

What is American Popular Music?

(aka WTF)

Rockabilly

Vaudeville

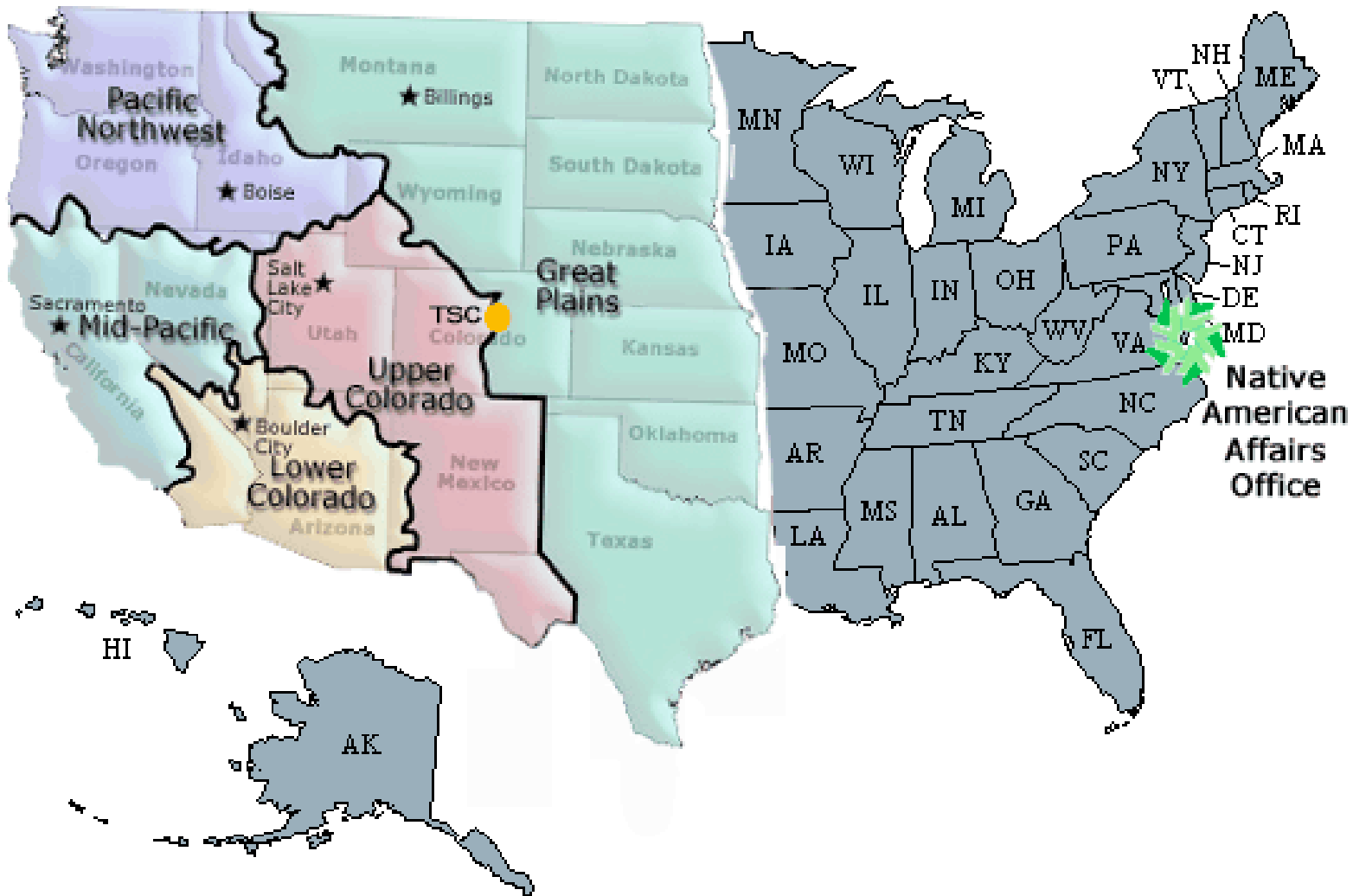




First: what do we mean by American Popular Music?

(Rockabilly singer-guitarist Kathy Zee, 1958)

Ok, wait -- before that: define the term American



First: what's meant by "American"?

American* =

"...of or relating to the experience of living in the United States."

"...following or adapting any ways of living common to Americans."

"...being characteristic of perspectives in the American media."

**In "American Studies", do not usually mean "American" in the sense of "the Americas", which include North and South America.*

What is "American Studies"?

<http://crossroads.georgetown.edu/>

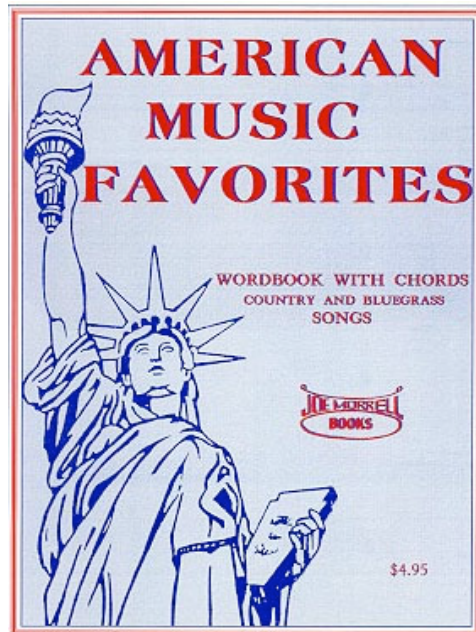
<http://eas-ref.press.jhu.edu/>

- "...vast range of disciplines....which, in one way or another, are trying to describe the cultures of the United States."
- But the United States has been both
 - a magnet for migration from around the world, *and*
 - the major economic engine of "transnationalism" and "globalization,"
- So "American Studies" is the study of a larger world in which America often *predominates in the relationships between cultures*

What is distinctly 'American' in Music?



Lena Horne



Marilyn Manson

What is distinctly American in Music?

Diaspora:

U.S. = site of continuous traumatic displacements of people throughout its history.

Media:

20th-c. Revolutions in media and information (esp. *recording, broadcasting*) often centered on American communities.

Commodification:

power in the U.S. is profoundly determined by access to capital; including "cultural capital"

-- so in the U.S., music that works as a source of identity will also work as a *commodity*.