like 22-Pistepirkko and Waltari making some bigger cult impact, especially in German-speaking Europe. Metal music also started to make an international impact, with some notable milestones achieved and lots of new bands established, particularly in the latter part of the decade.

New domestic successes included Finnish-singing rock bands like Kolmas Nainen (Third Woman), Neljä Ruusua (Four Roses), Apulanta (Fertilizer), CMX, and Ultra Bra. Finnish rap and hip hop were also taking their first steps, being very Finnish and overly humorous like the groups Raptori and Pääkköset. Some more Western-influenced cases, like Fintelligens and the underground movement with names like Notkea Rotta (Flexible rat) and Paleface, also started to mark a more “seriously” taken rap and hip hop scene. Examples of other cases following international trends, but with their own Finnish style with Finnish lyrics, also included several Eurodance-inspired groups like Aikakone (Time Machine).

The New Millennium

In the last two decades, with the exception of the huge domestic success of Finnish hip hop and rap, manifested in the stadium-filling group Cheek in particular, it is more difficult to point to any clear developments or directions in the Finnish popular music field because it has become very fragmented, with successful styles and artists emerging in various different genres. The new global village with the power of the internet, social media, and streaming services has also – as we very well know – dramatically affected the structure of the music business and music consumption in Finland. The once unknown and peripheral, yet domestically self-sufficient and vibrant, music country has also experienced a strong phase of internationalization. This is particularly highlighted by the success of Finnish heavy metal exports, as is further discussed in Chapter 4.

Besides metal and some unique cases in other genres, it is also important to note that, despite the rich music culture and high quality of the varied popular music produced, Finnish popular music has not yet made as big an international impact as, for example, the pop exports of our dear neighbor Sweden, often noted as the world’s third largest music exporter (see, e.g., Fleischer 2017). The recognition of Finnish music has, however, been increasing in recent years, and as argued in forthcoming chapters and coda, we might witness new international success cases soon in the 2020s. It seems that various forms of popular music have started to cross borders in more significant ways, and there appear to be several underground influences with strong international recognition, as shown in the chapters in the third section of the book.

However, the drastic successes that emerged right after the turn of the new millennium within metal, rock, pop, and electronic music was something really remarkable in Finland. It was also quite unexpected since it happened through so many different artists and styles – it seemed almost like Finland had been seriously discovered overnight by the international music field. Until the end of the 1990s, Finnish music was mostly inward looking, with a multitude of festivals, music industry, and live scenes mainly dedicated to local markets. But at the dawn of the new millennium, a wealth of Finnish bands made their international mainstream breakthroughs. For example, during 2000–2001, hip hop duo Bomfunk MC’s reached the most sold European hit single of 2000 with their song “Freestyler,” and techno/dance artist Darude achieved a global hit with his “Sandstorm,” a song that is still regularly played around the world. Also in 2000, love metal group HIM became the first Finnish chart-toppers in international rock markets.

The numbers also indicate the big change: The 2001 market value of Finnish pop export was five times bigger than in 1999. As Mattila (2005) states: “Everything changed in summer 2001.” Following the new international demand and prospects, Music Export Finland (later renamed Music Finland) was also established in 2002 to facilitate marketing and networking abroad. And the success continued. In 2003, rock group The Rasmus tasted big-scale success, with millions of

albums sold worldwide, reaching several gold and five platinum album designations, and extensive success touring. Furthermore, HIM achieved high positions in the album charts, Nightwish slowly became the biggest Finnish music import to date, and other metal bands like Children of Bodom and Apocalyptica started to appear visibly in various media and charts all over the world, not to mention the whole large front of Finnish heavy metal export that followed.

When monster rock band Lordi won the Eurovision Song Contest in 2006, totally out of the blue, it was one culmination of the rise in international awareness of Finnish popular music exports. The new export spearheads were also doing well business-wise. For example, in 2006, Finnish business magazine *Talouselämä* ranked Scene Nation Ltd, the production company behind Nightwish, at number eight in their listing of best Finnish companies. Moreover, on the “softer” side, pop/rock group Sunrise Avenue started to climb toward stardom, especially in German-speaking regions.

In the 2010s, big domestic names started to regularly fill big arenas and even stadiums with their big production shows, which had been mainly the territory of big international stars. The peak was when Cheek, the Finnish-singing hip hop artist, sold out Helsinki Olympic Stadium on two consecutive nights in 2014, also highlighting the position of hip hop as perhaps the most successful genre of the new millennium domestically – a development starting in 2003 when teenage star Pikku G (Little G) became the domestically biggest selling Finnish artist of the year.

The arena-sized concerts also reflected a rise in the importance of live shows globally. New domestic megastars like Jenni Vartiainen, PMMP, Antti Tuisku, Maija Vilkkumaa, and Anssi Kela, in addition to established names, reached new levels of success in terms of concert attendance. And interestingly, they represented quite a large variety of different styles, although generally positioned in the commercial mainstream blending together ingredients of pop, rock, and *iskelmä*. And remarkably, they all sing in Finnish. Even though Finnish-based English-singing international groups have been highly successful in Finland, it seems that the domination of Finnish-sung content has further strengthened over the last decade. Finnish lyrics even visibly entered the successful heavy scene, especially during the peak metal period of 2006–2010. Heavy metal sung in Finnish was a remarkably new thing for the earlier English-language-dominated scene, evolving especially in the 2000s with the domestic successes of bands like Timo Rautiainen and Trio Niskalaukaus (Trio neckshot), Kotiteollisuus (Home industry), Mokoma, and Stam1na, to name a few.

The shattered music field and international currents also attracted the new mainstream phenomenon of singing competitions to Finland. Formats like *Idols* and *Voice of Finland* have brought many successful artists to the domestic markets. *Vain Elämää* (Only life), the Finnish version of *The Best Singers* series, broadcast started in 2002 and shook the Finnish music mainstream – for instance, the super star status of Cheek was particularly boosted by his appearance in the program.

The Cross-Cutting Northern Narrative

Concerning the main themes of our book, there seems to be less negotiation on the East–West axis nowadays. Instead, more attention is on the discourses around the question of local versus global contents – particularly in terms of the contents and aesthetics “required” for an artist to be more widely recognized in domestic and international markets. Simply put, language is still the number one decisive factor of domestic success.

Moreover, we have remarked on the gradual rise in importance of cultural localities and country of origin characteristics in terms of achieving international recognition – a phenomenon that also appears globally as a certain counterforce to globalization and universalization that dominated many scenes in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Instead of the overarching East versus West identification discourses that were more typical in the early years, the current grand narrative of Finnish popular music tends to embrace the acclaimed unique cultural characteristics of Finland and, arguably, shared identity traits with other Nordic countries with whom there are various forms of international export collaboration.

The claimed narrative of *The North* – seeking an own, specific identity and maneuvering between East and West, local and global – is a story line that crosses genres and involves, in addition to specific cultural heritage and local myths, the strong presence of nature, unique seasons, and varied weather conditions, and also connects to the generally associated melancholic state of mind. Most strongly, such a narrative appears very typically in “darker” genres like metal (more specifically discussed in Chapter 4) but is also present in *iskelmä*, *suomirock*, and other Finnish genres, not to mention Sibelius and other influential names in classical music. Such a “soul of Finnish music” was also strongly presented at the 2019 opened Finnish Music Hall of Fame, the FAME museum, in Helsinki and historically represented by songs like “Lumi teki enkelin eteiseen” (Snow made an angel in the hallway) by Hector, “Joutsenlaulu” (Swansong) by Yö, and “Murheellisten laulujen maa” (The land of sad songs) by Eppu Normaali, just to name a few characteristic examples.

Finnish Popular Music Studies

The various aspects of domestic and international music scenes have been and are being explored in detail by a number of Finnish scholars, of which we also see many interesting examples in this book. There are, naturally, many other contributors of particular interest; some we have collected here in the remaining part of this introduction.

Universities

To begin, it is good to remember that Finland is a rather small country with only 13 universities. A few of these offer music studies, especially with a popular music focus. At the top, there are polytechnic-level arts academies, but they are more or less practice-based. One major difficulty with Finnish popular music studies – for a foreigner – is the peculiar language, which is spoken by less than 5.5 million people. A lot of academic research on popular music is, however, published in English. This is obviously more common in cases where the research topic is international, or the topic can be specifically seen as related to international currents. Having said this, we acknowledge that almost all research topics can be internationally contextualized.

The teaching and research of popular music at the university level in Finland has been traditionally done in several locations. The most notable are the University of the Arts Helsinki, specifically their Sibelius Academy, the University of Helsinki (Musicology), the University of Turku (School of History, Culture and Arts Studies – mainly Musicology and Cultural History departments), the University of Tampere (Music Anthropology, until 2011), the University of Eastern Finland (Cultural Studies), and Åbo Akademi University (Musicology). The University of Jyväskylä has also hosted important popular music research, such as The Beatles 2000 project (1997–2000), but their main

emphasis is on cognitive music studies. The research emphases differ depending on the department and the discipline. Even if we are hardly addressing folk music and jazz in this volume, there has been notable research on both topics at Sibelius Academy, Tampere, and Music Archive Finland² (formerly Jazz and Pop Archive in Helsinki). Two doctoral programs must also be mentioned. First, *musiikintutkimuksen valtakunnallinen tohtorinkoulutusverkosto* (Finnish Doctoral Network for Music Research, MuToVe) was active first as a doctoral program (2012–2015) and is now a network of eight universities. The second was the PhD Programme in Popular Culture Studies (PPCS, active during 2012–2015), a collaboration of four universities. It funded several doctoral studies on popular music studies, despite having a more general focus.

When it comes to the disciplines themselves, several methodological currents become evident. Even if there is some analytical, cognitive, and psychological work on popular music, the main body of researchers work within the field of cultural musicology, be it conceptualized as cultural studies, ethnomusicology/music ethnography, music history, audiovisual studies, or something similar. Besides the music itself, the research thus covers a wide range of topics, such as popular culture, dance, audiences, fans, reception, production, technology, the music industry, media culture, lyrics, and journalism.

Networks and Literature

Finnish popular music studies can also be seen as an interdisciplinary activity, mainly centered around the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM, established 1981), and more specifically its Nordic branch, IASPM Norden (1986). Finns have been active in the organization, including on the board of the international association, since the 1980s. Other important research associations are *Suomen musiikkitieteellinen seura* (Finnish Musicological Society, established in 1911), and *Suomen etnomusikologinen seura* (Finnish Society for Ethnomusicology, established in 1974).

In terms of the specific literature, to add more popular ones mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there are only a few methodological books on popular music in Finland, so far, and most of these are in Finnish. The most prominent include *Populaarimusiikin tutkimus* (The research of popular music), edited by Aho and Kärjä (2007), and *Musiikki kulttuurina* (Music as culture), edited by Moisala and Seye (2013), exploring some parts of Finnish popular music and its research. Notable Finnish-language journals that publish popular music research are *Musiikki* (Music, published by the Finnish Musicological Society), *Musiikin Suunta* (Direction of music), and *Etnomusikologian vuosikirja* (Yearbook of ethnomusicology), both published by the Finnish Society for Ethnomusicology, and the partly English *Finnish Music Quarterly* (published by Music Finland). Finnish popular music is also researched in the Nordic context, including many Finnish writers, in *The Oxford Handbook of Popular Music in the Nordic Countries* edited by Holt and Kärjä (2017). Furthermore, *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of the Popular Music of the World* touches on Finnish popular music, in particular Parts 7 (*Locations: Europe*) and 11 (*Genres: Europe*).

People

Next, we introduce a few Finnish popular music researchers from different disciplines and approaches, all professors or at the highly experienced docent³ level. This is definitely not meant to be a comprehensive list, and we have limited the list to people with a research interest in

Finnish popular music. What follows is mainly meant to give the reader an indication of the variety of research and clues for further searches. We have tried to divide researchers by affiliation and sometimes by methodological grounds, but it has been sometimes challenging as most tend to move between universities and also widen their academic horizons by finding new research topics and approaches. Possible mistakes are ours. Last, but not least, it has to be mentioned that a good number of these scholars are semi-professional musicians as well.

If there is a “grand old man” of Finnish popular music research, it must be Docent Pekka Gronow. He mainly worked within Yle, the Finnish Broadcasting Company, as the director of their record archive. He had already become known for his radio programs on blues and jazz in the 1960s, and he has written several books on the record industry and popular music. He also established an underground record company *Eteenpäin!* (Forward!) with M.A. Numminen in the mid-1960s.

Professor Vesa Kurkela, who worked at the University of Tampere and later at the Sibelius Academy as a professor of music history, is another example. His interests cover both historical music mediations and popular music. He even researched the music cultures of post-Communist-era Bulgaria and Romania, and he has written especially on 19th century Finnish music, music-related organizations, local music history in the Southern Ostrobothnia region, and the history of Finnish radio music. Kurkela collaborated with Docent Pekka Jalkanen, also well known as a composer, in their massive review of Finnish popular music history (Jalkanen and Kurkela 2003). Also working at the Sibelius Academy, Professor Lauri Väkevä has specialized in popular music history and music education. Docent Kaarina Kilpiö has researched Finnish music history, advertisements, audiovisuality, and music technology. Docent Olli Heikkinen in turn, has researched music and nationalism, music genres and registers, folk music, and music history. Moreover, Docent Saijaleena Rantanen has researched music and politics, music history, and Finnish migrant worker music. Docent Juha Torvinen, also affiliated with the University of Helsinki, has researched the philosophy of music – including a doctoral thesis on music and phenomenology in 2007 – and ecocritical thinking in music, including popular music.

If ethnomusicology and sound studies are considered, perhaps the most well-known Finnish researcher is Professor Helmi Järviluoma. She is Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Eastern Finland. As a sensory and soundscape ethnographer, Järviluoma has developed the mobile method of sensobiographic walking. Her research and art span the fields of sensory remembering, qualitative methodology (especially regarding gender), and environmental cultural studies to sound art and fiction writing. Concerning soundscape researchers who have written on popular music, we need to mention Docent Heikki Uimonen, a professor of popular music research at the Sibelius Academy, 2012–2017. He is an expert in music consumption, radio music, cassette tapes, and changing sonic environments. His research interests include the sonic construction of place, mediated music, social use of music, transforming soundscapes, and how all these intertwine. Docent Meri Kytö has researched sonic domestication, articulations of acoustic privacy, soundscapes of political protest, busking, football fans, and public libraries. Currently, she is writing about sensory agency and technology. Docent Elina Hytönen-Ng has specialized in jazz research, spatiality, soundscape studies, and ethnography. And Professor Pekka Suutari is an ethnomusicologist whose research focus has mainly been on Karelian-area music culture but also includes Soviet and Russian music culture.

Audiovisual aspects have been the target of a strong research emphasis in Finnish popular music studies. Professor John Richardson is an expert in several fields, including the cultural study of music, audiovisual research, popular music studies, contemporary music studies, gender