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***“Disco Sucks”: The Decline and fall of Disco Music***

In the 1970s, the underground and urban dance music known as disco increasingly entered mainstream radio in the United States, challenging rock music in both radio airplay and record sales. The radio deejay served as tastemaker and radio stations functioned as an institution, mediating which music made it to the airwaves. The influential medium of radio led to the mainstreaming and ever more popularity of disco, but also led in part to its decline and fall. In 1979, one event in particular, Disco Demolition Night, led to an almost overnight drop in popularity of the dance genre. Shock jock Steve Dahl of 97.9 WLUP-FM sponsored a baseball game promotion, involving a climatic explosion of vinyl disco records on the playing field in-between a double header of the Chicago White Sox and Detroit Tigers. For 98¢ and a donation of a disco record, the public could attend the game and observe a fiery destruction of vinyl disco records—their donated records! Scholars have also recognized that issues of race and homophobia played a role in the declining popularity of the dance genre. In my paper, I will examine how both radio deejays and radio stations served as musical institutions, exerting power of influence on the musical tastes of their listeners, ultimately leading to the chants and banners claiming that “disco sucks”.

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