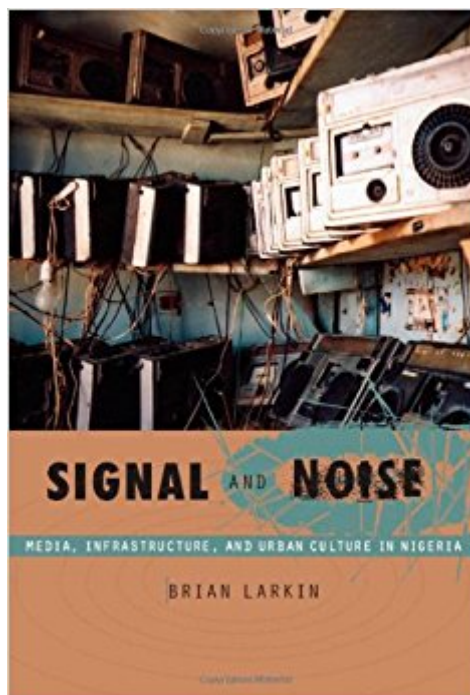


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Signal And Noise: Media, Infrastructure, And Urban Culture In Nigeria (a John Hope Franklin Center Book)



Synopsis

Mainstream media and film theory are based on the ways that media technologies operate in Europe and the United States. In this groundbreaking work, Brian Larkin provides a history and ethnography of media in Nigeria, asking what media theory looks like when Nigeria rather than a European nation or the United States is taken as the starting point. Concentrating on the Muslim city of Kano in the north of Nigeria, Larkin charts how the material qualities of technologies and the cultural ambitions they represent feed into the everyday experiences of urban Nigeria. Media technologies were introduced to Nigeria by colonial regimes as part of an attempt to shape political subjects and create modern, urban Africans. Larkin considers the introduction of media along with electric plants and railroads as part of the wider infrastructural project of colonial and postcolonial urbanism. Focusing on radio networks, mobile cinema units, and the building of cinema theaters, he argues that what media come to be in Kano is the outcome of technology's encounter with the social formations of northern Nigeria and with norms shaped by colonialism, postcolonial nationalism, and Islam. Larkin examines how media technologies produce the modes of leisure and cultural forms of urban Africa by analyzing the circulation of Hindi films to Muslim Nigeria, the leisure practices of Hausa cinemagoers in Kano, and the dynamic emergence of Nigerian video films. His analysis highlights the diverse, unexpected media forms and practices that thrive in urban Africa. *Signal and Noise* brings anthropology and media together in an original analysis of media's place in urban life.

Book Information

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A well-written and subtly argued examination of the social position of film and radio in a complex postcolonial context. The author's ideas about the ongoing use of older technology (and technology that doesn't work the way it was designed to) are particularly fascinating, as is his documentation of all the diverse cultural practices that circulate in and around Kano's movie theaters. Highly recommended for those interested in film spectatorship and radio listening - much of what is here challenges the common Euro/American based generalizations we are used to reading.

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