

MOVEMENT

JOURNEY OF THE BEAT

Written by Stephen Mallinder

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Stephen Mallinder

ABSTRACT

Movement: Journey of the Beat addresses the trajectory and transition of popular culture through the modality of rhythm. It configures fresh narratives and new histories necessary to understand why auditory cultures have become increasingly significant in the digital age. Atomised and mobile technologies, which utilise sonic media through streaming, on-line radio and podcasts, have become ubiquitous in a post-work environment. These sonic media provide not merely the mechanisms of connection but also the contexts for understanding changing formations of both identity and community.

This research addresses, through rhythm, how popular music culture, central to changing perceptions of ‘self’ and ‘others’ through patterns of production and consumption, must also be viewed as instrumental in shaping new platforms of communication that have resonance not only through the emergence of new social networks and cultural economies but also in the development of media literacies and pedagogic strategies. The shift to online technologies for cultural production and global consumption, although immersed in leisure practices, more significantly alludes to changing dynamics of power and knowledge. An online ecology represents a significant shift in the role of place and time in creative production and its subsequent access. Popular music invariably provides an entry point and subsequent platform for such shifts and this thesis looks to the rhythms within this popular culture in as much as they encode these transformations.

This doctoral research builds on the candidate’s established career as music producer, broadcaster, journalist and teacher to construct an appropriate theoretical framework to indicate how the construction, transmission and consumption of popular music rhythms give an understanding of changing social contexts. The thesis maps the movement of commonly recognised popular rhythms from their places of construction to the spaces of reception within

broader political, socio-economic and cultural frameworks. The thesis probes the contribution of place and time in transforming global cultures, via social geography and memory, positioning such changes within readings of mobility, stasis, modernity and technology. By consciously addressing multiple disciplines, from populist to academic, *Movement* provides evidence of how wider structural changes have become reified within the beat and how in turn rhythm provides an appropriate modality through which change can be negotiated and understood.

MOVEMENT: THE JOURNEY OF THE BEAT

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PUBLICATIONS

A number of journal articles in relation to the topic, authored, and co-authored, by the candidate have been published during the writing of the thesis:

S. Mallinder, “Sheffield is Not Sexy”, (*Nebul4.3*, September 2007, pp. 292-327)

T. Brabazon & S. Mallinder, “Off World Sounds: Building a Collaborative Soundscape”, (*Journal of Media and Culture*, 9 (2) 2006 pp. N/A ISSN 1441-2616)

T. Brabazon & S. Mallinder “Popping the Museum: The Cases of Sheffield and Preston” (*Museum and Society*, July 2006. 4(2) pp.96-112, ISSN 1479-8360)

T. Brabazon & S. Mallinder, “Into the Night-Time Economy: Work, Leisure, Urbanity and the Creative Industries”, (*Nebula4.3*, September 2007, pp.161-178)

T. Brabazon & S. Mallinder, “Lots of Planets Have a North: Remodeling Second-Tier Cities and their Music”, (*Nebula5.1/5.2*, June 2008, pp.51-73)

T. Brabazon & S. Mallinder, “Branding Bohemia: Community Literacy and Developing Difference”, (*City and Time* – publication date tbc <http://www.ceci-br.org/novo/revista/index.php>)

INTRODUCTION

Rhythm is the architecture of being.¹
Léopold Senghor

In January 2010 I was invited to participate in a discussion on modernity and the post-punk period at the Sydney International Arts Festival. The more specific topic for debate was the role of sampling as evidence of evolving post-modern techniques, or ‘Signal to Noise: Circa 1979 (-83)’² as the theme was labelled by the festival. It was inferred through the panel presentations, that this period also heralded the beginning of a new and soon to be digital epoch of unfettered plagiarism and cultural burglary from which popular music has never recovered. A member of the audience questioned why Afrika Bambaatta’s *Planet Rock* release on 12 inch vinyl, in its unapologetic lifting, and non-attribution of Kraftwerk’s rhythms and melodies, should be viewed as a start-point in this debate when, for her, it was clearly an end-point. The inference was technology had suddenly brought about a loss in cultural authenticity. I responded to the comment hoping to prompt the audience member to expand her view. I was intrigued by this reversal of what was not only the accepted line with regard to *Planet Rock*’s place in a popular music narrative but also the track’s position as a fulcrum upon which much of this writing not only revolved, but over time discretely evolved. The track signified a very literal collision of African-American dance rhythms with the sensibilities of European technological minimalism. Equally significant was that the release pre-empted the important shift from analogue to digital technologies where the hybridization (or to use popular argot, mash-ups) of forms would become commonplace not only within music but, through technology, most manifestations of social and cultural production. Music had unconsciously, and not for the first time, sounded a

¹ Léopold Senghor, poet, philosopher and first president of Senegal (1960-80) quoted in I. Markovitz, *Léopold Sédar Senghor and the Politics of Negritude*, (Heinemann, London, 1969) p.7

² Sydney Festival 2010 – Circa 1979: Signal to Noise
<http://www.sydneyfestival.org.au/2010/Free/Circa-1979-Signal-to-Noise/> Viewed 22.01.10

clarion call for wider societal changes. The issues of technology, cultural referencing and the fluid movement of rhythmic signatures will unfold through the thesis, as will the roles of the above protagonists. However as this process of writing reached a conclusion the audience member's comment and subsequent discussion offered a timely reminder of where the process had begun. It was also confirmation, given sound's inherent impermanence, fluidity and movement, of the need to acknowledge certain common ground in electronic music - of significant artists, releases, periods, modalities and localities - and the inevitable debate which ensues in order to find meaning in its production and endless recontextualisation.

Such debate appropriates Jacques Attali's analysis of music's wider political currency, - "not only to theorize *about* music but *through* music,"³ as the aim and purpose of this research is to find meaning within the rhythms of popular culture. The thesis filters the pulses, collisions and appropriate absences in order to help map the movement of sounds, ideas and expressions through multiple, often conflicting, popular cultural narratives. As cultural production not merely contains but reinforces our social reality, by reconfiguring Attali's strategy, rhythm becomes a significant tool in understanding such changing realities. Rhythm has been the motor of change in the industrial and post-industrial age, its intricacies and nuances, accelerations and absences, in continuous flux shifting from the metronomic to the locomotive, the changing tempo of popular rhythms marking the passage of social time. As journalist Jon Pareles suggests, the endless transformation of the beat, more than the familiarity of melody or harmony, has provided the auditory narrative of the age of mass consumption of popular music:

Shift an accent, add a silence, give a part a different attack or move it into a new register, and a new rhythm is born; by comparison, melody and especially harmony

³ J. Attali, (trans. B.Massumi) *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1985) p.4

seem to be known quantities. Through the 20th century, factors from technology to spirituality have colluded to return rhythm to its age-old place of primacy.⁴

Without isolating the beat from the totality of the music of which it is part, this thesis grants centrality to the most visceral component of our sonic domain. Rhythm, that most perceptible yet least tangible characteristic of popular music, provides inherent functionality. Of the seven major elements of music, the beat is implicit in three: tempo, meter and rhythm itself, providing the architecture upon which pitch, harmony, melody and loudness can shape and aesthetic.⁵ The mechanics of the beat bestow not only an infrastructure onto which melody and harmony can be built but also a modality that enables sounds, and the ideas upon which they are constructed, to move through time and space. The transforming tempos of popular rhythm measure out the passage of structural change. The movement of the beat is addressed in the project through both analogue and digital spaces in order to help understand both our past and present capacity to navigate or transcend physical and virtual worlds. As rhythms and sounds accelerate through digital space, they morph and transform in fractal patterns challenging our capacity to definitively read or map their mutation. This analysis aims to trace this multiplicity of rhythms and counter rhythms in order to discern meta-narratives contained within them. By giving centrality to popular rhythms, a more oblique view to our social reality is proffered, presenting a certain, if relative, truth regarding the world we wish to understand and offering further evidence of its complexity and vitality.

Rhythm's authority rests on its capacity to anchor sound's inherently amorphous nature through metronomic rigour. As the anarchy of sound takes shape in music, the components of pitch,

⁴ J. Pareles, "The Rhythm Century: The Unstoppable Beat", (New York Times, 03.05.98)
Online:

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9905E6DB163EF930A35756C0A96E958260>
Viewed 05.11.08

⁵ Meter is the specific arranged pattern of beats across a period of time, rhythm the order and structure of those patterns combined or grouped, and tempo represents the speed or pace of the rhythm.

melody, harmony, and timbre are parameters that are principally internalized and personalised. Rhythm is primarily marked by its exteriority, our response being, as neurologist Oliver Sacks suggests, ‘elemental’.⁶ We may hum or whistle our favourite tunes, constructing songs in our minds for personal or domestic amusement, rhythm, however, is largely characterised by the physicality of our reaction. This thesis looks to construct a sonic narrative by addressing a corporeal response, by listening, in Nietzsche’s words, “to music with our muscles”.⁷ Our usually spontaneous, or automatic, reply to rhythm contributes to personal and collective interaction upon which many populist cultural practices have been built. The beat is above all else ‘social’, binding communities and groups through the dances they share, usually in ecstatic response. This physicality forms the basis of creative and cultural communication that can be addressed at the points of production, transmission and reception. The processes of making, moving, and appropriation of rhythm enables us to negotiate its wider meaning. However it is the very unpicking of this physicality that begins to problematise the beat’s movement. The final stage of the research addresses the significant movement away from analogue into digital space as sounds, identities and communities fragment and transform. The research is framed by the specifics of both time and place acknowledging that they are essential in the construction of the sounds and rhythms that move them, to become contained within the increasingly fluid communities that are built precariously upon them. This investigation employs the relationship between significant binaries - of the local and global, the physical and the virtual, mobility and stasis, experience and memory - which continually inform and transform the cultural production and social practices that have evolved from the beat and in whose reading meaning can be negotiated.

⁶ O. Sacks, *Musicophilia* (New York, Picador, 2007) p. xi

⁷ F. Nietzsche, (trans. W. Kaufmann) *The Portable Nietzsche*, (New York, Penguin, 1997)

Rationale and Methodology

Sound's inherent resistance to containment, together with the continual and incremental transformation of the underlying rhythms of popular music, have required the application of a range of analytical approaches in this research in order to address and find meaning in the trajectory of 'the beat'. Multiple discourses run through the thesis, particularly in an attempt to avoid racial or spatial essentialism, and economic or technological determinism. Nevertheless such factors do drill into broader narratives that allow the thesis to configure such structural analysis. The research employs three elements to frame the movement and agency that rhythm provides – time, space and identity. These constituent parts are also be reconfigured as the conditions of production, transmission, reception and appropriation. In this context, the thesis addresses the temporal and spatial conditions upon which rhythm is constructed. It frames the subsequent dissemination of these sounds within broader socio-economic and political structures. From the post-Civil War roots of jazz and blues in the nocturnal spaces of New Orleans to the invisible digital producers of newer sonic forms 'grime' and 'dub-step', social engagement and cultural production are circumscribed by socio-economic mechanisms which impinge upon them and of which they, in turn, become an integral part. As producer Quincy Jones glibly observed, "the times are always contained in the rhythms".⁸ The thesis employs an extensive range of popular cultural and academic resources, together with literary, sonic and visual references, to map the movement of sound, people and ideas across spatial and temporal borders. The research addresses the continual hybridization and, in the context of the historical collisions of populist forms, the creolization of sounds and rhythms, which require multiple points of analysis in order to address theories of authenticity or points of origin.

⁸ P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (Cambridge, Mass. University of Harvard Press, 1993) p.109

Specific mechanisms are interwoven with these grand narratives. Technologies, which are essential tools of popular cultural production, have also continually conditioned how those sounds and beats are moved, received and heard. From past prosaic tools, to contemporary software, auditory cultures are continually reshaped and reformed. The objective is to map the significant shift from analogue to digital technologies as the increasingly accelerated transmission and consumption of information leaves those with access as, often unconsciously, connected. In this final context, rhythm, moving through this matrix of digital space, has created a ubiquitous, if frequently subliminal, encoding of this hyper-connectivity. The role of technology, particularly transformations in space and time biased communication is vital in addressing the movement of people, ideas and products. Such changes provide an important factor of mediation, bridging the space between producer and consumer, subsequently shaping the development of personal identities and cultural communities. We read, see and style the beat as well as hear and move to it. The research addresses this relatively recent shift into digital cultures to find meaning in the growing fragmentation and fractal progression of rhythm. It is this accelerated progression that problematises definitive classification of not merely the sounds but also the precise identity and make up of these more recent digital online communities. Technology is a vital determinant in this thesis's reading of change and movement, of production and consumption, and, in the final analysis, of acceleration and dissipation.

The research is structured around rhythmic templates, which although never stable have been acknowledged as significant within a broad popular cultural narrative: reggae, hip-hop, house, soul, techno, electro and more contemporary digital rhythms, drum and bass, break-beat and glitch. Each in turn has been circumscribed by time and place in which they were constructed (Kingston, Jamaica, Detroit, Sheffield, New York, Düsseldorf, London and Chicago), but subsequently recontextualised by the spaces in which they were consumed. Such specificity of space and time dissolves under the glare of closer scrutiny and supports the thesis premise that

sound inherently resists containment. Sound driven by the beat transgresses all boundaries, challenges delineation. Although the investigation debunks the essentialism of singular time and place it employs such strategies in order to navigate what would otherwise be an indecipherable sonic topography. As a keynote speaker at a Melbourne music conference in 2006, (an international event which drew male and female electronic producers from Mexico, Canada, Germany, India and China), I witnessed a young Asian producer address delegates from the floor to say:

It was drum and bass that first opened me up to the genres and different beats. When I heard about drum and bass, I found out about the jazz in there. So then I went on to get into Detroit and techno, then house and Chicago, I found out about broken beats and all the other sounds. You see where I come from its restricted but it was the drum and bass and jungle that got me to see it all.⁹

Others in the room nodded in acknowledgement. His point slowly trailed off, but he had intimated what has become accepted as an informal, but globally recognised, taxonomy of rhythm. Print and digital media have compartmentalised sound; from rock to folk, country to heavy metal. Rhythm has positioned itself within the popular cultural narrative through its own nomenclature. The thesis employs this accepted codification in order to negotiate a pathway through the matrix of sound with which we have become confronted. Nevertheless it challenges the notion of convenient compartmentalisation in order to find more complex meanings within what are in actuality fluid and morphing rhythms.

The research has been required to confront the innate nature of sound, its resistance to containment, its evanescence, its lack of tangibility. All of which impose, frequently inadequate, descriptors to enable the listener, and researcher alike, to find the appropriate associations or linkages. The unavoidable subjectivity applied through this process, the imposition of labels, of

⁹ Anonymous music producer, Red Bull Music Academy, Melbourne October 23, 2006
[http://www.redbullmusicacademy.com/HOME.12.0.html?&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[cat\]=7&tx_ttnews\[pointer\]=1&cHash=138072a23d](http://www.redbullmusicacademy.com/HOME.12.0.html?&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[cat]=7&tx_ttnews[pointer]=1&cHash=138072a23d)

tidily packaged genres that enable the listener to flick through CD racks, magazine stands or more recently trawl websites, blogs, and other auditory gatekeepers is a necessary, if unsatisfactory, process. Attributed to diverse authorities, including Miles Davis, Elvis Costello, Frank Zappa, Laurie Anderson and Gertrude Stein, the somewhat clichéd proclamation that, “writing about music is like dancing about architecture”¹⁰ underlines the inherent problems of applying appropriate models for critical analysis, of one medium’s translation through another. Andrew Blake, in examining the distinctiveness of British music culture, alludes to the inherent difficulties of music theorisation, “which is, as yet, struggling towards birth”.¹¹ In considering the continual address of music through the spoken and written word, there remains “the paradox of confronting words about music.”¹² Ironically this author’s personal background has continually required such popular media translations. Having fulfilled, often through economic necessity, a considerable number of roles within music, including that of journalist¹³ the thesis has adopted, in the nature of the research and the style of writing, such popular media affectations. Such experiences and understandings have been embraced not only to justify the application of these loosely, but popularly, accepted and understood rhythmic paradigms but also in order to find appropriate criteria. Once adopted the taxonomy is more readily deconstructed, in order to unpick the multiple layers of interconnected sound. This process becomes a means to flush out the ideas of modernity, race, sexuality, physicality, community, ecstasy, and memory that have become embedded within these beats. The movement of the rhythms in popular music across these borderless worlds, and the cultural collateral attributed to them in the process, has required broad and inclusive research. The common discursive platforms of popular music: television; radio; music press; fanzines; and more recently

¹⁰ The source of this frequently referred to quote is somewhat spurious. Most commonly associated with Elvis Costello, http://thinkexist.com/quotation/writing_about_music_is_like_dancing_about/174805.html However the debate has also acknowledged many others, <http://www.ilxor.com/ILX/ThreadSelectedControllerServlet?boardid=41&threadid=4185>

¹¹ A. Blake, *The Land Without Music* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997) p.10

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ The author worked as both a print and broadcast journalist in Australia from 1996-2007

websites; fan-sites; and blogs have provided important resources for this research, and are perhaps most responsible for the compartmentalisation of popular rhythms and styles. However the multiple narratives at play are grounded in structural transformations - economic, social and political - that impact upon music's evolving forms. The application of theories of mobility, modernity, communication, technology, identity, work, leisure and space provide frameworks upon which the flow of popular rhythms is built.

In mapping the construction, movement and collision of popular rhythms it is possible to more clearly comprehend the transformations that have underpinned them. The metronomic pulse of soul, accentuated on the 2nd and 4th or backbeat, became a click track to America's post-war production boom, its manufacturing heartbeat. In contrast the fragmented 'glitch' beats, globally produced and largely invisible¹⁴, have become one benchmark of digital production. The emblematic syncopation of Jamaican ska, with stressed and rested beats, remerged through London's early dubstep. In each case rhythm has provided a cipher for times, and spaces, in which they were created and heard. In a period of cultural fracture and fragmentation the assurances of a clear narrative have been challenged. The once acknowledged linearity of popular music suggested by reggae and soul, and whose salient features, flagged by media and cultural authorities, were accepted as canonic, has been lost to a pervasive 'present'. Presently, rhythm's quantum nature, paradoxically discrete and yet complexly interwoven, represents the multiple layers of connection and interaction through which digital society presently engages. It is this loss of linearity that requires new histories of movement, engagement and disconnection to be considered. The pulses of the 'nano' age are evidence of scale and complexity that can be understood in the context of past cultural formations.

¹⁴ As examples of 'glitch' beats constructed from digital minutiae - subsonic throbs and high-end clicks – Prefuse 73, Vibesquad, in West Coast USA, Four Tet and Autechre in the UK are evidence of globally dispersed producers. <http://www.vibesquad.com/> and <http://www.warprecords.com/artists/index.php?artist=ae>

The rationale and departure points for mapping the movement of these popular rhythms, although acknowledging a broader and commonly understood taxonomy, has in part been informed by the author's own association with music. Although not adhering to a strict timeline there is a concession to a personal history of engagement with much of the music presented - as a producer, performer, and importantly as a listener and consumer. This subjective, but considered, narrative potentially imposes a misleading linearity to the beat's path however it does empathise and conform to an understood chronicle of popular music. The sequence of chapters does enable the reader to thread together the transforming rhythms and provides appropriate theoretical frameworks to develop a clearer understanding of how these transformations were supported. The rhythms are underpinned by acknowledged understandings of space, mobility, race, modernity, communications, and identity as evidence of how the beats were moved. These diverse, though not disparate, sources are drawn together to indicate the underlying significance of how rhythms connect and reify wider social, economic and cultural transformations. Building upon the Atlantic Diaspora¹⁵ the rhythms of Jamaica provide an appropriate starting point, linking an embedded past to an imagined future. They signify a post-colonial and new commodity world whose sounds moved physically and emotionally to be reconstructed in a post-war United Kingdom. The city of Sheffield constructed its rhythms against the backdrop of this changing cultural composition; shaped by its own spaces and histories the city also absorbed these 'other' sounds to support the development new creative city industries. Detroit, like Sheffield offered changing music modalities, and very specifically rhythms, as evidence of such urban transfiguration. The city's metamorphosis from the shiny optimism of soul music to the minimalism and functionality of techno offered confirmation of changing understandings of mobility, work and cultural production. Düsseldorf counters this North American narrative with a European perspective of technological change and modernity, importantly against the backdrop of West German reconstruction. The synergy between

¹⁵ P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (Cambridge, Mass. University of Harvard, 1993),

Sheffield, latter-day Detroit and Düsseldorf provide evidence of the flow and counter-flow of cultural influence. As the beats and electronic sounds converge so it becomes possible to see the emergence of a post-modern, decentred sonic ecology. As testimony to the multiple pathways of cultural affect the modish sounds of new technology emerging from the industrial cities of West Germany also informed the beats of electro and hip-hop. Although acknowledging the significance of New York the rhythms of hip-hop signify the loosening of the anchors of place and the acceleration of global associations and networks. Although driven by hip-hop's overt commodification this particular part of the investigation also affords the author to underline the complexity of cultural associations and demonstrates the multiple levels of hip-hop communities. Against this backdrop of a fragmenting beat culture the emergence of house music reinforces the changing dynamic between producer, performer and audience evident in hip-hop. Club music's apogee during the late 1980s and 1990s demonstrated how music was appropriated, transformed and moved by a new dancefloor diaspora. With club music at its most proliferous the period also marked a point of change from a past analogue commodity world to the very beginnings of a digital and soon-to-be abstract online ecology. The investigation concludes with how rhythms online give evidence of changing understandings of ways in which individuals and communities connect, associate and move information. The conclusion finally unpicks the imposed narratives and constructed sense of order as the beats, now abstract and binary are encoded in the online universe.

The investigation begins by addressing the movement of Caribbean rhythms from their spaces of construction. The sonic template of Jamaica, as addressed in the *Digital Rasta* chapter, represents the transformation and relocation of ethnically prescribed rhythms through migration, technology, iconography, and commodification. Expanding on Barbara Browning's reading of

the viral like dissemination of African rhythms¹⁶ the thesis looks to how the specificity of place allowed the creolisation of indigenous African folk traditions. The key metamorphosis taking place as these sounds fused with the crackling sound of American rhythm and blues that arrived both on disc and as the furthest possible reach of deep South radio signals. Such sounds would shape future post-colonial communities in British and, through post-war relocation, North American cities, where nostalgic constructions of home by first generation migrants framed and projected perceptions of Caribbean popular culture. The thesis acknowledges the writings of David Morley in centring ‘home’ as an important tool in identity building¹⁷. Interviews with a first generation Jamaican migrant, Everton Smith, are drawn upon to proffer evidence for the role of music in this exotic heimat.

The writings of Stuart Hall and Dick Hebdige,¹⁸ together with oral histories and music writers, such as Lloyd Bradley¹⁹, are used to piece together a narrative of Jamaican music and its subsequent importance to members of a globally dispersed community. Looking to Ronald Segal and Paul Gilroy the movement of Jamaican rhythms signifies the continuation of an Atlantic diaspora²⁰. This sustaining of community is viewed through the lens of reggae’s ideological and cultural expansion, one that has attempted to resist dilution through ersatz commodities and mock lingua franca. Drawing upon Louis Chude-Sokei’s readings of post-nationalist geographies and the ideological links with Africa²¹ the research looks to the transformations that have been built upon the bold iconography of reggae, which has

¹⁶ B. Browning, *Infectious Rhythm: Metaphors of Contagion and the Spread of African Culture* (New York, Routledge, 1998)

¹⁷ D. Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London, Routledge, 2000)

¹⁸ D. Hebdige, *Cut ‘n’ Mix* (London, Comedia, 1987) and S. Hall, “Minimal Selves” in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, H. A. Baker, Jr., M. Diawara and R. H. Lindeborg (eds), (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996)

¹⁹ L. Bradley, *Bass Culture* (London, Penguin, 2000)

²⁰ P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (Cambridge, Mass. University of Harvard, 1993), P. Gilroy, *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack* (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1987) and R. Segal, *The Black Diaspora* (London, Faber & Faber, 1995)

²¹ L. Chude-Sokei, “Postnationalist Geographies: Rasta, Ragga and Reinventing Africa” in Potash, C (ed) *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution* (London, Schirmer, 1997)

continually framed global perceptions of the alterity of Jamaican cultural production from the exotic to resistant. The global exploitation of the rhythms of reggae and dancehall through commodified forms, never more evident than at the 2008 Olympic Finals in Beijing as Jamaican Usain Bolt, celebrated being the fastest human to the strains of Bob Marley's *Redemption Song*²² in front of a global audience of nearly 3 billion people. However looking outside the reach of reggae's more commercial reach authors David Toop²³ and Mark Prendergast²⁴ provide recognition of the role of 'dub', specifically its use of space and absence, in contemporary sonic production. As the opening chapter title, *Digital Rasta*, taken from one of the researcher's own early releases,²⁵ suggests the thesis maps the movement of the rhythms into contemporary global styles from 'reggaeton' to 'dub-step'.

In contrast to the portability of Jamaica's cultural building blocks, the sounds and rhythms of Sheffield demonstrate a regional capacity to absorb and incubate sound. Using statistical data²⁶ the chapter, *Sheffield Isn't Sexy* demonstrates how socio-economic factors impinge on local narratives and their subsequent shaping of popular cultural production. Employing notions of psychogeography the chapter suggests how it was possible for the industrial rhythms of the region to become subliminally translated into sonic templates as it mapped the city's entropic course through creative industry strategies. As the effects of the city's mono-cultural decline created a void which music production, in absorbing the cultural and historical ambience of the city, was able to fill. The researcher's personal association with the city, together with the help of local journalist Martin Lilleker, has enabled this part of the thesis to draw upon local histories. First hand knowledge of music production and the municipal strategies for

²² Jamaican athlete Usain Bolt broke the 100 metres record at the Beijing Olympics in a time of 9.69 seconds, 17.08.08

²³ D. Toop, *Ocean of Sound* (London, Serpents Tail, 1995)

²⁴ M. Prendergast, *The Ambient Century* (London, Bloomsbury, 2003)

²⁵ Track Title: 'Digital Rasta', Album: *Microphonies* (Virgin Records 1984)

²⁶ Economic figures drawn from sources including: M. Dinfentass, *The Decline of Industrial Britain 1870-1980* (London, Routledge, 1992) and I. Gazeley and A. Newell, *Unemployment in Britain since 1945* March 1999 (School of Social Sciences, University of Sussex)

rejuvenation in the 1980s and 1990s, which drew heavily from that cultural reservoir, has helped give authority to this part of the thesis. With reference to a wide range of academic journal and policy papers²⁷ the research addresses the development of Sheffield's nascent creative industries emerging in the spaces of primary industry entropy. Such developments, brought about by regional policies that sought the construction of a cultural hub, quickly began to highlight the inherent problems that arise from any attempts at the institutionalisation of sound. The creation of the National Centre for Popular Music was a well intentioned but flawed municipal attempt at anchoring sound within a circumscribed space. The project's attempt at science park functionality, housed the centre in an iconic, and ironic, drum shaped design. This clear manifestation of the city's underpinning rhythm, was not sufficient to save it from premature closure. The process demonstrates an inability to effectively contain sound's salient characteristics of movement and transgression, most particularly through 'top-down' policy initiatives. Through local narratives and the collapse of the Centre the chapter addresses the role of memory in the dissemination of rhythms in a region that was making bold attempts to embrace a post-work economy.

The thesis turns to the shifts in the music production of Detroit in order to assess the allegorical nature of rhythm and its capacity to become an abstraction of socio-economic change. Applying Stanley Aronowitz and other scholars'²⁸ readings of the post-work economy, the research maps the changing modes of popular cultural production. The chapter *From Chevrolets to Laptops*

²⁷ Key sources include: A. Lovatt & Justin O'Connor, "Cities and the Night-time, Economy", *Planning Practice and Research*, (Vol. 10, No. 2, 1995); L. Moss, "Sheffield's cultural industries quarter 20 years on: what can be learned from a pioneering example?" *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group (Vol. 8, No. 2, 2002) and A. DiGaetano and P. Lawless, "Urban Governance and Industrial Decline: Governing Structures and Policy Agendas in Birmingham and Sheffield, England, and Detroit, Michigan, 1980-1997", *Urban Affairs Review*, (Vol. 34, No. 4, 1999)

²⁸ Texts include, S. Aronowitz, and J. Cutler, (eds) *Post-Work*, (New York, Routledge, 1998) S. Aronowitz, B. Martinsons, and M. Menser, (eds), *Technoscience and Cyberculture*, (London, Routledge, 1996) and P. Toynbee, *Nickel and Dimed*, (London, Granta, 2002) and *Hard Work*, (London, Bloomsbury, 2005)

traces the shift from work to leisure practices that have become reified in Detroit's industrial decline and the subsequent rise of the city's electronic music creation. Such is the city's association with its sonic past that many, most recently journalist Rupert Cornwell, resort to cliché describing a battle "for its soul" as the transformation of fortunes allude to Detroit as a post-American city, "a Pompeii of the industrial era".²⁹ The defining role of Detroit's sonic production in popular music's global narrative requires the chapter to be composed in two parts in order to address the paradigmatic transformation of the city's rhythms, one which marked the end of the industrial age. The city's significance is underlined by a former car worker who noted, "Detroit just got it first, but it could happen anywhere now."³⁰ Drawing upon a rich source of cultural texts, from Gerri Hirshey's and Peter Guralnick's seminal histories of soul music³¹ to more recent writings, for example Mark Anthony Neal's generational 'soul babies' analysis of the period's enduring social impact.³² The music of cities like Detroit and Philadelphia travelled beyond their regional and national borders to white working class and later, as evident in Banjerja and Hutnyk's writings³³, the complex identity of British Asian communities. As the thesis traces the transformation of soul music's factory floor practices, the embodiment of Fordist production techniques, to techno's decentred creativity, evidence is sought in more recent interviews and analysis on websites and specialist music media. The changing nature of textual forms mirror the city's transforming beats in marking America's shifting mobility and modernity.

²⁹ R. Cornwell, "Downtrodden Detroit fights for its very soul", *The Independent on Sunday*, 17.08.08, p.39

³⁰ Richard Feldman, a former Detroit car-worker, quoted in P. Harris, *From Motown to Misery: The Bitter Fate of Detroit*, *The Observer*, 01.11.09, pp.36-37

³¹ G. Hirshey, *Nowhere to Run: The Story of Soul Music*, (London, MacMillan, 1984) and P. Guralnick, *Sweet Soul Music*, (Edinburgh, Canongate, 2002)

³² M.A. Neal, *Soul Babies*, (New York, Routledge, 2002)

³³ K. Banerjea, and P. Banerjea, "Psyche and Soul: A View from the South" in S. Sharma, J. Hutnyk, and A. Sharma, (eds) *Dis-Orienting Rhythms: The Politics of New Asian Dance Music*, (London, Zed Books, 1996)

Evidence of the nation's shiny chrome surfaces of 1960s auto-mobility, with its network of freeways is proffered through Dick Hebdige's readings³⁴ of the emergent musical language of American popular forms. The erosion of this modernity superseded by silicon technology, and attendant matrix of digital connections, is addressed in part by changing perceptions of race and class. The changes in the rhythms of the city are viewed in the context of such wider transformations, from work to leisure economies, national to trans-national linkages, and the identities built upon them. The chapter bridges the space between Sheffield in the previous chapter and Germany in the following one. The links reinforce the belief in the growing impact of national and global economic policies on social formations and the cultural production that comes as a result. The research indicates how changing cultural production practices, from factory floor structures to informally connected nodes, have become reified within the rhythms.

The chapter *Europe Endless* analyses, through the work of the Düsseldorf-based, and significantly global artists, Kraftwerk, the impact of post-war European conditions on the rhythms of contemporary popular and electronic music. The research positions the group's projection of a lost Weimar 'modernity' and post-war mobility in the context of earlier American rock n roll rhythms and the subsequent beats of New York hip-hop and electro. The research turns to Zygmunt Bauman and others' readings of modernity and the reconstruction of post-war Europe to help address the apparently conflicting modalities of nostalgia and technological-modernity.³⁵ The chapter demonstrates how the specificity of post-war Germany informed the sonic and visual template of the group to frame their romantic constructions of technology, cosmopolitanism and movement. It returns to the theme of home, with the German ideas of 'heimat', as with Jamaica, centred on a nostalgic social construct, but this time

³⁴ D. Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light*, (London, Routledge, 1989)

³⁵ Key references include: Z. Bauman, *Europe: An Unfinished Adventure*, (Cambridge, Polity, 2004), Z. Bauman, *Postmodernity and its Discontents*, (New York, New York University Press, 1997) and A. Wellmer, *The Persistence of Modernity*, (Cambridge UK, Polity, 1991)

temporally and geographically anchored. The group's fascination with technology, and specifically robotics, which would resonate with Detroit techno's futurist constructions, is viewed through the lens of reality, and 'simulation'. The writings of Jean Baudrillard³⁶ appropriately link Kraftwerk's technological idealism to the changing perceptions of modernity, and post-modernity, in the Europe of this period. Popular music texts are sourced to trace how European minimalism not only offered a discernable alternative to rock n roll's Afro-American rhythmic hegemony but how it, in turn, it became translated through American urban beat culture. The collision of such trans-national rhythmic templates - at the thesis's own 'ground zero' - New York electro and hip-hop is addressed in this and the subsequent *Paid in Full* chapter. The nexus of these two components of the thesis indicate how the 'otherness' of this perceived European exotica informed the brave new world of global street culture.

The impact of Kraftwerk's machine-driven minimalism on the rhythms of hip-hop is evident in the embryonic sounds of New York's Five Boroughs which remain a symbolic touchstone for a global hip-hop network. The inbuilt ideology of community and social mobility have been sustained within the beats of hip-hop, often in conflict with its global branding, that transcend racial, geographical and social boundaries. *Paid in Full* addresses what has perhaps been popular music's most discursive subject, hip-hop. Factors of race and gender, patterns of consumption, modes of production, urban cachet and cultural collateral have all been assigned to deconstruct the music's dynamic. Looking to key texts by Tricia Rose, G.P. Ramsey, Nelson George³⁷ and others, the chapter aims to negotiate readings of hip-hop's evolution within its national context. Resonant of Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis*³⁸, which deals with the

³⁶ J. Baudrillard, *Simulations*, (New York, Semiotext Inc, 1983)

³⁷ T. Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, (Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press, 1994), N. George, *Hip-Hop America*, (New York, Penguin, 2005), G.P. Ramsey Jr., *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004)

³⁸ H. Lefebvre, *Rhythm, Space and Everyday Life*, (Continuum, London, 2004)

interconnection of time, space and everyday life the chapter draws upon Milos Foreman's³⁹ understandings of hip-hop and urban space. The thesis challenges some of these national-centric readings of hip-hop through wider global understandings of David Toop⁴⁰, Paul Gilroy, Tony Mitchell⁴¹ and others. The music's much wider dissemination is addressed here through not only its more commercial forms but also within the more liminal spaces of local production and scratch and beat culture.

The research looks to position the beats of hip-hop within the seemingly conflicting duality of the 'material' and 'social' constructions of the genre. The chapter's title, taken from the Eric B and Rakim album of the same name⁴², highlights the continuing discourse involving the music industry's drive for profit and the debt owed to artists. The resulting urban authenticity investigates how this has been constructed through the material encoding of hip-hop. The role of popular media in this manufactured authenticity that at times appears in conflict with the value of the music is viewed in the context of seeming eroding social capital. As such, the research addresses music's capacity to reconfigure some of the dynamics of this social capital, declared in terminal decline, by social scientist Robert Putnam.⁴³ Drawing parallels with John Miller Chernoff's⁴⁴ research into the framing of social interaction within African communities through the modality of rhythm, in this context the chapter also addresses more trans-national networks

³⁹ M. Foreman, *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*, (Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2002)

⁴⁰ David Toop's early analysis of hip-hop, D. Toop, *Rap Attack 3: African Rap to Global Hip Hop*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 2000) remains a significant text on the origins and development of the music and its attendant culture.

⁴¹ P. Gilroy, *Against Race*, (Cambridge, Mass. Belknap Press, 2000), T. Mitchell (ed), *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA*, (Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan University Press, 2001)

⁴² Eric B and Rakim, *Paid in Full*, (4th and Broadway, 1987)

⁴³ R.D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 2001)

⁴⁴ J. Miller Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1979)

that have developed in the liminal spaces of the world-wide-web and through hip-hop's largely unheralded 'scratch' and 'beat' making culture.

In contrast to what is arguably America's predominant popular cultural form, hip-hop, the chapter that follows addresses the impact of dance-floor cultures, which emanated from New York and Chicago during the 1980s, and resonated globally but remained largely unrecognised by the national audience. *House Music All Night Long. Say What? House Music All Night Long* – the chapter appropriating a line from a group ironically known more for hip-hop production, Jungle Brothers⁴⁵ - positions a singular rhythmic template that disguises multiple narratives. The research demonstrates how numerous dance cultures, from disco to rave, have continuously transformed through the re-inscription of that most ergonomic and ubiquitous of rhythms – 4/4. The chapter draws upon a wide range of sources in order to trace the roots and subsequent movement of the spectacular club cultures that seeped from Chicago's, largely gay and black, house scene to critically inform the explosion that shaped British club culture from the late 1980s until the present time. Looking to Peter Shapiro, Stephen Redhead, Simon Frith⁴⁶ and other key writers of the period, the chapter retraces the links from disco, funk and soul to the commercial tropes of contemporary generic dance music. The capacity for Chicago's club culture, mapped by writers like Hillegonda Rietveld,⁴⁷ to move and translate to a British context is understood through multiple modalities. Sarah Thornton's⁴⁸ writings, on club cultures and sub-cultural collateral, are positioned in respect of embedded disc-cultures evident in embryonic patterns of record consumption and club practices. The 'rhythm clubs' of 1930s London and the

⁴⁵ Jungle Brothers, *I'll House You*, (Gee Street Records 1988)

⁴⁶ P. Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around: The Secret History of Disco*, (London, Faber and Faber, 2005), S. Redhead (ed.), *Clubcultures Reader* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1997), S. Frith, *Music For Pleasure*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988)

⁴⁷ H. Rietveld, "The House Sound of Chicago" in S. Redhead (ed.), *Clubcultures Reader* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1997)

⁴⁸ S. Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995)

‘discotheques’ of 1940s Paris, identified in the writings of Eric Hobsbawm⁴⁹ and Albert Goldman⁵⁰ respectively, mark early models of club cultures to come. In contrast the metanarratives of global movement are applied, to highlight the symbolic processes of communication. Through the work of Harold Innis and James Carey⁵¹, the effect of space biased and time biased communication are apparent in the shared practices, and shared disc consumption. Such patterns of movement are shown to lay bare the scar tissue of past music cultures.

In order to gain a clearer understanding of the nature of dance music the chapter draws together a range of research. Looking to John Shepherd et. al.’s sociological understanding of music language⁵², the physiological roots of dance music, in the writings of Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson⁵³ and the relationship to more logocentric music forms, evident in Roland Barthes’ readings of the ‘grain of the voice’,⁵⁴ the chapter addresses the complexity of the dance floor. Drawing on the writings of Matthew Collin, Mireille Silcott and other popular cultural texts the chapter maps the return of house and techno rhythms to their source. In the shape of ‘rave’, the accelerated rhythms become reinscribed in the form of predominantly white, hedonistic American club cultures. By addressing the most functional of dance floor rhythms, still evident in current generic club cultures, the chapter seeks to find an understanding of the transformation of the beat.

⁴⁹ E. Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People*, (London, Abacus, 1999) p.361

⁵⁰ A. Goldman’s *Disco* (New York, Hawthorn Books, 1978)

⁵¹ H.A. Innis, *The Bias of Communication*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1951) and J. W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, (London, Unwin Hyman, 1989)

⁵² J. Shepherd, P. Virden, G. Vulliamy and T. Wishart, *Whose Music: a Sociology of Musical Languages*, (London, Latimer, 1977)

⁵³ J. Gilbert and E. Pearson, *Discographies*, (London, Routledge, 1999)

⁵⁴ R. Barthes, “The Grain of the Voice” in *On Record*, Frith, S and Goodwin, A (eds) (London, Routledge, 1990) pp.293-300

Looking towards the era of mobile technologies, file-sharing, downloading, ring-tones and silent discos, the concluding chapter probes how the thesis's taxonomy of rhythm begins to unravel. No longer anchored exclusively to the geographical spaces of production or neatly circumscribed periods of consumption their mapping, in the shift from the analogue to the digital domain, becomes increasingly problematic. This loss of linearity and bounded space is matched by the massification of sounds, images and rhythms in the digital realm and provides the chapter's title, *You Can't Have Everything...*, suggested by the words of American comedian Steven Wright. The full quotation "you can't have everything ... where would you put it?"⁵⁵ merely a droll observation in Wright's stand up routine during the early 1990s now appears a strangely prophetic pronouncement for the music buying practices of the iTunes, product free, digital ecology. The notion of limitless choice, where nothing is new, nothing is discarded and all becomes reconfigured and available through the limitless storage space of users' hard drives. The perception is one built upon endless consumer selection that has arguably become increasingly shallow. This chapter investigates the factors which impact on the dissipation of the beat as it crosses over into the borderless, infinite, world of mobile and on-line technologies. Driven by the digital tools of MySpace, Facebook, Flickr and YouTube, the auditory cultures lose specificity to become enmeshed in the visual, the beat forever accompanied by its attendant images. On iPhones, Blackberries and laptop computers the sounds and rhythms of instant culture become indivisible from the billions of mashed and up-loaded film clips and phone-cam images. On social networking sites, and blogs, sights and sounds converge through these increasingly experiential technologies.

Significantly this collapsing space between 'producer' and 'consumer' marks how such past binaries can no longer be applied effectively. With music programming software automatically

⁵⁵ The line used over a number of years in Steven Wright's stand up routine:
<http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/521.html> accessed 12.09.08 Website:
http://www.stevenwright.com/a_word/index.shtml

included in applications bundles on personal computers, Apple's *Garage Band* perhaps the most known, we have all become, in the true spirit of mash-up culture, 'producers' or prosumers'. Sonic tools are at our fingertips. The boundaries between work and leisure, private and personal, past and present, author and reader, place and space, have become irreparably breached. Identities once constructed upon understandings of hegemonic centre and margins have been replaced by the blurred liminality of the 'in-between' offered by virtual space. Fluidity and the syncretic nature of identity that has marked technological society becomes ever more fragmented in the online environment. No longer fixed or readily understood, as Bill Osgerby's readings of youth media observes, "[across, and within, multiple cultural sites] – their identities constituted by the intersections of crisscrossing discourses of age, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality and so on."⁵⁶ Perceptions of self, and others, must be investigated in the spaces where they have been constructed, through "the multiple subjectivities that may have sprouted through the fissures and disjunctions of late modern society."⁵⁷ Music's role in the complex construction of identity can be found in the infinite shelf-space of the digital world. Here not only has the linearity of time and space dissolved, creating a moebius strip of ever available sounds and images, but also the space between centre and edge has become eroded, the dark spaces of past music (sub)cultures largely illuminated. The 'long tail'⁵⁸, identified by Chris Anderson, has meant a repositioning of marginal, or lost, cultures within a more complex user market. As the chapter title suggests digital technologies have become the engine of this instant digital à la carte selection. Newer platforms, iTunes being the most obvious, and newer mechanisms, Quicktime, MP3s and wav-files for example, identified by Brabazon, et al⁵⁹, mark the discarding of cultural consumption once anchored exclusively to the tangible product. The

⁵⁶ B. Osgerby, *Youth Media* (Oxford, Routledge, 2004) p. 180

⁵⁷ *ibid.* p.181

⁵⁸ C. Anderson, "The Long Tail: Forget squeezing millions from a few megahits at the top of the charts. The future of entertainment is in the millions of niche markets at the shallow end of the bitstream." *The Wired*, October 2004 <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html> - viewed 06.01.07

⁵⁹ T. Brabazon, F. Cull, M. Kent, & L. McRae, *Jingling the Single: The I-podification of the Music Industry*, (AQ, May-June 2005) pp. 26-36

overarching determinants of diversity, choice, mobility, access, and exclusion frame the discourse that aims to find meaning, however fleeting, in these rapid and fractal transformations.

Such transformations identify a phenomenon embedded in social production, in which the participants provide the building blocks through content and connection; the current make up of the internet has begun to offer glimpses into new economic, social and cultural worlds.

Employing the utilities model of the internet, most specifically proposed by Nicholas Carr⁶⁰, the idea of the World Wide Computer, a centralised service facility akin to electricity supply, has become instrumental in the construction of expansive global communities. Built upon shared interests, likes, dislikes, searches and linkages the globally connected nodes provide an opportunity for a rich and diverse sonic culture. Sharing through ‘clouds’ rather than selling on exclusive websites facilitates newer gift economies of which music plays a fundamental role through the posting of MP3s and wav files that have become de rigeur for sonic producers and consumers alike. The opportunity for such democratic participation also offers hope for massive sonic diversity in a post-‘Long Tail’ environment. However such utopian visions also disguise the mechanics of other economies applied by MySpace and in particular YouTube that, by harvesting the surplus of social production, provide a system in which all participate, but few financially profit. The major corporate deals that have marked the rise of Google and YouTube are built upon the platform of user participation individual searches, free content and largely outside the regulation of copyright and production costs. Perhaps inspired by Apple Macintosh, who in 2001, went as far as promoting their iTunes facility with advice to users ‘*rip, mix and burn*’⁶¹ the Anderson has subsequently challenged the economic model in which the ‘long tail’

⁶⁰ N. Carr, *The Big Switch: Rewiring the World from Edison to Google*, (New York, W.W. Norton & Co. 2008)

⁶¹ In the light of peer-to-peer file sharing and the Napster debate the company no longer overtly adheres to this philosophy; however numerous online sites still retain evidence of the blurred

functions, arguing the user expectations have shifted in the post-google era to a fundamentally free, utilities provision.⁶² The question of this massification of online music through free software, sharing and streaming bring an important discourse: have the same tools and algorithms that suggest a global community marked by a rich sonic tapestry, also driven consumers and participants towards uniformity? Playlists, customized charts and personalised on-line radio stations, such as LastFM⁶³ and Spotify⁶⁴, have on a mass scale the capacity to undo the heterogeneous potential of the internet. Social networks, Facebook being the most dominant platform, draw like to like and the inherent fragmentation of the net becomes reversed and re-bundles the sounds and rhythms of popular culture through accumulated participation. Again however an effective market model for music consumption, which is capable of supporting artists, collapses. Spotify an online radio popular in the UK and founded by Swedish entrepreneur Daniel Ek in 2009, has 7 million subscribers, of which 300,000 paying a nominal £10 fee for ad free service, plans to streams 36 billion songs by the end of 2010. As an indication of the need for music to find an appropriate payment mechanism Spotify's most streamed artist, Lady Gaga, with over 1 million streams of *Poker Face*, received as a result \$167 (£108) in royalty payments.⁶⁵

If the current nature of digital communities has reached such critical mass it is important to address appropriate understandings of this transition from past analogue representations. The

philosophy of CD burning and sharing. See Macworld:
<http://www.macworld.com/article/2509/2001/10/rip.html>

⁶² C. Anderson, *Free: The Future of a Radical Price*, (London, Random House, 2009)

⁶³ LastFM based in the UK (Shoreditch, London) claims to be the world's largest social music platform and offers the service in 200 countries, 12 languages, is affiliated with iTunes and was acquired by CBS Interactive in 2002. The site has created a music community that, it claims stands in excess of 21 million users, and generates recommended music lists through its audioscribbler system, enabling subscribers to produce their own customised online radio stations through the use of its library database, <http://www.last.fm/>

⁶⁴ Other key on-line radio stations have grown in reach and activity, Spotify has become a leader in this provision: <http://www.spotify.com/en/>

⁶⁵ J. Brown, *Spotify: 1 Million Plays £108 Return*, (*The Independent*, April 14 2010), p.3
online:<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/spotify-1-million-plays-163108-return-1944051.html>

thesis applies readings of mobility and space to give a rationale to such a shift. Changing patterns of movement, by volition or necessity, require us to address how traditional readings of connection and place can no longer be rigidly applied. As we move more and more through digital space we need to develop appropriate narratives and understandings. Applying much earlier writings of J.K. Huysmans⁶⁶ and more recent analogies of Rob Shields⁶⁷, the chapter identifies prescient virtual worlds in literary, religious and cultural domains that suggest ‘new’ may be a descriptor often too liberally applied. Such evidence suggests a social predisposition to accepting the movement of images, information and sound through, a non-tactile, contemporary cyberspace. The chapter, through changing cultural practices, demonstrates the significance of music in the domestication of these digital technologies. If present mobile technologies appear to reposition our relationship with sound and space, they can be traced through much earlier examples like William Gibson and Stuart Hall’s embracing of the Sony Walkman⁶⁸. The reading of sound’s production, dissemination and consumption through YouTube, music festivals in Second Life⁶⁹, and the relatively recent vogue Silent Discos, do however permit a clearer understanding of present meanings of spatial links and mobility: real and virtual; collective and atomised.

As theories of space transform so do configurations of connection and movement. How we connect, expand and grow in digital space requires appropriate frameworks. The chapter positions rhizomatic expansion and fluid virtual communities, connected by the digital membranes, through which the encoded rhythms pass. Without reducing Gilles Deleuze’s writings to an oversimplified analogy the chapter recognises the principles of connectivity and

⁶⁶ J.K. Huysmans, *Against Nature* (London, Penguin, 1998)

⁶⁷ R. Shields, *The Virtual*, (Routledge, London, 2003)

⁶⁸ P. du Gay, S. Hall, L. Janes, H. McKay & K. Negus, *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*, (London, Sage, 1997)

⁶⁹ *Secondfest*: A music festival held through Second Life’s virtual domain on 30th June 2007

heterogeneity that are applicable to the matrix of links that flourish in the digital world.⁷⁰ The growth of virtual mobility has however been concomitant with political, economic and social encroachment upon many aspects of physical movement and displacement. As more recent technologies suggest liberation from our physical chains they are matched by, and frequently mask, an intrusion upon individuality and identity: who has access; who is being monitored; who has mobility? As sounds and images collide freely through digital space they camouflage discreet, or with third party use of personal information freely given by users, not so discreet, scrutiny of the user and consumers. Boundless consumption is matched by caveats placed on personal mobility and the development of aspects of fortress nationhood in the post-9/11 world.

This broad typology of popular cultural forms, identified primarily through their rhythmic structures – garage or dub-step for example - should not be considered as exclusive formations. Each looks to, and informs, the other. The mobility of sound, people and cultural expressions effects the bleeding of these beats and the ideas that move through them. The modalities of ‘home’, ‘modernity’, ‘technology’, ‘memory’, ‘social capital’, ‘consumption’, ‘work’ and ‘post-work’ run through all the rhythms that are addressed in the thesis. In keeping with the nature of sound they do not sit in mutual exclusion but continually inform each other as the rhythms expand and disperse in fractal patterns. The thesis identifies these thematic overlaps. The lost modernity of Weimar Germany, which is filtered through the iconography of Kraftwerk, is also fundamental to the idealised future worlds of Detroit techno and New York hip-hop. Reggae’s claims to maintaining an Atlantic diaspora importantly re-emerge in turn through hip-hop and electro’s global beat collective - Zulu Nation. The post-war economic shifts impinge upon the rhythms of Düsseldorf, Sheffield and Detroit, manifesting in the latter two cities not only in electronic music, but also through earlier working-class formations evident in soul music. Music’s capacity for multiple readings is apparent in the sounds and expressions of disco, which

⁷⁰ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, (London, Continuum, 2004)

informed both the embryonic hip-hop and later house music genres. This inter-textuality intentionally frames the thesis and is vital to the movement of the sounds and rhythms from the analogue to the digital domains.

The significant loss of linearity in this shift from the analogue to the digital is evident in the instant availability of past and present auditory cultures. In this context the key thesis rationale can have no exclusive cultural point of origin. As a consequence the research has chosen a specific position of entry and subsequent trajectory, one that enabled the researcher build upon a body of practice-based work and research over the previous twenty-five years. Personal experiences have however been positioned within appropriate theoretical frameworks. Significant references are made in the thesis to wider social, economic and cultural factors that have had a fundamental impact on spatial and temporal movement of sounds, rhythms and those which carry them. Similarly the rhythms have been given context to help understanding, a recognised taxonomy of beat. The research is constructed upon an identified typology of rhythm and has been addressed through modalities, which although not exclusive, have been significant in their cultural agency. The thesis acknowledges the role of pre and early-industrial factors. New Orleans, in many respects the cradle of popular music, has been fundamental in the evolution and creolization of rhythm. The post-Civil War collapse of the military infrastructure saw a proliferation of flaneur musicians, drummers and pipers that flourished in the city's cultural melting pot.⁷¹ The collision of Celtic, French, Spanish, and African sources, from which jazz would emerge from places such as Congo Square, driven by rhythms of the 'cutting contests' and 'second lines' of competing New Orleans bands.⁷² The later exodus of itinerant labour from the rural southern states, took the folk culture of the blues to the industrial capitals

⁷¹ J.V. Buerkle and D. Barker, *Bourbon Street Black* ((New York, Oxford Street Press, 1973) Note "Both the Civil War and Spanish American War had dumped large numbers of used musical instruments into pawn shops when military and naval bands dissolved in New Orleans." P.14

⁷² *ibid.* pp. 11-25

of North America, synchronised to the rhythms of the railroad. These beats would become transformed to rhythm and blues, soul and rock and roll. The thesis acknowledges this decentring of folk and popular culture but also sees the lyrical primacy that increasingly framed folk and rock cultures that developed alongside the rhythm driven formations of soul and funk. Such factors have been considerations in constructing an appropriate framework for the research.

In consciously circumscribing and classifying rhythm, this doctoral research has not marginalised these other significant factors or phenomena but rather viewed them as areas for further, specific investigation. Multiple and alternative narratives of popular culture can be addressed through rhythm. If the transforming beats of New Orleans jazz signify an important chapter in the analogue period put aside then drum and bass is a digital classification that provides a discursive element in the thesis, referred to more obliquely than directly. Placed at a significant technological juncture⁷³, drum and bass, or jungle as it was more readily referred to at its inception, nevertheless permeates all aspects of the thesis. It is a translating rhythm. Each classification within this typology is appropriated and filtered through drum and bass's technological modality. The broken beats appropriated in hip-hop, or 'the break' as the two, four or eight bar segments are more frequently called, were stretched and manipulated to provide the original foundation upon which drum and bass's superstructure was built. The electronic rhythms associated with house, together with the blips and beeps of the industrial

⁷³ Drum and bass evolved through digital technology's ability to 'time-stretch', a process in which the tempo of a sampled section of music or rhythm can be speeded up or slowed down without any perceivable change in the sampled section's pitch. Fairlight and Synclavier originally developed the technology during the mid-1970s but it was not until the late 1980s that producers adopted the more affordable and widely available Akai S900. This subsequently became the most commonly used sampler for the production of drum and bass. The process is dealt with in more detail in the thesis. R. Street, *Fairlight – A 25-year long fairytale*, IMAS Publishing Group, 2000, <http://www.audiomedia.com/archive/features/uk-1000/uk-1000-fairlight/uk-1000-fairlight.htm> and J. Twyman, *(Inter)facing the music: the history of the fairlight computer musical instrument*. Bachelor of Science (Honours) Thesis, University of Sydney, 2004.

nuclei of Detroit, Düsseldorf and Sheffield, have all become a significant part of the genre's digital palette. The Jamaican nuances, vocal and textural, present in dancehall, ragga and dub styles have been filtered through the global sounds of drum and bass, 2-step, and dub-step. Drum and bass has remained a clearly identifiable cultural enclave that continues to operate in the slowly eroding liminal spaces of the dance culture that blossomed in the mid-1980s to the early-1990s. Perhaps more than any other designated electronic music category drum and bass has remained the most tightly compartmentalised, self-referencing and self-regulating. Time signatures, melodic and harmonic components have all remained strictly adhered to – most drum and bass rhythms are constructed between 166-176bpm. The close feedback loop between producers and consumers has effected the nuances and seemingly narrow parameters that constitute authentic 'drum and bass'. Worthy of other research the genre as such is referred to obliquely within the text but its significance is drawn out throughout the thesis.

A Life in Syncopation

The introduction inferred a key point of entry into the research: the single track and an obvious sonic and popular cultural reference, Afrika Bambaataa's *Planet Rock*⁷⁴. The experience of the Sydney Festival panel reaffirmed that this single release has retained its place as universally-acknowledged product of cross-fertilisation; a clever, if by contemporary standards crude, juxtaposition of New York's nascent electro (slash) hip-hop culture with Kraftwerk's vision of a sanitised and surface modernity in the tracks *Numbers* and *Trans-Europe Express*. As both music-fan and music-producer, the track was particularly resonant. At the time of release, significantly on twelve-inch vinyl, it stood at an important cultural crossroad. Juggling with conflicting sonic narratives – the strident rhythms of punk had bled into the metronomic pulse

⁷⁴Afrika Bambaataa and the Soul Sonic Force, *Planet Rock*, (Tommy Boy, 1982)

of disco, quite literally with PIL's *Metal Box*⁷⁵ - the traditional merengue and tango settings of 'rhythm boxes' had been vandalised by the likes of Sly Stone and George Clinton to reshape funk and soul, Hamilton Bohannon had forged studio precision onto the Afro-centric poly-rhythms of the dance-floor, and, concomitantly, affordable and accessible Japanese music technology had begun to further democratise music production. My work as a musician, or rather sound producer filtered and translated these changes through personal sensibilities. As a slightly iconoclastic, if somewhat primitive music-maker, this shredding of cultural formalities and the incorporation of the past through sonic bites of television and radio, as well as evolving music technologies, were fundamental and necessary processes. This research, into the flow of rhythms across cultural borders and morphing of styles through emerging technologies of production and consumption, represents a personal transition from the practices of the studio to the multiple theories of cultural formation. An inversion of the thesis statement that no sound, rhythm or other cultural product has a single point of origin, it was the single track which began this research to investigate the endless flow of messages which form the increasingly fractal structure of popular culture.

Having produced music since 1973, my timeline, narratives, stories, history and music has mapped myriad economic, cultural and technological transformations. Similarly it has incorporated, through touring, recording and residing, multiple spaces. From the early period in northern England the trajectory has accommodated periods, some extensive, recording and residing in USA, Europe, Japan and Australia. Touring as both musician and DJ has involved considerable amounts of travelling. This physical mobility over thirty-five years has left some mark upon my sensibilities but also, I like to think, upon my capacity to transcend, through sound, the borders of both time and space.

⁷⁵ Public Image Limited, *Metal Box*, (Virgin 1979)

These changes and transgressions have built into the thesis' rationale and research strategies. The objective has been to extend the work undertaken in a practice-based career to construct meaning from broader structural changes and specific understandings drawn from personal production. The researcher's personal production, throughout the period, has consciously built in inter-textuality as means of expressing a less musical and more journalistic stance.

Evangelical preachers, kodo drummers, riot police, prisoners, political and religious leaders, striking miners, newsreaders and other 'ready-mades' have been essential components in audio and visual production. Adapting William Burroughs and Brion Gysin-esque cut-up methodologies such found and sourced materials have been interwoven through the researcher's sound pieces and film production. During the analogue period, the processes involved tape editing and film splicing; the onset of digital technology enabled more extensive and malleable processing of television, ambient and pre-recorded materials in the production process. In this way, the inherent hybridity of both sound and vision is addressed but also allowing the specifics of time and place to be built into the production. In an attempt to produce pieces that were both timeless, and 'of a specific time', rhythm was always central in order to anchor this sonic collision. Rhythm made sense, gave meaning and order. It is perhaps important to note that early film clips and videos also marshalled rhythm's capacity to provide structure and regularity by adapting the period's nascent drum programming to video editing techniques.⁷⁶ It was rhythm's visceral and structural characteristics that could be called upon to anchor multiple and often conflicting sounds, images, textures and messages that were being transmitted in, what can loosely be termed, 'songs' and 'films'.

Later work, constructed upon emerging network technologies, placed the emphasis on evolving trans-national producer-consumer communities – clusters of musicians, artists, promoters and

⁷⁶ *Doublevision Presents Cabaret Voltaire*, (Doublevision/Virgin Video, 1982) and *Cabaret Voltaire, Gasoline in Your Eye*, (Some Bizzare/Virgin Video, 1985). Produced S. Mallinder and R.H.Kirk

labels that were able to communicate informally through the world wide web⁷⁷ and augmented by DJ-ing or minimal live appearances. Based in Perth, Western Australia, the researcher's establishing of the Off World Sounds label was a mechanism that purposely aimed to build upon an increasingly de-centred electronic music culture. Over eight years and more than thirty releases the label drew upon original music, of diverse electronic and dance styles, by artists including: from Manchester (Shaun Ryder, Gripper); New York (Little Egypt); Vienna (Bone Idol); Sheffield (Looped for Pleasure); Hull (Fila Brasilia); London (Soul Electric); Melbourne (Crackpot, Ransom); Adelaide (Attaché); Sydney (DB Chills, Multiball) and Perth (Sassi & Loco, Ku-Ling Bros.). A promotional wing, Off World Productions, facilitated tours and festivals for the artists and associated overseas labels (Wall of Sound, Ninja Tunes, Grand Central, Pork, and Marine Parade amongst others). The underpinning, in part ironic, of Off World⁷⁸ as a 'brand' was intended to further the idea of a creative industry in a second-tier city, one that was able to transcend spatial and temporal barriers and connect with similar independent organisations. A number of releases were intended to formalise this association by encouraging artists to mix and remix each other's recordings.⁷⁹ This process of inter-textuality was achieved through dissolving cultural and spatial barriers through the conflation of network and production technologies.

It was this specific point of collision that required further investigation in order to find meaning in the emerging digital platforms through which sounds, images, rhythms and messages were

⁷⁷ The world wide web is referred to throughout the thesis in its more commonly used terms in lower case

⁷⁸ Off World was a specific reference to the 'off world colonies' in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, (New York, Doubleday, 1968) which were resonant of Perth, Western Australia, famous as the most isolated capital city in the world

⁷⁹ The Ku-ling Bros. *Eat the Rich*, (Off World Sounds, 2003) was a project in which various artists from the label were remixed by S. Mallinder and S. Norton.

<http://www.brighton.ac.uk/cmisis/contact/staffprofiles/swm10/eattherich.php?PageId=1020> Other releases, Various Artists – *Heat Electric*, (Off World Sounds, 2000) and *Flat Back Four*, (Off World Sounds, 2002) also included a number of label collaborations.

being driven. These so called ‘new’ media were creating similarly new points of entry, transmission and reception where the space between producer and consumer was rapidly collapsing. Significantly, it was also unpicking the hegemony of the traditional gatekeepers - radio, television, and print media – to create disparate, exponential and increasingly virtual cultural filters. The bits and bytes from which digital rhythms are constructed have become inseparable from the messages in which they are contained. They have become encoded within the splintering and fractal transformations of images, sounds and messages that spin, loop and morph in digital space. Meanings in this expanding digital matrix however could be formed through an understanding of the movement and formations which preceded them in the analogue domain. Having identified a taxonomy of popular cultural rhythms, specifically establishing key factors in their construction, movement and appropriation, the research has mapped their transformation in the context of new technologies; technologies of *making* and technologies of *moving*. The thesis positions the changing movement of rhythm through these newer platforms within a wider social and economic framework. It is intended, through this work, to establish a greater understanding of the role of rhythm as both a physical and metaphysical phenomena.

Rhythm as Modality

Perhaps nowhere are illustrations of rhythm so numerous and so manifest as among the phenomena of life.⁸⁰

Herbert Spencer, 1897

[Rhythm] is the beat that draws the dividing line between serious and vernacular, visceral and intellectual. Pulse equals life equals pleasure.⁸¹

Ben Neil

⁸⁰ H. Spencer, *First Principles*, (New York: Appleton and Company, 1897) p.85 Available online: <http://socserv.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3113/spencer/firprin.html> Accessed 10-17.03.08

⁸¹ B. Neil, “Breakthrough Beats: Rhythm and the Aesthetics of Contemporary Electronic Music” in C. Cox and D. Warner (eds) *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, (London, Continuum, 2004) p.387

Herbert Spencer, an English philosopher who was perhaps most renowned for his pre-Darwinian views on evolution, and the more regrettable social implications of survival of the fittest, was however a key analyst of the underlying mechanisms of change. His key principles outlined in 1862, acknowledged among them the ‘rhythm of motion’. Underlying Spencer’s principle was the belief that all motion was rhythmic, alluding to patterns of movement and flow common to all. Significant to this belief was the proposition that “rhythm was generally not simple but compound,”⁸² that the forces at work create secondary effect evident in the associated patterns of daily life. Double, triple, “even quadruple rhythms are generated.”⁸³ The natural cycles evident in the movement of celestial bodies, of planetary orbits, of tides, light waves and sound waves, of winds and currents, impact in turn on social and economic patterns. Spencer infers the underlying importance of principles of motion and rhythm to the dynamics of sociology. The natural cycles that in turn governed the rhythms of earlier agrarian modes of production of social movement and rituals and cultural expression, gave way with the advance of industry and mass production. Spencer witnessed first-hand the transformation of industrial time through the subsequent beat of daily rituals, of commerce, of human movement:

The flux and reflux of people and commodities which each of these exhibits, becomes more frequent as national development brings greater social activity. The rapid rhythm of weekly markets begins to supersede the slow rhythm of fairs. And eventually exchange becomes at some places so active, as to bring about daily meetings of buyers and sellers -- a daily wave of accumulation and distribution [of cotton, or corn, or capital].⁸⁴

The external rhythms that have in turn marked natural, industrial and digital time, seeping through by osmosis, to become encoded in subsequent social practices and cultural forms. As musicologist John Shepherd observes, “the rhythmic structure of tonality helps to maintain industrial man’s intense and constant awareness both of the passage of time, and his own

⁸² H. Spencer, *First Principles*, (New York: Appleton and Company, 1897) p.82 Available online: <http://socserv.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3113/spencer/firprin.html> Accessed 10-17.03.08

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ *ibid.* p.86

consciousness.”⁸⁵ These rhythms and their subsequent ripples are played out in the borderless sonic realm, not through a closed system but rather, through patterns of connection and interaction, in the daily routines of work and leisure, of production and consumption.

Rhythm implies collision, a conflict of forces and uncertain equilibrium, determined, by Elsie Fogerty in an early investigation of rhythm, by three factors: *time*; *force* and *space*.⁸⁶ Her work addressed how ‘natural’ development tied to rhythmic control, patterns of speech, movement and work, which functioned through these elements. She sensed however a growing shift that became apparent through creative outputs, concluding: “man is developing a strong antagonism to all strict temporal or spatial order – jazz, surrealism, free verse”.⁸⁷ Aspects of popular culture signalled the unravelling of these guiding principles in the face of social and economic changes. As we begin to migrate the rhythms through newer determinants of technology, of collapsed time and space, more complex networks have appeared as digital rhythms supersede the natural cycles and the clockwork regularity of industrial time. However the collision of digital rhythms is still made evident through the ‘flux and reflux of people and commodities’ but in spaces unimagined by Spencer or Fogerty. The pulse of the ‘new’ is still most apparent in its patterns of production and consumption, its movement of intangible products, its social connections, rituals and expressions. In contemporary popular culture, specifically through the envelope of electronic music, rhythm has frequently become the mechanism through which pleasure is measured and aesthetics negotiated.

If, as Fogerty observed, the developments in popular music, art and literature marked a movement away from the stricter rhythms of work it was to a beat unlike the regimentation of

⁸⁵ J. Shepherd, “The Musical Coding of Ideologies” in J. Shepherd, P. Virden, G. Vulliamy and T. Wishart, (eds.) *Whose Music: a Sociology of Musical Languages*, (London, Latimer, 1977) p.106

⁸⁶ E. Fogerty *Rhythm*, (London, Allen & Unwin, 1937) p.17

⁸⁷ *ibid.* p.238

mass production to which Adorno referred. One in which, “the liquidation of the individual is the real signature of the new musical situation,”⁸⁸ and where all music is ultimately reduced to ‘the commodity’, which Attali caricatured consumer culture in rhythmic terms by referring to the “repetitive society.”⁸⁹ This conflict of control and freedom is played out through rhythm. A Chaplin-esque ‘Modern Times’ slave chained to the wheels of industry and mass consumption juxtaposed against the liberated soul lost in ecstatic dance. In the post-work society both scenarios continue to be framed in rhythm. Barbara Ehrenreich points to this paradox where:

Instead of generating their own collective pleasures, people absorb, or consume, the spectacle of commercial entertainment, nationalist rituals, and the consumer culture, with its endless advertisements for the pleasure of individual ownership.⁹⁰

Driven by the compulsion of consumption, or externally imposed rituals, Ehrenreich suggests the loss of the true collective experience, the inherent capacity for collective joy, has come through hegemonic forces controlling the beat of the drum. The fear of liberation, or worse still loss of control, in the rhythm of the dance has continually threatened to destabilise the social balance. Seeing a clear chronology Ehrenreich notes: “ecstatic rituals still build group cohesion, but when they build it among subordinates – peasants, slaves, women, colonized people – the elite calls out the troops.”⁹¹ The attendant rhythms of popular culture have offered the agency of liberation, of individual and collective experience, but concomitantly the primary rhythms of commerce, of production and consumption have also shaped these beats.

Evidence of the compound nature of rhythm is at the very cradle of what we perceive, in populist terms, as ‘the beat’. The rhythms of popular culture that circulate through contemporary digital time and space were conceived in New Orleans in the social and cultural

⁸⁸ T. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, p.31 (London, Routledge, 1991)

⁸⁹ J. Attali (trans. B.Massumi) *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1985) p.127

⁹⁰ B. Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*, (Metropolitan, New York, 2006) p.250

⁹¹ *ibid.* p.252

melting pot that bubbled away, in the aftermath the Civil and Spanish-American Wars, during the decades that bordered the turn of the twentieth century. Perhaps more apparently than at any other time the primary rhythms, of the land, of industry, and of war, triggered the secondary beats of leisure and newfound liberty. In the nocturnal spaces of the city and in areas such as Congo Square, marching brass bands comprised of free slaves and immigrants from Haiti and Cuba would congregate on Sundays.⁹² Together with large numbers of decommissioned soldiers, the attendant collision of rhythms began shape new and significant popular cultural forms. As Peter Shapiro's tracking of popular rhythms observes, they created a syncopation "which is at the root of not only jazz but just about every form of African-American music."⁹³ The rhythm of war, evident in the marching bands that had for centuries provided the motor-force driving the military machine, now turned to count the time for a new dance culture. They shifted from the regimentation of troops to the syncopation of the streets, bars and dance halls of the city. In Shapiro's words, "New Orleans customized the military's marching steps to satisfy their very different needs."⁹⁴ In time the drums of war, embedded in the new dance beats, would become the rhythms of movement as the railroads and highways of American took them to urban industrial centres and beyond.

Metaphors of Movement

The American principle, what this country was really founded on, is *motion*.
Energy, and using it to move on up or out and go and get somewhere, don't really
matter where.⁹⁵
Lester Bangs

The principle of modernity through movement, to which journalist Lester Bangs alludes, has framed the narrative of popular music and the communities built upon it. This motion along

⁹² J.V. Buerkle and D. Barker, *Bourbon Street Black*, (New York, Oxford Street Press, 1973)

⁹³ P. Shapiro, "Automating the Beat: The Robotics of Rhythm" in R. Young (ed) *Undercurrents: The Hidden Wiring of Modern Music*, (London, Continuum, 2002) p.133

⁹⁴ *ibid.* p.133

⁹⁵ L. Bangs, *Psychotic Reactions and Carburettor Dung*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 1996) p.327

the railways, freeways and autobahns, together with digital pathways that link more recent social networks, has both moved and informed these beats. ‘Movement’ has become encoded within the sounds and rhythms of popular music, which in turn propel these beats and songs along the analogue and digital highways that link the music communities that have evolved, frequently at distance from the point of production. The soul music and techno of Detroit, whose mechanisms of work and post-work production is addressed in the *Chevrolets to Laptops* chapter, sprang from preceding metaphors of movement. The railroad rhythms of the blues were built into the sounds and songs that travelled to the industrial centres of the Midwest. As Peter Shapiro notes:

The rhythm of life in most of America was created by the railroad, and pre-war blues and country records were often little more than imitations of the locomotive using jugs and guitars.⁹⁶

Early blues tracks, such as Darby and Tarlton’s *Freight Train Ramble* and Leadbelly’s *Rock Island Line*, make literal reference to dominant mode of travel at the time. In contrast, the beats of Bo Diddley, who had openly confessed, “I play guitar like a drum”⁹⁷, were in *Who do You Love?* and his namesake song *Bo Diddley* mimicking the rhythms of the trains that carried people and commodities along the nation’s railroad network.⁹⁸

Kraftwerk, as acknowledged in the *Europe Endless* chapter, followed Bo Diddley’s methodology to the letter building in the sounds and images of both analogue and digital movement into their work. The group embraced both the nostalgia and utopia of mobility. Taking in on their journey the sounds of steam and train tracks in “Trans-Europe Express”, the

⁹⁶ P. Shapiro, “Automating the Beat: The Robotics of Rhythm” in R. Young (ed) *Undercurrents: The Hidden Wiring of Modern Music*, (London, Continuum, 2002) p.134

⁹⁷ D. Toop, *Exotica*, (London, Serpents Tail, 1999) p.107

⁹⁸ References: Darby and Tarlton’s *Freight Train Ramble* (Columbia, 1929), Lead Belly, *Rock Island Line* (Asch Recordings, 1937), Bo Diddley, *Who Do You Love?* (Checker, 1956) Bo Diddley, *Bo Diddley*, (Chess, 1958)

attendant car horns and Doppler-effect speeding automobiles in “Autobahn”, and whir of racing gears accompanying the heaving breathing of the cyclist on “Tour de France”, progressing to the more digital rhythms composed from connecting telephone lines in “Computer World”. If this was suggestive of new forms of modernity and mobility it was wholly embraced, as evident in the *Paid in Full* chapter, by the nascent hip-hop community. Appropriating the New York subway system to ensure their message was seen, and subsequently heard, they also began to indicate that movement was no longer restricted to physical relocation. Raised on computer games, science fiction films and television fantasy they suggested that the journey could just as easily be cerebral and very soon virtual. No longer limited by rhythms of rail and road, hip-hop and electro showed that accessible and affordable technology was becoming the new arbiter of time and space.

Beloved by Kraftwerk, the earlier rhythms of surf music were suggestive of mobility and freedom as essential markers of youth and affluence. Sandy Nelson, drummer for Jan and Dean, perfected the tom-tom roll rhythms that become analogous of Californian surf and sand, whilst the Beach Boys’ *Lil’ Deuce Coupe* epitomised a post-war American fascination with the liberty afforded by the automobile to the accompaniment of a literal driving beat. If this image of motion was highly evocative to American youth it was doubly so for those trapped within the reality of a Europe undergoing reconstruction and economic hardship. Hemmed in by social and economic restrictions, the perception of unrestricted movement appeared exotic and unattainable. If some, like Kraftwerk, began to build the idea of motion into their rhythms, others constructed beats from an enforced stasis. Building rhythms from steam hammers and the sounds of machinery, Cabaret Voltaire, as addressed in the *Sheffield Isn’t Sexy* chapter, found movement in the anchoring of the environment. Richard Kirk from the band explained:

There was no surf to ride in Sheffield, just post-war desolation, unemployment and ugly urban landscapes.⁹⁹

Technology provided significant solutions to capturing and encoding these metaphors of mobility and immobility. The once impossible task of mimicking the tools of movement became attainable to those who desired to bridge the gulf of time and space. The military precision so desired of disco was achieved by the rhythm machines that rinsed out all the naturalism of syncopation to provide the machine like eroticism required by the times. In contrast musician Gerald Simpson, more commonly known as A Guy Called Gerald, saw digital technology as a means of expanding his idea, that the sampler was “ a time-machine by explicitly linking ancient African rhythms and more modern funk beats with futuristic breakbeat science.”¹⁰⁰ Resonating with the afro-futurism of Sun Ra, Simpson sought to bridge this divide through technology. A journey through time, that had separated his African slave heritage from his modern day situation, became possible; he referred to this specifically in the title of his album, *Black Secret Technology*.¹⁰¹

From the New Orleans ‘Second Line’, that inverted the pulse of the evolving military machine to serve the needs of an emerging populist music culture, through to technologies that could provide a nexus of lost past and digital future, rhythm has provided not merely a modality of movement and change but also a significant tool of understanding. The thesis aims to address these key factors by constructing, however unstable they may be, culturally and spatially specific rhythms in order to address how they have formed, transformed and informed each other. Although in the context of colliding rhythms and hybrid forms the idea of ‘culturally and spatially specific’ appears oxymoronic it is a necessary mechanism in order to construct and

⁹⁹ M. Lilleker, *Beats Working for a Living: Sheffield Popular Music 1973-1984*, (Sheffield, Juma, 2005) p.93

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in P. Shapiro, “Automating the Beat: The Robotics of Rhythm” in R. Young (ed) *Undercurrents: The Hidden Wiring of Modern Music*, (London, Continuum, 2002) p.138

¹⁰¹ A Guy Called Gerald, *Black Secret Technology*, (Juicebox, 1995)

deconstruct. Models must be built so that they may be pulled apart and understood. The chapters stand as unstable structures, but ones that nevertheless align with understood and identifiable sonic and rhythmic templates. The investigation of popular culture must be understood as a multi-disciplinary and inexact science. It is a means by which change, social and economic, can be filtered and better understood. This research attempts to engage with media through which these popular rhythms move in order to gain a greater understanding about the forces that impact upon them and direct them and which they in turn direct and inform.

CHAPTER ONE – DIGITAL RASTA

Post-Colonial Swing

In the current climate of greatly accelerated social, economic and cultural exchange, transformations are unfolding in an increasingly mediated and networked environment. Augmented by sophisticated communications systems, global interactions are manifest as a complex pattern of symbols and signifiers, both aural and visual. The bombardment of spatial barriers, both tangible and virtual, has caused the traditional building blocks of personal and collective identity to be increasingly encroached upon. Movement either enforced or by volition, imagined or actual, sends us to the very edges of our cultural range. Regardless of choice, very few are immune as we engage beyond these increasingly permeable boundaries to confront the challenge of addressing ‘difference’. In defining ‘who we are’ it is fundamental that we address ‘who we are not’. The study of ‘beat’ and the movement of rhythm provides a mechanism to enable - via music built upon it – a contextualization of ‘otherness’. The rhythms of Jamaica signify a collision of traditional markers of community and the malleability of identity. Mapping the beat allows clearer readings of the impact of local stasis and global mobility in the construction these now fluid communities and changing constructions of ‘self’. Through actual, social interaction, or virtual engagement in mediated form, rhythm provides both agency for dispersed communities and the capacity to carefully map popular cultural exchange. The interaction of rhythms and melodic patterns within a global context, from trans-Atlantic to trans-Pacific, has produced a fusion of arbitrarily classified genres and hybridity of styles - African, American, European, Caribbean, and Asian – music impacting upon music, a collision of once culturally specific meters and rhythmic tools. More importantly this journey of rhythm accentuates broader, more complex global patterns that show genres of music, which do not necessarily conform to geographical boundaries or national considerations, operating as an indicator of social and economic shifts and a barometer of class, gender and ethnicity. Similarly

rhythm has both assimilated, and anchored itself to, technology's acceleration, reinforcing the processes of cultural appropriation and transformation in a world of mass media and consumer capitalism – external economic and cultural forces impacting on music. Indeed the times are always contained in the rhythms.

Jamaica, as a centre of human movement from the period of trans-Atlantic slave trade through to post-colonial migration, provides a paradigm of trans-cultural identity, formed, in part, outside national boundaries, as communities reflected and progressed the idea of the singularity of the Jamaican condition, revealed through a collective consciousness and symbolic home. Paradoxically the construction of this meta-Jamaica from beyond geographical boundaries has had the effect of reinforcing a national identity, but one which alludes to time and place, fashioned through the idea of a collective 'home', as depicted in Morley's application of the German concept of 'heimat,'¹ or imagined community, an antidote to mobility's residual dislocation and one, which in Hobsbawm's definition is, "almost always a social construction rather than a real memory"². The colonial period represented a moment of greatly accelerated change, in Browning's reading of the spread of African rhythms, "the first processes of global exploitation,"³ as the settling of the New World witnessed massive human movement. The period up until 1870 saw an estimated 10 million slaves shipped from Africa to the Americas.⁴ Aside from other considerations this monumental dislocation would help create a collective consciousness, the beginning of an African diaspora⁵, which would continually manifest and express itself through music, and very specifically in the universal language of rhythm. This absence of written history ensures the primacy of sound as the key conduit for this consciousness: an oral tradition through the modality of music and rhythm, Paul Gilroy argues:

¹ D. Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London, Routledge, 2000) p.31

² *ibid.* p.32

³ B. Browning, *Infectious Rhythm: Metaphors of Contagion and the Spread of African Culture* (New York, Routledge, 1998) p.6

⁴ R. Segal, *The Black Diaspora* (London, Faber & Faber, 1995) p. 4

⁵ *ibid.*

It is important to remember that the slaves' access to literacy was often denied on pain of death and only a few cultural opportunities were offered as a surrogate for the other forms of individual autonomy denied by life on the plantations. Music becomes vital at the point at which linguistic and semantic indeterminacy arise amidst the protracted battle between, masters, mistresses and slaves.⁶

Colonial Jamaica, serving as agricultural producer for the lucrative European market, followed the path of plantation slave, then smallholdings capitalization throughout the 18th and 19th Centuries. Post-colonial rule saw what Segal describes as a period of “democracy of floating disillusionment,”⁷ with patriarchal support from Britain, until independence was guaranteed in 1962, by which time the economic influence of the USA had become pre-eminent and many Jamaicans had followed employment opportunities and relocated to New York and parts of the American south, whilst others had taken up the offer of citizenship to migrate in numbers to Britain. These patterns of movement embodied in the music, would be activated through cultural symbols and soundscapes that were representative of imagined homes, “placed identities for placeless times.”⁸ These nostalgic homes, both Africa and Jamaica, were crucial determinants of both identity and community, constructed through mechanisms which were outside empowered literacies and print mediums. Rather, they were, as Louis Chade-Sokei argues, “articulated and disseminated (through the) sound/culture nexus: that discursive space where Africa ceaselessly extends and invents itself in an epistemological matrix coded not in words but in sounds.”⁹ The dilemma, it would appear, is contained within the struggle for an expression of this identity – African, Jamaican, Afro-Caribbean, Black-British or Afro-American? The role of music, manifested through its social capacity, the blues parties and sound systems, would become crucial in constructing this identity and would be challenged,

⁶ P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (Cambridge, Mass. University of Harvard, 1993) p.74

⁷ *ibid.* P.185

⁸ D. Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London, Routledge, 2000) p.246

⁹ L. Chude-Sokei, “Postnationalist Geographies: Rasta, Ragga and Reinventing Africa” in Potash, C (ed) *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution* (London, Schirmer, 1997) p.216

initially in migrant Britain, but more recently with the incursions of global mass media, by the successive appropriation, transformation and commodification by dominant cultural forces. In Browning's argument accelerated mobility and the contagion and spread of "infectious rhythms," ensures, "there is no fixed point prior to which one can speak of cultural purity."¹⁰ The role of authenticity, as a determinant of identity is spurious, more significantly it would seem technology has made authenticity increasingly an abstraction and mobility has rendered the debate as purely subjective.

Freezing Up Orange Street¹¹

Popular music is traditionally perceived as being a continuum and in a constant state of flux. It shifts and morphs, showing seams or stitches, but with no obvious point of origin or destination. Musicians and producers incorporate technology, adapt to market forces and popular mores, and significantly in the digital age, where music is no longer a linear progression, but instead cyclical, ignites the question and relevance of the cultural discourse: real or artificial? The process of digital 'sampling' has resulted in the wholesale plundering of the recorded past to offer a prismatic representation of previously digested musical signifiers. Technology has simply aided the process and transformed what was previously influence, mimicry or partial appropriation into the wholesale commandeering of a rhythm, melody, vocal or sound bite. One argument, which will be addressed later,¹² probes the digital 'revolution' as the death of reggae, Jamaica's principal musical form, however this cross-pollination of styles and sounds was

¹⁰ B. Browning, *Infectious Rhythm: Metaphors of Contagion and the Spread of African Culture* (New York, Routledge, 1998) p.6

¹¹ Title taken from Prince Buster "Freezing Up Orange Street", also known as "Sweet Pea" (FAB Records, 1967) the street remains a symbolic area for Jamaican music and has been home to numerous retail outlets and Sound Systems

¹² L. Bradley, *Bass Culture* (London, Penguin, 2000) p.501

crucial to the development of the Jamaican music, and technology will enable a short circuit to this process of fusion.

The spatial significance of Jamaica places it at the apex of two interlocking triangles connecting three continents. It is linked historically, for the black majority, to a lost spiritual home in Africa. It is aligned to the political and economic continent of Europe. Chiefly as a result of its geographical proximity, Jamaica would increasingly be drawn into the American sphere of influence, paradoxically both socialist Cuba and capitalist United States. The important synergy with America emerges from a commonality, a shared past, violent heritage and key to the African diaspora, which would find expression through cultural forms, in particular, music. Mobility and technology would facilitate this evolving identity and accelerate the fusion of Jamaican folk traditions with nascent popular music forms from the southern states of America. The process of popular fusion would come through tangible and mediated forms with the post war movement of military personnel through the Caribbean, which saw US sailors bring in jazz and blues records, and the 1950s r & b played on radio stations in and around Miami, picked up in Kingston, Jamaica.¹³ If radios themselves were scarce at this time, live music was practically non-existent; the demand for black American music could only be satisfied by mobile 'sound systems', in hired halls or the slum yards. The sound system, a focus for the community with raucous sounds and larger than life DJs,¹⁴ would sell goat curries, salt fish and Red Stripe beer, which would become ubiquitous symbols of a pan-national Jamaican lifestyle, the branding of the latter an indication of a Jamaican identity constructed through commodification. These parties, in time transposed to British dancehalls, would transform cold wet nights in locations like Brixton, London or St. Pauls, Bristol into an imagined 'home' for thousands of migrant West Indians.

¹³ D. Hebdige, *Cut 'n' Mix* (London, Comedia, 1987) p.62

¹⁴ *ibid.*

In *Bass Culture*, Lloyd Bradley's history of reggae, Derek Harriott, now running a successful record business in Kingston, Jamaica elaborated on the social significance of the early sound system:

The sound system dances were where ghetto people came to enjoy themselves. No airs or graces, just be among your own people ... people would have on their best clothes and you would have a drink and hear the very best music. It made us feel good about ourselves. Like we could do anything.¹⁵

DJs Duke Reid, Sir Coxone Dodd and Prince Buster became synonymous with their respective sound systems and these three would become the catalyst for the embryonic Jamaican music industry. The chronological relevance of this is, firstly to recognise the degree to which contemporary global DJ culture evolved from this very point - filling the void left by an impoverished local economy, unable to support a live music infrastructure, the highly competitive sound systems, driven by ego and good business sense, would beg, steal or borrow to acquire rare US records. Removing or obliterating labels to obscure titles and artists names DJs were able to gain the upper hand in the blues party battles. This embryonic, commodity fetishization would later be re-invented in Jamaican clubs, as the one off dub-plate or white label; an esoteric and exclusive approach to music's artifacts, which would also re-emerge in 1970s New York, albeit in the form of recycling and post modern re-appropriation of older, rarer records, to fire the nascent hip-hop and break beat scene, thereby consolidating the perception of vinyl records being a determinant of authenticity and become fundamental to subsequent club culture. The other significance of this chronology was the appearance of the DJ as the iconic figure, previously a mediated symbol, via radio, here for the first time a tangible medium with actual affect on the dynamics of the audience/performer synergy and manifestation of the physicality of music through social function.

¹⁵ L. Bradley, *L Bass Culture* (London, Penguin, 2000) pp.3-4

The essential development to come from the early Jamaican productions was 'ska', a hybrid of American r & b and 'mento' - the existing Caribbean folk tradition, a local version of calypso (itself an amalgam of African rhythms with Spanish melodies), and like its Trinidadian counterpart a continuation of African music's oral tradition, complimented by lyrical social commentary; in Hebdige's phrase, "the links between drumming, religion and resistance."¹⁶ Rhythmic structures framed ska's composition, with fusion of r & b shuffle and embedded African off beat syncopation, driven by a clipped guitar or piano on the second and fourth beats of the bar to produce a distinctive and at this time enclosed Jamaican sound. The dominant African pattern was that of 'call and response', which as well as providing modality for blues, gospel and r & b, would also be encoded in ska, and later reggae's, rhythmic template, highlighting a common structure for the plurality of forms.

A deejay is just a person who talks over the mike (sic), puts records on and reads the invitation where the next dance is going to keep.¹⁷

Through the mediated incursions of black American radio stations, (jive talking jocks) Jamaican music acquired a vocal model for the sound system DJs,¹⁸ who began 'toasting' or 'talkover', charismatic figures such as U-Roy, Big Youth and King Stitt, chatting over records. Augmented by intense competition, the capacity to personalize the sound system, and provide a dynamic, tangible link between the music and community had in effect created a modality not only for music but also as an expression of identity. Musically this template would be transposed to London's dancehalls and New York's block parties,¹⁹ but importantly through the sound system articulated via the language of DJ culture this synergy would symbolically assert 'Jamaican-ness'; this direct communication, despite U-Roy's self-depreciation, was a functional

¹⁶ D. Hebdige, *Cut 'n' Mix* (London, Comedia, 1987) p.44

¹⁷ DJ and toaster U-Roy. Source: D. Katz, *Solid Foundation: An Oral History of Reggae* (London, Bloomsbury, 2003) p.163

¹⁸ D. Toop, *Rap Attack #3* (London, Serpents Tail, 2000) p.18

¹⁹ *ibid.* p.19

component of the Jamaican soundscape. The absence of other mediated forms – radio and TV - resulted in thousands flocking to the nightly parties²⁰ where the DJ served as agent for community news and information, as harbinger for styles and fashion, whilst developing literacy for the music. The consequence of ska’s rhythmic structure was ‘talkover’ which took on a staccato or scat meter and though often irreverent and boastful, ironically had precedents in the non-conformist church services on the island²¹, again with traditional call and response patterns, centred on rhythmic regularity - both secular and religious forms would later have a significant influence on the evolution of American rap. This paradigm of triangular interaction becomes formalized through the African tradition of storytelling, which Hebdige identifies as ‘social glue’, where there is music for every occasion - “work songs, songs for births, marriages and deaths,”²² and where the “music was dominated by the drums”²³. This display of music’s corporeality provides both a real and nostalgic link to a pre-colonial heritage whilst engaging with the prosaic and immediate concerns of the community, highlighting music’s ability to eclipse time and place. An expression of music as simultaneously continuous and cyclical, sound transcending the ‘I’ and producing a communal experience, ‘we-ness’ in Adorno’s words, of the mediated form.²⁴

Borderless Jamaica – An Imagined Home

Migration is a one-way trip. There is no ‘home’ to go back to.²⁵
Stuart Hall

Jamaica, in a post-colonial condition offered an illusion of social and economic transformation.

Despite the deception of access to social and political mobility for colonial communities the

²⁰ L. Bradley, *Bass Culture* (London, Penguin, 2000) p.18

²¹ D. Hebdige, *Cut ‘n’ Mix* (London, Comedia, 1987) p.50

²² *ibid.* p.30

²³ *ibid.* p.30

²⁴ T. Adorno “Minima Moralia: on a Damaged Life”, (London, NewLeft Books, 1974) in M. Bull, and L. Back, (eds) *The Auditory Culture* (Oxford, Berg, 2004) p.6

²⁵ S. Hall, “Minimal Selves” in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, H. A. Baker, Jr., M. Diawara and R. H. Lindeborg (eds), (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996) p.115

reality of the retention of existing financial infrastructures, plus the inequitable division of property and wealth ensured a period of stagnation for the black and coloured majority. The opportunity for social mobility within a national context was non-existent and the years following the Second World War saw many seek employment beyond the boundaries of the West Indies. Many found work in agriculture from Florida to New England²⁶ and began to settle in urban centres from Miami through to New York. Although accurate figures here are difficult to ascertain due to non-registered migration to the USA, in 1969 the numbers involved matched those to Britain.²⁷ The perception that this migration, as in the case with Britain, was simply a post-war phenomenon, is undermined by statistics showing an accumulative movement to the Eastern seaboard, by the 1930s a quarter of Harlem's residents claimed West Indian origin.²⁸ The trickle of Jamaican migrants, which would by the 1950s become flow, came with attendant Caribbean culture including the rhythms of the region as sonic symbols of home.

This pattern of mobility, resulting from the shifting trends in labour demands and the search for employment, would begin the process of Jamaican identity becoming constructed from outside national boundaries. This would have quantifiable, long-term effects on the movement of popular culture and the emergence of subsequent electronic and dance genres, but importantly USA migration would reflect a completely different cultural interaction from the British experience. America had an active black population and embedded culture. The established communities in urban centres required West Indians, to, in Gilroy's words "fit in"²⁹. This did not inhibit long-term assimilation and only in the later years as trans-cultural forces, displayed through popular music, did the elements of Jamaican identity re-emerge. Caribbean identity was more easily integrated into the rich complexity of African-American culture, a component of the heterogeneous make up of black America. Embedded indigenous black communities provided

²⁶ L. Bradley, *Bass Culture* (London, Penguin, 2000) p.138

²⁷ *ibid.* p.138

²⁸ D. Toop, *Rap Attack #3* (London, Serpents Tail, 2000) p.18

²⁹ P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (Cambridge, Mass. University of Harvard, 1993)

Jamaican migrants opportunities to more readily assimilate suggesting the prospect of some degree of social mobility absent in post-colonial Britain and the Caribbean³⁰. Despite being part of a larger African diaspora, the need for the creation of a separate community became peripheral to the much bigger issue of being a Black American and the social and economic consequences of that condition. The civil rights movement, Malcolm X and the more militant Black Panther Party became greater determinants of Black consciousness and would give way to the adoption of African styles and cultural emblems with artists such as James Brown, Aretha Franklin and Roy Ayers as the iconography of soul music began to express the black diaspora through popular music.³¹

The experience of British migrants reflected an entirely different and very specific process of Jamaican mobility. In turning to its colonies to solve a labour shortfall following the Second World War, the Nationality Act was passed in 1948 granting citizenship to its incumbent Commonwealth. Those seeking recognition, financial security and unfulfilled social mobility at home took up the offer. This very concise and quantifiable period of migration is evident in statistics that indicated by 1958, a quarter of a million West Indians had officially migrated.³² However over half of the males who migrated were employed below their qualification levels³³ as Jamaicans, across all classes began to form clusters in urban centres and experience first hand cultural dislocation. Unlike the United States, Britain had no existing black demographic; the opportunity for assimilation did not arise. The newly arriving colonial migrants represented the exotic 'other' to a white majority, steeped in memories of empire with entrenched values that frequently manifested as racial superiority, or at best, curiosity. The migrants themselves

³⁰ L. Bradley, *Bass Culture* (London, Penguin, 2000) p.140

³¹ P. Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1987) p.178

³² R. Segal, *The Black Diaspora* (London, Faber & Faber, 1995) p. 277

³³ *ibid.* p. 278

had to cope with the challenges of climate, discrimination in housing and unemployment, physical and cultural alterity and unfulfilled expectations.

Everton Smith (pronounced 'Simit' in Jamaica), now is a resident in Perth, Western Australia, is first generation British citizen whose parents migrated from Jamaica to London in 1955, in order, in Smith's words, "to improve their lives, as they had no opportunity to 'move up' in the country regions of Jamaica,"³⁴ finding employment in nursing and on the railways. Smith's father talked of regulating community housing schedules in Brixton and Camberwell, where "one person on nightshift would hand over the bed to another who was on days" and remembers racism's incarnation, frequently dismissed as apocryphal, 'No Blacks, No Dogs, No Irish' on the doors of pubs and boarding houses. Such hostility, which in turn produced localized confinement within the city centres, created a sudden alignment of cultures igniting in some cases an entrenched racism. A reflection of a historically-derived perception of otherness, described by Segal as a reduction to "conventional wisdom,"³⁵ was not experiential but served to alienate and homogenize Commonwealth migrants. Exacerbated by restricted mobility, forcing the majority into enclaves within the urban centres³⁶, a mirror of the ghettos and yards of Kingston, this would consequently create communities, which would produce echoes of a lost Jamaica. Sound systems and illegal blues parties in Britain, modelled on those in Kingston would operate as a collective focus, a construction of a nostalgic version of another home, developing social linkage and imposing community boundaries within the context of the white, hegemonic British culture.

³⁴ Interview with Everton Smith, Perth, Western Australia, 13th April 2005

³⁵ R. Segal, *The Black Diaspora* (London, Faber & Faber, 1995) p.270

³⁶ *ibid.* p.279

The perception of home which Morley describes as a, “metaphorical embodiment of memory and thus identity,”³⁷ one which is created not as a physical entity, rather in Descombes’ words as, “rhetorical territory, the person is at home when he (she) is at ease in the rhetoric of the people with whom he (she) shares a life.”³⁸ This territory of shared symbols, language and collective memory offered a sense of security as a means of rationalizing displacement and alienation. Stuart Hall’s experience of migration centres upon the idea of an ‘absent-present’ in which the displacement becomes a formative part of identity and there is recognition of oneself through ‘difference’. An identity constructed through difference in which, as Hall observes, “these are ‘imaginary communities’ – and not a bit the less real because they are symbolic,”³⁹ that as a result enables those displaced to always “feel that they are all, in some way, recently migrated” to lay claim to territories to which they feel alienated. In this context home, with its attendant colours, smells, sounds, and rhythms, becomes a touchstone of security to those displaced.

Nevertheless, this defining of cultural markers through a constructed home would also highlight the fragility of these perimeters, resulting in what Gilroy terms, “an historic encounter between young black and white people.” This precipitating mutual scepticism and curiosity would begin “the creation of a youth sub-culture in which black style and expertise were absolutely central.”⁴⁰ Music, in the form of ska, but later as reggae, soul, disco and other dance genres, would infer authenticity - music that denoted roots and was free from the constraints of the commercialization of popular ‘white’ music codes – in short corporatization. Music thus gave agency to those excluded, working class black and white, from established social or cultural channels. The process would also become an indication of how class and race were enmeshed at

³⁷ D. Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London, Routledge, 2000) p.19

³⁸ V. Descombes quoted in M. Auge, “Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity” (London, Verso 1995) p.108 in Morley, D *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London, Routledge, 2000) p.17

³⁹ S. Hall, “Minimal Selves” in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, H. A. Baker, Jr., M. Diawara and R. H. Lindeborg (eds), (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996) p.116

⁴⁰ P. Gilroy, *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack* (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1987) p.163

music's point of contact; most interaction was between black migrants and white working class youths who shared the same space, on housing estates, factories and urban centres. Excluded from pubs and clubs in Britain, Jamaican culture would take an autonomous route, tentatively engaging with white working class culture through mods and skinheads, who began to identify with black music- ska and soul and adopt a black style. Everton Smith remembers early fraternization, "they seemed to like our music but not the people, but we felt it was the white guys that spread the word."⁴¹ White working class youth's display of empathy with the disempowered Jamaican community and its ability to express itself through music also highlighted the absence of meaningful exchange, due in part to the lack of a common nexus of displacement and imagined home. Remaining as outsider sub-cultures, mods and skinheads annexed aspects of black culture as an expression of their resistance to the dominant white popular culture, still anchored to the tenets of pre-war music hall and variety industries. Not until the commodification of Jamaican culture began, and due in large part to the appropriation of iconic figures such as Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, by a growing student population did middle class consumerism have any demonstrable effect on the Jamaican identity.

The black population, mainly West Indian, had grown to around half a million by the mid-1960s⁴², approximately half in London with the rest scattered throughout the industrial cities of the north and Midlands. The significance of this was the organic growth of Jamaican communities in these urban centres and subsequent emergence of Britain as an active determinant of a Jamaican identity shaped outside its national boundaries. If blues parties and sound systems were the collective, external manifestation of the shared identity, the home provided a contained reinforcement; the proximity of neighbours incubated the community. Everton Smith remembers a childhood in Camberwell, where he and his friends "shared a

⁴¹ Interview with Everton Smith, Perth, Western Australia, 13th April 2005

⁴² R. Segal, *The Black Diaspora* (London, Faber & Faber, 1995) p.280

backyard and if they put their feet on the window ledge they were virtually in my house,”⁴³ and where music was a binding factor. The community’s constant reinforcement of music as a display of cultural cohesion was most apparent inside the home, where sound was a ubiquitous sign of identity. Morley’s assertion of the role of technology, as mediation and physical focus for the home⁴⁴, is reflected in the Jamaican experience as, rather than Morley’s television as representative of the ‘sacred’ consumer appliances, Smith talks of the symbolic role of the record player as an essential display of Jamaican-ness, as well as playing a vital social function, “there were always people round the house and the record player was always on, I remember it being a ‘stacker’ (multiple record) player and my mum would get me to flip all the discs over.”⁴⁵ The constant mediation, of the collective experience through music, both inside and outside the home was an affirmation of consensus identity, not as homogenous but rather as consciously distinctive, Smith stressed, “we listened to everything, blues, soul, Rolling Stones, but we were always playing music.” Music itself was a demonstration of Jamaican identity within a broader social and cultural context.

Music increasingly provided the key component of this trans-national diagnosis, through a process of flow and contra-flow. Consumption impacted upon values in production as sound and rhythm accelerated cultural mobility. In this developing trans-cultural flow touring artists and imported records would become a tangible link with the bipolar-Jamaica. Everton Smith’s family were constantly engaged in communication with their Caribbean, or other home, “my parents were always sending money back and my dad made frequent visits, friends were always coming back with things, and yes records, lots of records. They eventually went back, 15 years ago.”⁴⁶ This dissolution of space through symbolic movement of money and artefacts, served to reinforce the communal experience of dislocation and, in the process, construct a homogenized

⁴³ Interview with Everton Smith, Perth, Western Australia, 13th April 2005

⁴⁴ D. Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London, Routledge, 2000) p.88

⁴⁵ Interview with Everton Smith, Perth, Western Australia, 13th April 2005

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

community. Smith also talks of “always being conscious of Jamaica,”⁴⁷ an indication of how in Morley’s words, “[it is] still common to think of cultures as depending on and being rooted in places – in stable patterns of interaction”.⁴⁸ The secondary effect being the constant mythologizing of music and the encrypting of records with totemic qualities - authenticity defined through exclusivity.

They (sound system operators) would be playing dances in their own community, or across town in Brixton or Hackney, then they’d do outings where they’d book a hall in Birmingham or Reading or somewhere and their crowd would go up in a coach to mix with the local crowd – often their people had relatives from that area.⁴⁹

Sound systems became emblematic of a transportable music culture but also an indication of how the Jamaican community was becoming self-contained. A duality was also becoming apparent, successful artists such as Prince Buster and Jimmy Cliff would perform at exclusively white university campuses and then do club shows for entirely black audiences⁵⁰. The inference being that appropriation of Jamaican culture could not be at the expense of authenticity, but it also served to illustrate the demarcation of the communities. Identity was forged against a background of media ignorance, Jamaican music received no exposure - radio or television, and in a hostile social and political environment, where Conservative politician Enoch Powell had predicted Britain’s policy on migration would lead to “rivers of blood”⁵¹, reduced by Margaret Thatcher to the sound bite, “people of a different culture”⁵² and politicized as the notorious Sus Laws. A revival of the 1824 Vagrancy Act designed to cope with urban dysfunction after the Napoleonic Wars, was revived as a political tool in the guise of maintaining civil order and used

⁴⁷ Interview with Everton Smith, Perth, Western Australia, 13th April 2005

⁴⁸ D. Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London, Routledge, 2000) p.212

⁴⁹ Jah Vego, a vinyl selector, Duke Vin’s Sound System, London. Source: L. Bradley, *Bass Culture* (London, Penguin, 2000) p.114

⁵⁰ *ibid.* p.122

⁵¹ R. Segal, *The Black Diaspora* (London, Faber & Faber, 1995) p.281

⁵² *ibid.* p.282

as racial harassment with a 35:1 – stop-arrest ratio.⁵³ This clear evidence of a restriction of social mobility, enforced through territorial barriers, was a manifestation of migrant ‘difference’, which at this time was in danger of hermetically sealing many communities. Everton Smith points out, “our parents always told us ‘you are English’, we felt Black British, but our roots were clearly Jamaican – we always supported the West Indians in the cricket and Brazil in football, we loved football but there were no black footballers when I was growing up. Racist incidents were pretty isolated, still we were told, treat everyone as equal but be aware of who you are.”⁵⁴ Unified by this alienation first generation migrants were, as Bradley asserts, “likely to be more homogenous than their parents”⁵⁵, who were most probably born in different parts of Jamaica, or even different islands, but bonded by the migrant experience. Those born in Britain were more likely to be dismissive of regional, Caribbean trivialities and joined by a common ‘imagined’ Jamaica, ritualized in the sound system and blues parties. Regardless of the heterogeneous make of all communities collective experience would eclipse the plurality; in Tonkiss’ notion of community forged from indifference, which would “enfold forms of diversity and outline pockets of relative homogeneity, along class, ethnic or cultural lines.”⁵⁶ It was within these spaces, the Sound Systems, and through the rhythms that the emergence of Pan-African ideology would provide a synergy linking this bipolar Jamaica to assist in producing an identity forged within a global context.

Ideology and Iconography

If the Notting Hill riot of 1976 erupted from structural racism, specifically within the local infrastructure, then the inner city riots of 1981 were symptomatic of broader class schisms

⁵³ L. Bradley, *Bass Culture* (London, Penguin, 2000) p.427

⁵⁴ Interview with Everton Smith, Perth, Western Australia, 13th April 2005

⁵⁵ L. Bradley, *Bass Culture* (London, Penguin, 2000) p.380

⁵⁶ F. Tonkiss, “The Ethics of Indifference,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol.6, No.3, 2003, pp.297-311

within British society rather than the cultural fundamentalism reduced to xenophobia as outlined by Morley⁵⁷. Although racial discourse is conducted within the context of class, the issue was not one of black and white, but rather one of an increasingly disillusioned underclass, black, Asian and white fighting for political currency. This push for agency, for a section of the Jamaican population, would find expression through a loose ideology. If music had helped provide a means of cultural literacy then the creed of Rastafarianism would, in part, supply the vocabulary to articulate the Jamaican experiential condition, precipitating a shared language and linking migrant and non-migrant to the wider African diaspora.

The vagaries of Rastafarianism enabled it to represent the experience - immediate and historical - of Jamaicans in Britain and the Caribbean within the schema of black consciousness.

Significantly, through selective interpretation, Rastafarianism contained the seeds of its own misconception and dismissal by academics. As Gilroy argues, there were “problems rooted in attempts to analyse the movement as a religion or as a sub-culture rather than as a popular phenomenon.... and persistent difficulties in establishing core tenets and ideas and using them to specify exactly who is legitimately entitled to belong to the group.”⁵⁸ Paradoxically these inherent ambiguities allowed many to profess allegiance, but with varying degrees of commitment or comprehension, an ideology conveniently un-coded and not vehemently enforced. Its relevance lay in its inclusive, social capacity rather than theological function. Based on the teachings of Marcus Garvey in the early 20th Century and furthering the idea of a return to a Zionist Ethiopian homeland, Rastafarianism’s basic tenets, centring on displacement, had equal resonance for national and migrant Jamaicans, enabling a common identity without adherence to any strict hierarchical canons which would impose cultural uniformity. Louis Chude-Sokei attributes Rastafarian lure to the illusion of “the promised land of Ethiopia,

⁵⁷ D. Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London, Routledge, 2000) p.248

⁵⁸ P. Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1987) p.187

(which) was a pre-colonial utopia and the imminent future of black people who were destined to survive the time span of Babylonian hegemony.”⁵⁹ Garvey’s teachings promoted the idea of self-sufficiency through self-awareness, fusing class rhetoric with pragmatic ideology. By the 1920s he had established the Universal Negro Improvement Association throughout the Caribbean, Central America and major cities in the USA⁶⁰. Rastafarianism’s resurgence during the 1970s and 80s was accelerated largely by its potent signifiers, immediately recognizable icons and symbols – Haile Selassie, the dreadlocked Rastaman, emblematic colours: red, gold and green (Jamaica) and red, black and green (Africa). This effected a short cut to its ideology, plus it provided an inclusive, esoteric language, constructing a cultural boundary, but nevertheless one which filtered through Jamaican community, young, old, migrant, national, believers and non-believers alike. This ideological panacea, which can be reduced as Chude-Sokei suggests to an African, “cultural commodity available to all those with black skin,”⁶¹ nevertheless functioned as a broad consensus for global Jamaicans in and legitimized their proactive role within a black diaspora, providing a way to collectivize and anchor resistance to a black heritage.

Channelled through music, Rastafarianism came to signify, if informally, the community and provided the means to commodify the growing Jamaican consciousness. Paradoxically the conditions in Britain and the Caribbean began to shape changes within the music. Producers would in Bradley’s words begin “tailoring their tunes with one eye on export figures and chilly north European conditions demanded an extra hi-tempo sound to get the blood flowing and the feet moving”⁶² In contrast the Jamaican tempo had decelerated, in response to violence at the sound systems, to a ‘rocksteady’ beat. Self proclaimed ‘rude boys’ were pushing the ego driven

⁵⁹ L. Chude-Sokei, “Postnationalist Geographies: Rasta, Ragga and Reinventing Africa” in Potash, C (ed) *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution* (London, Schirmer, 1997) p.217

⁶⁰ L. Bradley, *Bass Culture* (London, Penguin, 2000) p.72

⁶¹ *ibid.* p.217

⁶² *ibid.* p.163

rivalry of DJs and party organisers to combatant levels, which fuelled by affiliation to opposing political parties, the socialist PNP (People's National Party) and JLP (more pro-USA Jamaican Labour Party) had increased local aggression. The 'outsider' Rastafarians became the beneficiaries, as their benign ideology would gain credibility and support, affecting musical production as an accommodation of the growing convergence in migrant and national tastes and styles, encased in a growing black consciousness. Artists such as Big Youth, Burning Spear and groups like The Abyssinians would become potent visual, as well as sonic symbols, of the evolving style of reggae – colour branded, and boldly displaying the emblem of authenticity, the dreadlock hairstyle – these would become powerful icons of Jamaican identity, defiance and self determination, particularly finding currency amongst first generation migrants keen to express this identity through a collective consciousness and to define themselves beyond the limitations of an imposed identity. However in time Rastafarians' adaptive creed would spread to incorporate many non-Jamaicans as an embodiment of anti-racist sentiments, becoming in Said's words, "an interpretative community"⁶³ causing the blurring of cultural boundaries and help push a generic identity that was more easily marketed. A demonstration of Rastafarianism's non-threatening doctrines was more easily consumed by white audiences struggling to empathize with openly militant expressions of black identity.

An existing infrastructure within Britain, incorporating record distribution and sound systems, which had evolved around the success of early ska music, produced a precedent for later networks of creative industries, the pattern of ethnic concentration, a notable model for "cultural industry clusters,"⁶⁴ highlighted by O'Connor, and evidence of "tacit knowledge, embedded

⁶³ E. Said, "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community", in Foster (ed.), *Post Modern Culture*, (London, Pluto Press, 1985) in P. Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1987) p.187

⁶⁴ J.O'Connor, "A Special Kind of City Knowledge," Paper for the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2004 p.1

locally,”⁶⁵ which gave access to both black and working class white markets. This infrastructure would be significant in the development of reggae⁶⁶ and its subsequent commodification through popular channels, but more importantly it created a tangible link between the producers in Kingston, Jamaica and the consumers in urban Britain, as product became a barometer of identity. The artifact - the record, a means of bridging the spatial gulf, not simply through sound, an obvious embodiment of ‘real’ Jamaica, but also through the visual attachment – images, colours and titles - a means of objective classification. The record, as symbol of consumption, becomes in Gilroy’s words, “no longer a private, passive or individual process it becomes a procedure of collective affirmation and protest in which the new authentic public sphere is brought into being.”⁶⁷ The political and economic environment of post-independence Jamaica was in step with the British experience, and could find expression through music and ideology. Tourism, foreign investment, specifically American, and the declining demand for bauxite, the country’s leading resource, was finding, just as in colonial times, wealth concentrated in few hands. The increased relevance for music as agency for the marginalized majority became a paradigm of the migrant experience. Ironically the most immediately recognizable symbol of the Jamaican ‘sufferah’ underclass would emerge to lend voice to the disenfranchised, but would also transcend national and migrant boundaries to become the most potent and marketed icon of Jamaican identity.

The Commodification of Jamaica

If the sound system became an agent for the Jamaican consciousness, then it did so by maintaining cultural boundaries and was, in large part, built upon artistic anonymity. In contrast

⁶⁵ *ibid.* p.4

⁶⁶ L. Bradley, *Bass Culture* (London, Penguin, 2000) p.235-8

⁶⁷ P. Gilroy, *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack* (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1987) p.210

the popular music industry's focus on the cult of personality would more easily accommodate those whose persona was more suited to a literacy built around the white rock band, and would in effect diffuse any threat to either music industry or society. The late Bob Marley legitimized the ambiguous Rastafarian creed. His market success globalized reggae, became the ubiquitous symbol of a constructed Jamaican identity and in doing so extended that identity beyond geographical and trans-cultural boundaries. The iconic predilections of a globalized music industry have rendered Marley as 'the' powerful symbol of Jamaica's exotic myth.

Paradoxically the marketing of his image, in effect homogenizing the public perception of Jamaica, has produced a static vision, which has cryogenically sealed its identity in time and place, and consequently left reggae in a holding pattern which defies aesthetic progression. This is in no way intended to denigrate the significance of Marley as artist, icon or charismatic figure, understandably revered, not only amongst Jamaicans, but also in the wider music community. Instead an observation of the appropriation, transformation and commodification, not only of a style of music, but of a whole community identity, part of what Morley likens to a "creolisation of cultures,"⁶⁸ where aspects of global lifestyles are drawn on in order to, in Rapport and Dawson's words, "(secure) their own identities, turning the erstwhile alien into their own."⁶⁹

Jamaica has become the embodiment of the 'exotic other', enabling consumers to engage in form of musical tourism protected by a mediated prophylactic, shielded from the realities and inequalities frequently expressed through the music. Addressing music within the context of its chronology and heritage facilitates an understanding of expression, particularly when defined by its ethnicity and class. Narrative allows an appropriate social and political framework by which to assess the music's wider relevance. The antiseptic packaging of commodified angst,

⁶⁸ D. Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London, Routledge, 2000) p.10

⁶⁹ N. Rapport and A. Dawson, "Home and Movement" p.25 quoted in D. Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London, Routledge, 2000) p.10

exemplified by punk or the post-colonial, post-migrant experience in reggae, blunts the message by reducing to easily interpreted symbols and trivializing experience. Such commodification of ideologies runs the risk of rendering the music, to those outside the specified community, largely impotent. This seems too ironic as Marley himself saw his music as a means of propagating the tenets of Rastafarianism, which Hebdige relates in Marley's words as, "a weapon for peace,"⁷⁰ an ideology at odds with consumerism, but never a problem for the non-Jamaican record industry, the channel through which he would access the rock orientated white European and lucrative American markets which would begin to define both the artist and the representation of Jamaica outside the boundaries of the ethnic community. The iconic Marley has been identified and activated by a market as largely passive and non-confrontational to white audiences without compromising his role as a symbol of black consciousness.

Technology and Jamaica's Soundscape

If reggae was witnessing a global accessibility through mediated symbols and increased mobility, producing what Berman describes as "internationalization of daily life,"⁷¹ then Jamaican creativity and improvisation was reformulating its own identity through the sonic medium and the creation of the 'dub' soundscape. The essential function of the sound system was to create an important synthesis between the producer, consumer and the medium through which the music was conferred, which Gilroy argues, "expresses the improvisation, spontaneity and intimacy, providing a living bridge between the African tradition of music-making which dissolves the distinctions between art and life, artifact and expression which typify the contrasting traditions of Europe."⁷² Significantly, a bridge between the migrant experience and

⁷⁰ D. Hebdige, *Cut 'n' Mix* (London, Comedia, 1987) p.78

⁷¹ M. Berman, "Why Modernism Still Matters" in S. Lash and J. Friedman, (eds) *Modernity and Identity*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1992) p.35

⁷² P. Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1987) p. 164

an imagined home, whilst serving as an expression of cultural authenticity. Hebdige points to the traditions of West Africa, describing music's function as 'social glue', where "every member of the tribe, even those who are not especially skilled, can participate."⁷³ This continuous process mythologises not only the Jamaican home but also emphasizes the visceral experience of engaging in music, providing a corporeal link to an African home - physicality and spirituality fused within rhythm and music. An expression of Jamaica's duality, one that embodies a nostalgia and yearning for a mythologized African past whilst constructing a cultural framework for a potential future, realized through music and technology.

Instruments ease backwards and forwards, in, out and around the mix, completely rebalancing the tune four or five times in the space of a minute. New melodies are shaped out of bits of rhythm that have been stretched and remoulded, whereas melodic sequences have been chopped down so brutally they can be stacked on top of each other to become the rhythm. All the while the echo and phaser units are picking up horn lines and keyboard riffs apparently at random, and the percussion is careening around as if in a pinball machine.⁷⁴

The translation of the studio experience to record, and expressed through the medium of the sound system marks a fundamental shift in the development of music. The movement away from the structures of popular and classical music and into a realm of spatial construction and deconstruction had only existed within the disciplines of experimental and avant garde; Luigi Russolo's 'Art of Noise' manifesto, Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Musique Concrete* and Lamonte Young's minimalist works⁷⁵ are precedents though an unlikely source of inspiration for the Jamaican innovation - 'dub', which had parallels in the abstraction and fluidity of progressive jazz, but not in spatial representation, creating in Toop's words, "new maps of time."⁷⁶ Dub chartered new sonic territory, utilizing technology with reverbs, delays, sound effects and ambient interludes it began to challenge popular conceptions of song structures. The key tenet is

⁷³ D. Hebdige, *Cut 'n' Mix* (London, Comedia, 1987) p.30

⁷⁴ The Mighty Two, *Tribesman Rockers, African Dub* Chapter Three (Joe Gibbs, 1978) quoted in L. Bradley, *Bass Culture* (London, Penguin, 2000) p.308

⁷⁵ M. Prendergast, *The Ambient Century* (London, Bloomsbury, 2003)

⁷⁶ D. Toop, *Ocean of Sound* (London, Serpents Tail, 1995) p.152

‘what is omitted or absent is as relevant as what is included.’ Prior to dub John Cage, with a piece entitled 4’33” and later” Waiting”, had for the first time incorporated silence as the key structure⁷⁷. Where Cage’s absence had adopted Hindu philosophy of “music to quieten the mind,”⁷⁸ Jamaica’s protagonists had improvised to juxtapose space with technology to completely different ends and to entirely different audiences. To open up the spatial constraints of popular structures was a unique experiment and one that could work only through the sound systems if the role of rhythm was elevated to the foreground. Rhythm constructed from not only drums but also from repeated snatches of melody and voice offered a new template for Jamaican expression, one that would echo through the analogue and digital periods and embed the crucial role of ‘drum and bass’. Advanced through its two greatest exponents, King Tubby and Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry, dub became Jamaica’s most significant contribution to ‘electronic culture’. A process rather than style or genre it encapsulated technology, spontaneity and improvisation by the stripping away of multi-track recordings to reconstruct an entirely new soundscape that bore only a passing resemblance to the original track, discarding the popular verse / chorus structures in favour of spatial and rhythmic synthesis. The reconstruction of popular tracks would become a production norm and through formatting - the release of multiple mixes of a song, in Toop’s analogy - “ unpicking music in the commercial zone ”⁷⁹ - the ‘version’ or dub rework would become an essential tool for DJs and a music industry keen to extract the full marketing potential of existing product.

The significance of the ‘dub process’ was to extend the Jamaican influence outside the cultural fundamentals which bound the sound system communities, placing the music in a wider context and beyond the defining markers of ethnicity. Music technology, (allowing for general access), is not bound by geographical cultural markers and although dub was a quintessential Jamaican

⁷⁷ M. Prendergast, *The Ambient Century* (London, Bloomsbury, 2003) p.47

⁷⁸ *ibid.* p.47

⁷⁹ D. Toop, *Ocean of Sound* (London, Serpents Tail, 1995) p.152

expression, as an ad hoc technique, utilizing technology, it transferred to a plurality of music forms. Although utilizing dub's techniques inferred cultural appropriation, sonically it could work with any sound source. Tracks such as The Clash's "London's Calling" display how rock structures can equally be reduced by dub's spatial reconstructions, just as most club genres would begin to integrate its production values. Journalist Richard Williams points to dub's absence of "in built politics" which permitted its application outside ethnic perimeters.⁸⁰ King Tubby, by transferring his experiments to the sound system, turned the studio process into an experience of a three dimensional soundscape; producer Dennis Alcapone remembers - "Tubby had him steel horns for the treble and he put them up in the trees so it's like the sound is coming from all over."⁸¹ This was a significant step in the direction of 'technician as artist' and a portent of future club culture; by-passing the live performance the DJ had become the key medium, transforming the dynamics of how the audience accesses music in a meta-performance which would reach its zenith in the club boom after the late 1980s.

If technology operates as a mechanism which can disguise cultural boundaries, its continued incursions would signal the end of exclusive, traditional and contained modes of expression. British-based musician and producer Denis Bovell points to his view of a degradation of Jamaican authenticity - "when computers came in, that's when the amateurs took over. The Japanese (technology) got stuck into reggae and made it so easy that any man could go down the road there and buy an ordinary little synthesizer that's even got one beat already in it called reggae."⁸² Technology provided short cuts and sparked a proliferation of 'versions' of original tracks, which required Jamaican music to be reassessed. A track by Wayne Smith, *Under Mi Sleng Teng*⁸³ heralded the beginning of the digitization of reggae, absent of reggae's talismanic

⁸⁰ R. Williams, "The Sound of Surprise" in C. Potash, (ed) *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution* (London, Schirmer, 1997) p.147

⁸¹ L. Bradley, *Bass Culture* (London, Penguin, 2000) p.314

⁸² *ibid.* p.501

⁸³ Wayne Smith, *Under Mi Sleng Teng* (Jammy's Records, 1985)

bassline, the track was released in 239 versions over a nine month period in 1985⁸⁴, symptomatic of how technology's construction and deconstruction of music was dismantling the idea of it being the expression of an exclusive national identity. The emergence of live bands, (such as Aswad, Steel Pulse and Bovell's own band Matumbi), in the short term helped British reggae resurrect cultural markers, nevertheless the onset of digitalization and importantly digital sampling, accelerated the process of melodic and rhythmic appropriation which, despite the issues of copyright, became formalized by the dominance of 90s club culture.

Digital Rasta

Despite protestations of the purists others did embrace technology. Just as King Tubby had reinvented the sonic terrain, Lee 'Scratch' Perry extolled the virtues of metronomic simplicity, he would in his own words, "take the drum machine and beat the drummer till he played like one."⁸⁵ Nevertheless the systematic plundering of music's heritage through digital sampling has continued unabated since the advent of manipulative, or perhaps more accurately, reproductive technology, which became readily available by the mid 1980s. Analogue precedents, such as Grandmaster Flash's *Adventures on the Wheels of Steel*⁸⁶ were isolated curiosities to popular audiences, nevertheless an apt prognosis, illustrating how snatches of sound and rhythm could be grabbed, most often in 2, 4 or 8 bar segments and used as building blocks for entirely new pieces of music. Juxtaposing of rhythms and melodies from multiple sources accelerated the process of hybridity. Music, in the majority of situations, is mediated by some level of technology, studio or performance, however only since the appearance of digital reproduction

⁸⁴ P. Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1987) p.209

⁸⁵ J. Gilbert, and E. Pearson, *Discographies* (London, Routledge, 1999) p.116

⁸⁶ Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five, *Adventures on the Wheels of Steel*, (Sugarhill Records, 1981)

has there been any serious concern for the negative implications of hardware innovation, creating what Gilbert and Pearson refer to as a hierarchy within technology, which points to an arbitrary classification of ‘real’ and ‘artificial’, where one form of technology is deemed authentic and essential, or “considered more technological than others,” and “aesthetic preferences are transformed into ontological division.”⁸⁷ This hierarchical reference confronts technology’s corporeality rather than its cultural effect. Its most common use in the studio environment renders it invisible and unknown to the consumer, the realm of reception, thus leaving the argument of technology’s incursions into authenticity largely subjective.

Perhaps it is more relevant to analyse how the characteristics and idiosyncrasies of Jamaican music have been appropriated through technology, continuing the flow even at the expense of cultural legitimacy and so contextualise the real or synthetic discourse. Technology has enabled the proliferation of composite styles dissolving spatial determinants of music; the popular perception of reggae being anchored in place, and to a large extent time, would mean the retention of status only by re-enforcing this cliché. Aesthetically entrenched it could be commodified, via established symbols and icons, formatted in endless re-issues, box sets and compilations, whilst in hybrid form would continue to have wider contextual affect. Within this framework the question of authenticity must be defined, disempowered cultures seek to retain links and symbols to an identified source or common origin, whereas music’s inherent mobility infers fusion and appropriation. This paradox can only be resolved by the integration of technology’s inevitable role, an acceptance of cultural multiplicity and arbitrary non-hierarchical classification, the alternative being nostalgic and regressive. It is perhaps only through this generic splintering that Jamaican music can retain credibility and by default authenticity, the natural flow of music through rhythm facilitates organic change, validating its cultural roots unimpeded by spatial considerations. The morphing of reggae into the more

⁸⁷ *ibid.* p.112

upbeat, urban dancehall style is a direct response to the requirements of global consumption and the creative whims of electronic producers who have retained Jamaican identity, albeit in abstracted forms through the evolving styles of dancehall, 'ragga', drum and bass, garage and 2-step.

Bobby Digital in Kingston may send a disc with the basic rhythm track to Daddy Freddy who is in London. This track may feature the latest craze in dancehall rhythm – Indian tablas, 'mento' patterns from the 1950s. After a brief vocal session ... go to Massive B in the Bronx for hip-hop beats. Within a few days this mix is booming out on the mighty Stone Love Sound System somewhere in a crowded field in West Kingston. Or in a community centre in Brixton.⁸⁸

The unencumbered mobility of sounds in an accelerated context seems to be the realization of Zygmunt Bauman's assertion that space sometimes appears to exist, "solely in order to be cancelled; as if a constant invitation to slight it."⁸⁹ The idea is that "space abolishes the flow of time. The inhabitants of the first world live in a perpetual present,"⁹⁰ making the concept of authentic and artificial redundant, the cyclical characteristics of post-modern and post-technological music are a complete repudiation of chronological and spatial considerations. Technology, analogous of social and cultural shifts, has reinforced more recent, accelerated mobility through the processes of digitization. The capacity for folding time and space with digital technology's 'time-stretching' function has arrested music's once anchored linearity and cultural torpidity. Time-stretching, in real terms allows a segment of sound – music, voice, or rhythm - to be manipulated in a way that the duration of the 'sample' can be lengthened or shortened without the subsequent change in pitch, or alternatively the pitch can be transformed without increasing or decreasing the duration of the sample - which inevitably occurs when the same sample is in analogue form. This simplistic reduction has enabled the juxtaposition of an infinite number of soundbites, rhythms, voices and melodies, enabling stylistic appropriation

⁸⁸ L. Chude-Sokei, "Postnationalist Geographies: Rasta, Ragga and Reinventing Africa" in C. Potash, (ed) *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution* (London, Schirmer, 1997) p.220

⁸⁹ Z. Bauman, *Globalization* (Oxford, Polity, 1998) p.77

⁹⁰ *ibid.* p.88

without degradation of quality or perceived authenticity. Although it is important, as Gilbert and Pearson confirm, to avoid technological determinism and merely map “simple causal relations between technological change and musical (or any cultural) activity,”⁹¹ it is inevitable that such innovations act as accelerants and the fact that computers and samplers are ubiquitous, a constant in the recording process, permits a degree of acceptable generality. This is not to say that all music is defined by technology’s cause and effect, folk and rock traditions co-exist in a world of rampant technology, the boundaries of arbitrary music genres themselves rendered invisible by technology, but importantly, within the context of rhythm and electronica to be dismissive of such changes is to marginalise the process of construction and in this case reduce technology to an incidental factor in Jamaica’s musical evolution.

The Jamaican sound, if one indeed still exists, has become appropriated into a much broader, complex schema. From the dub tinged sounds of Washington’s Thievery Corp. to East London’s On-U Sound, New Zealand’s Salmonella Dub, to Toronto’s dancehall scene, these exponents of ‘a’ Jamaican sound are a testament to musical and cultural fluidity; evidence of all sounds and styles containing the seeds of their own transformation.

Identity and community are embodied within the narrative of popular, electronic and rhythmic music - the premise of this thesis; the mobility of music through the agency of rhythm is symptomatic of the colonial and post-colonial condition and forms part of the narrative of popular culture. The Jamaican experience, as part of the broader African diaspora, is something which lies within the hierarchical construction of alterity, and which permeates the entire body of work, to isolate either would somehow marginalize and exclude, seemingly tag them as music strands which function outside the whole. Although the classifications of identity and community infer shared values and characteristics they are not mechanisms intended to reduce

⁹¹ J. Gilbert, and E. Pearson, *Discographies* (London, Routledge, 1999) p.110

post-colonial migration to a singular experience or infer ethnic homogeneity, but rather to be suspicious of cultural determinism. Nevertheless, any mapping of human mobility (and its cultural consequences), requires the construction of a modality through discernable patterns and conditions, which take account of the heterogeneous make up of communities and identity's inherent plurality.

Jamaican identity inevitably incorporates local and regional factors, patterns of migration, methods of collective expression, cultural confrontation and dislocation, language and ideology, all constructed within the context of a broader diaspora. It is also important to assess the residual Jamaican identity in a mediated, post-technological, globalized world, captured through accelerated mobility and commodity consumption. The allegorical nature of music leaves Jamaica as a snapshot of global transitions and conditions, economic, social and cultural, and specifically, as an affirmation of the disintegration of chronological and spatial boundaries, produce an identity increasingly constructed outside political and geographical limits, and on a continuum that incorporates a nostalgic illusion, a consumer commodity lifestyle, and a pan-national community.

CHAPTER TWO – SHEFFIELD ISN'T SEXY

How to Retune a City

There is a peculiarity in the town of Sheffield above all others that I have noticed: in that town, all classes of labourers dare to speak the truth that is within them, ay and labour while they think.¹
Radical Artisan, circa 1849

Attempts to resurrect a cultural phoenix from the extinguished ashes of Sheffield's moribund industrial past were unsympathetically derided by the words of Conservative Member of Parliament, Michael Fabricant. Unwilling to acknowledge the growing momentum of the leisure economy in urban regeneration, Fabricant's headline generating assessment that, "Sheffield is not sexy, it is old and dirty"² reinforced the perception of sclerotic post-work northern cities that defy restoration. The politician's belief that an engrained deficit of glamour held back the city's pursuit of the World Athletics Championships in the early 1990s suggested that cities like Sheffield, once the engine room of the nation's manufacturing hegemony, had atrophied irredeemably. The city's push for global interaction, through an international sporting event, where commerce and service are deemed high-end goals, was compromised by the unfashionable image of an archaic and corroding landscape. The struggle for control and re-branding of its urban image provides a narrative of well-meaning, but flawed, urban engineering in which the city attempts to negotiate its popular cultural present through its industrial past. The process also signifies the centrality played by the cultural industries, of leisure, sport and music, in redefining post-industrial economies and infrastructures. Sheffield sought cultural redemption in and through a sonic landscape continually shaped and stretched through osmosis

¹ J. Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2002) p.190

² Source: *Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport Minutes of Evidence*. Examination of Witnesses (Questions 20 - 39) 16 October 2001 B. Kerslake and S. Brailey
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmcumeds/264/1101607.htm>
Accessed: 15.11.05

by the once relentless rhythms of the city's industrial pulse and emerging popular pastimes. Sheffield's working class consumption and production practices grew from the dancehalls and working men's clubs, through sixties northern soul, to eighties electronica, and millennial super-clubs, refracted through the sardonic pop and rock from Pulp to the Arctic Monkeys and Richard Hawley. In the hiatus of post-work Britain popular music forms began to occupy the tarnished shell of Sheffield's disappearing economy to become valuable collateral in the push for its sustained regeneration.

The indivisibility of the city's political and economic narrative from its social and cultural history inevitably resulted in Sheffield's creative production and consumption being built upon the bones of its past. The significance of this auditory culture, turned bankable commodity, is in the city itself. Sheffield's municipal infrastructure, in the absence of any effective entrepreneurial mechanism, became inevitably enmeshed in the reification of the city's sound and unconscious celebration of its popular cultural forms. The sonic landscape is constructed upon its urban topology capturing the sound waves and rhythmic eddies and so shapes their movement, reception, incubation and production within the community's shared past. Emerging from its embryonic industrial and wartime soundscapes, Sheffield's cultural narrative became most clearly identified in the 1980s where the effects of industrial deceleration spectacularly encountered the dialectic force of accessible technology and its promises of modernity. The centrality of music as cultural currency, and as solution to urban regeneration, lies at the heart of the pioneering attempt in the development of Sheffield's Cultural Quarter. Significantly the city elected to regulate and administer nascent creative industry strategies, in a deflated economy with a meagre history of local entrepreneurialism. The subsequent failure of the city's talismanic National Centre for Popular Music signifies the inherent problems of institutionalizing popular cultural forms and resistance of sound to be anchored and contained.

Metal Machine Music

I don't think the Second World War finished until punk came along.³
Phil Oakey (The Human League)

A subjective assessment of the transformations that have taken place in the make up of the city's popular music requires justification. Therefore, I confess to a personal account that is inextricably bound up in the sound of Sheffield. Sheffield's major leap in grass roots music making came, as with any number of cities, as a result of the cultural shift in the late 1970s and the impact of punk. The DIY ideology that the movement brought changed perceptions of what could be achieved outside the corporate market model and what could be built out of regional resources and associations. Although having made music for a number of years prior to this the change in audience perceptions of what was permissible opened doors and I personally became a part of the city's cultural narrative. Born and raised in the city, I had, through working in the traditional steel mills, first hand knowledge of the strident, though decelerating rhythms of the city's primary industry.⁴ I led a dual life from 1982 commuting on an almost weekly basis from London to work and record before finally severing physical ties in 1995 when I moved to Australia. I returned frequently and permanently returned to the United Kingdom in 2007. However, my periods of absence could not erode a perception of being identified with a specificity of time and place. My musical heritage has rendered me hermetically sealed and subsequently experience schizophrenic feelings of personal identity. An increasingly connected and mediated world has left a 'past' self orbiting as a perennial present; my musical legacy has been re-packaged, re-marketed and commodified to the extent that I, like many others, have fallen prey to a sonic and visual 'reverse Dorian Gray' syndrome. Digital simulacra has left, as with most first-world people today, a virtual-self untarnished by the encroachment of linear

³ M. Lilleker, *Beats Working For A Living*, (Sheffield, Juma, 2005) p. 29

⁴ On leaving school, in 1973, I spent a year as a labourer in the city's oldest cutlery manufacturers, Sheffield Metal Company, which closed as a smelting works and relocated sometime in the early 1980s's. The brand name is still used and retails through an outlet in central London: Sheffield Metal Company, 5 Cavendish Place, London, W1

time, free to move through an on-line world. Nevertheless in my case this simulated self has been a virtuality fixed largely at the point of others' choosing. It has however left me with a sense of my personal embodiment of sonic mobility, a paradigm of human movement - sonic consumption, incubation and translation, transcending time and space. I am like, like everyone, a mobile encoder and decoder, the sum of my social and cultural interactions, which manifest themselves, in the sonic realm, through music production. Consequently, I have become synonymous with a spatial and chronological Sheffield, significantly one that has been central in informing the construction of the contemporary, self-regenerating city.

The great industrial towns have completely transformed our landscapes ... We must become aware of the role of these builders of the new world.⁵
(Guy Debord)

Debord's psychogeographical proposition that in constructing a history of culture we must address the emotional and historical ambience helps us draw from industrial cities understandings of their cultural production. Sheffield's form has been mythologized through function. The footprint of heavy industry has remained despite the encroachment of economic rationalization, which left behind its steel mills and factories as empty husks, a reminder of an earlier model of globalization and industrial hegemony. However, as a city it has redefined itself aurally, characterized, through a bricolage of archaic industry and shiny technology, the city's rhythms have reverberated through popular music forms. A paradoxical fusion - the sounds of metal and soul, steel and electronica, industrial bleeps and lyrical mockery - popular culture wrapped in the tarnished glamour of self depreciation: the noise of iron and irony. 'Sheffield Steel' became not only a manufactured by-word for the city, but also a convenient brand, which encapsulated the reification of an urban sound that somehow embraced everything from the post-soul of Joe Cocker and heavy metal of Def Leppard to early techno of the Warp label. The

⁵ G. Debord, *Psychogeographical Venice*, (1957) Available online <http://www.notbored.org/psychogeographical-venice.html> Viewed 02.03.10

arcane bleeps of The Forgemasters and Sweet Exorcist fused the soulful affections of Detroit and Chicago with sonar pulses of an industrial city in its death throws have continued through to Sheffield's present incumbent, the specific 'niche' sound⁶. However this construction of a mythologized city and its onomatopoeic sound fails to address the heterogeneous cultural makeup of an urban centre impacted by cultural forces both real and commodified. A city with a diverse ethnicity, compounded by industry to produce a strong working class bias, Sheffield's inclusivity has produced complex cultural production and patterns of consumption.

The perception of Sheffield's totemic sound as being self-referential, internally constructed upon industrial idiosyncrasies, problematizes all meanings of the mobility of sound. The city had been mono-cultural in its economic construction, however it was more diverse and complex in its social and ethnic make up. Sheffield, as regional web chroniclers *ayup.co* observe, had shown an acceptance of cosmopolitan sounds in the pre-war period, where the 'big band' sound had been swept aside by the influx and impact of jazz on the city.⁷ Subsequent post war colonial shifts were beginning to characterize the demographic make up of many urban centres. In the case of Sheffield, the bias towards a primary, rather than secondary, consumer manufacturing, industry did draw fewer and later migrants. Research by Sheffield University's Paul White indicates early resistance to post-war migration and an untypical ethnic composition, in which migrant figures still lag behind the national average.⁸ Figures infer but perhaps fail to account for the true cultural effect of migration into industrial regions, which until the post-war period

⁶ Emerging from the garage, 2-step and dub-step rhythms, the city's Niche Club has developed a minimalist sound that has become branded the 'niche sound'.

⁷ Ayup: Online Magazine for Yorkshire <http://www.ayup.co.uk>

⁸ The 1951 census showed only 32 people born in Jamaica and by 1981 ratios of Pakistani and Indian migrant considerably above and below the national average respectively. The 2001 census indicates Sheffield's migrant population of 5.8% born outside the EEC is below that of comparable cities for example Manchester, Nottingham and Birmingham. Source: P. White and Dr S. Scott, *Migration and Diversity in Sheffield: Past, Present and Future*, (Department of Geography, University of Sheffield, Monday 20 November 2006)

Accessed online:

<http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/EasySite/lib/serveDocument.asp?doc=92399&pgid=106674>

Viewed: 06.08.07

remained largely homogenous. The most recent 2001 census indicated a population of almost one million with 3.7% Black, 7.9% Asian and significantly a full-time student population of 25.6%.⁹ The use of statistical evidence to quantify social and cultural effect is inherently problematic. Within urban centres the very visible and frequently pro-active roles played by migrants in the city's social milieu and subsequent creative industries are contextual not merely statistical. During the embryonic period for Sheffield's popular music in the sixties and seventies, the West Indian Social Club, ironically situated in the industrial heartland of Attercliffe, suggested a nascent cultural fusion and the beginnings of an adjustment to a perceived exotic alterity. With rising purchasing power white working class youth progressed popular music's cultural cachet. The city's position in the Northern Soul circuit was clearly being recognized. Dave Berry, a local R&B singer and an established pop star in the 1960s, acknowledged the growing allure of youth, music and status, describing *The Mojo Club* as "wild and fashionable", *The Esquire* as "sophisticated and jazzy", and *The Black Cat* as, Peter Stringfellow's "thriving club."¹⁰ The predominantly black American music played in these clubs was progressed through fringe scenes such as Sheffield's. Built upon the dancehall and record culture of the big band era, the records flowed through ports into northern cities, where new surplus income encouraged, for both white and migrant communities, increased consumption. Soul, ska, and blue-beat, sold through independent record shops, the most iconic being Violet May's¹¹, became a significant component of the city's cultural collateral.

My epiphany, in respect of music's mobility and cosmopolitan potential, emerged at an early age. Growing up on the adjacent street to my own was a young basketball player, Michael Grudge, who despite failing to make the grade on college circuit, remained in the USA to

⁹ Source: UK Polling Report: <http://ukpollingreport.co.uk/guide/seat-profiles/sheffieldcentral> Accessed 06.08.07

¹⁰ Interview with journalist Martin Lilleker - www.ayup.co.uk

¹¹ Violet May's Record store remained the chief stockist of rock and roll, R&B, soul and reggae in South Street in the city's market area from the 1950s. Moving in the early 1970s to a city centre location, the store finally closed in the late 1980s.

become a founding member of seminal funk band Brass Construction. An acknowledgement was made that music, though spatially defined, was nevertheless built upon a more chaotic cultural collision. Music that I perceived to be cosmopolitan was being created by something as prosaic as a local boy; an innate fluidity that enabled sound to transcend the limitations of geographical place, here reified through the movement of people. Soul music, through its global dissemination, had created a community that reached from the California to South Yorkshire through the shared experiences of consumption and dancing. As a teenager my identity was purposely built upon reggae and soul music; the clubs previously mentioned by Berry were off limits to a high school pupil, but tantalizing nonetheless. *The Mojo* club was not only on my route to school, taunting me daily with the nocturnal pleasures of soul music, but was also enshrined when at 15 years of age - the same as myself - Stevie Wonder had apparently bewitched the crowd with his piano and harmonica skills. Little surprise then when a year later I risked ejection from the Sheffield City Hall by walking up to the stage to shake hands with soul singer Martha Reeves as she performed with her Vandellas. The need to find some way of grounding this distant and esoteric music was done through a display of physicality that could supersede mere consumption. Nevertheless unaware I was being acknowledged by someone who was from a fragmenting urban environment and comparable economic mono-culture, 'Motor-City', Detroit, which would later negotiate a parallel sonic path to Sheffield in its techno evolution.

If the dissemination and consumption of sounds and rhythms from America and the West Indies, of ska and soul, were evidence of social and cultural mobility, they were symptomatic of increasing media incursions into urban spaces to fuse with the internal sounds of the city. The reduction of music to merely popular cultural phenomena risks excluding a broader sonic context, the complexity of our reception of sound invariably overlooks the peripheral, environmental and subconscious which can become manifest in local and regional nuances.

Urban ambience can instinctively inform regional sounds and permeate through to popular texts. Traditionally environmental sounds have been translated into cultural forms, indigenous and folk music have grounded their authenticity by their incorporation. Jon Hassell's¹² reading of South East Asian gamelan gives recognition to the sounds of the elements, in this case water, in indigenous music, and so the elements of the urban environment become more obliquely incorporated into popular music's syncretic form. The need to find meaning in sound requires wider contextual reading, the incursion of auditory place into the spaces of production becomes part of this constructed meaning. Anthony McCann, in addressing a tangential issue of copyright, cautions against music's homogenous labeling, to enable convenient compartmentalization, suggesting, "in many disciplines, 'music' is often analytically separated and abstracted from social context in order to justify the validity of using the category as a universal label."¹³ If social and personal components play a formative part, we must avoid, in McCann's words:

A systematic exclusion of people, relationships, power, meaning, emotions, and the dynamics of social interaction from all relevant discussion.¹⁴

The construction of sounds and rhythms is contextual, encompassing all aspects of daily life not merely confined to the perpetuation of existing paradigms. The Sheffield soundscape is as much defined through its work environment and historical narrative as its patterns of social interaction and consumption; the 'sound' of the city is framed by its industrial corporeality, its elemental essence contained in rolling mills and blast furnaces.

Growing up in the city like my peers who produced music and formed bands in the late

¹² Jazz musician Jon Hassell spent considerable time incorporating the indigenous music of South East Asia into his recordings. The most notable being *Earthquake Island* (Tomato Records, 1978) and *The Dream Theory of Malaya* (EG Records, 1981), which built upon the ambient sounds of the region including water as percussion.

¹³ *Beyond the Term "Music"* November, 2002 Anthony McCann, p.2 Accessed online: 22.08.07 <http://www.beyondthecommons.com/aaa2002.pdf> p.2

¹⁴ *ibid.* p.3

seventies and eighties,¹⁵ I was suffused with stories of Sheffield's recent past. Along with London, Liverpool, Coventry and other strategic centres, the city had been a target for German bombers during World War II, primarily focused on the industrial epicenter, the Don Valley, but with several incursions into the city's commercial heart.¹⁶ The raids were mythologized by a war time generation through anecdotal stories of the community spirit fashioned, particularly in Blitz torn London¹⁷, by a collective identity constructed through adversity. The residual effect of these stories was a sonic implant, an urban and industrial landscape mediated by the unpredictable rhythm of technological warfare. The Blitz not only produced an onomatopoeic punctuation to existing aural delineation of steel and heavy industry but in Sheffield it became mythologized by its collision with the city's social and cultural life when a bomb hit the Marples, a talismanic hotel and dance hall in the city centre.¹⁸ The accepted tenet, that visual images help form an integral part of spatial and chronological narratives, seems to be marginalized with sonic counterparts. Aural and olfactory idiosyncrasies of a particular location

¹⁵ In this period I and my partners in Cabaret Voltaire, Chris Watson and Richard Kirk, were part of a close knit community with others who went on to form bands such as, The Human League, Clockdva, Heaven 17, BEF, Comsat Angels, Chakk and ABC.

¹⁶ The first Bomb fell in Sheffield on the night of August 18th, 1940, and the last fell on July 28th, 1942. The raids on Sheffield is really the story of the Blitz nights of December 12th and 15th, 1940 when German aircraft dropped somewhere in the region of 450 high explosives bombs, land mines and incendiaries. During these two nights 668 civilians and 25 servicemen were killed. A further 1,586 people were injured and over 40,000 more were made homeless. A total of 3,000 homes were demolished, another 3,000 were badly damaged and 72,000 properties suffered some damage.

<http://www.freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com>

¹⁷ James Richards, *The Blitz: Sorting the Myth from the Reality*, acknowledged importance of shelters provided for those in cities but notes that much was constructed myth and the reality was a great deal harsher: "In the first years of the Blitz, Anderson shelters were provided by the government, and 150,000 of these were distributed to houses with gardens. They were constructed of corrugated iron, many quite poorly, and were usually cold and damp, but they did provide a little private shelter for those who had them."

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwtwo/blitz_04.shtml Accessed 03.07.09

¹⁸ Marples Dancehall was hit on the night of December 12th 1940. The most accurate estimate is that 77 People were in Marples at the time of the explosion and 70 died as a result of the injuries they received.

Source - Personal Reflections, Chris Hobbs: www.chrishobbs.com/marples1940htm Accessed 20.02.2005

Note: The hotel reopened after the war and became an occasional venue for electronic bands in the 1980s.

should be a vital part of that constructed landscape and not fall prey to sensory hierarchies, conversely soundscapes should not be assembled through purely cultural representations. The city's image is structured within the context of its built environment, its history inextricably linked to the commercial and industrial infrastructure that, in the case of Sheffield, would eventually accommodate the creative businesses and cultural industries of re-generation, still resonating with sounds of the past.

The People's Republic

*The Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire.*¹⁹

(The Sheffield epithet)

Any analysis of Sheffield's cultural narrative must acknowledge the region's economic and political heritage, which frames its social interactions and fashions its sense of community. Geographically situated along the perimeter of the Yorkshire–Nottinghamshire coalfield and at the confluence of the Don and Sheaf Rivers, Sheffield's pre-industrial history dates back to the Roman settlement, Templeborough,²⁰ the heart of the subsequent steel industry during the 19th and 20th centuries. The city's primary production base generated a predominantly working class demographic, which till the present day remains embodied in its two football teams and through close ties to the Labour Party. Apart from two years in the late 1960s, the Labour Party has controlled the city since 1926.²¹ This engrained self-perception of an industrial heritage, of identity through work, of a community constructed through labour and its political

¹⁹ I. Gazeley and A. Newell, *Unemployment in Britain since 1945* (School of Social Sciences, University of Sussex, 1999) p.212

²⁰ A timber fort erected circa 55AD was one of a number of similar Roman constructions in the region. http://www.yorkshirehistory.com/romans_south_yorks.htm

²¹ A. DiGaetano and P. Lawless "Urban Governance and Industrial Decline: Governing Structures and Policy Agendas in Birmingham and Sheffield, England, and Detroit, Michigan, 1980-1997", (*Urban Affairs Review*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 1999, pp. 546-577)

representation shaped the city and its surrounds. Regional disengagement from Tory rule became signified by the slogan, referenced by Ian Gazely and Andrew Newell, “The Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire”. The sense of localism intended to produce meaning for a region, which was in actuality incorporated into a wider dynamic. The micro politics of the city were emerging from the macro-economics of a globalizing world.

Sheffield’s economic and political history is symptomatic of the residual effects imposed by broader mechanisms, of policies and structures externally driven. The city became amongst the first to feel the consequences of global economic shifts, national economic policies, anomalies of demand and their subsequent impact on patterns of employment throughout the last hundred years. A fundamental component of Britain’s industrial growth, the city provided the raw steel for the regional and global manufacturing industries. However, as an industrial mono-culture and primary producer Sheffield, and its local feeder coal industry, were to become economic canaries as globalization and monetarism elicited regional downturns and shifts in demand. The labour-intensive economy of the city and its adjacent region were to be foremost amongst the communities scarred by national policy, and trans-national structures, with residual human effect. The significant economic and social displacement began during the 1970s with global monetarism and national policies consolidating the decline of Britain’s manufacturing base. To reduce the national condition to a series of currency movements, market fluctuations and short-term government policies is spurious economic determinism. The complexity of Britain’s industrial decline remains deep-seated and contentious. As Dinfontass emphasizes the complexity of dynamics at work in a market economy resists reduction to a single formula. The nation’s long term industrial sclerosis comes as a result of multiple factors, many institutionalized in the political economy of Britain as a nascent industrial and manufacturing force. Dinfontass states significant factors from entrepreneurial conservatism, early embedded practices, lack of education and training with consequential skill shortages, entrenched family

business structures, post-war free trade practices, union-management relationships²² and, significant in regional disparities, a movement of investment towards finance and commerce in London at the expense of northern manufacturing.²³ Post-war Sheffield, a mixed economy of nationalized industries and private companies, would embody the transformations in late-capitalism Britain.

Loadsda Money, We Got Loadsda Moneeey ...

Football chants during the 1980s and 1990s frequently involved traveling fans from London teams, Chelsea, West Ham and Tottenham, waving, and on occasion, anecdotally claimed, burning, bank notes in front of their rival northern supporters. In reference to a character from comedian Harry Enfield, they boasted of the easy money available in the supposedly affluent south. They had, they claimed, “loadsda money ...”. The national perception was of a divided country, the banking and consuming south, the unemployed and impoverished north. The long established term of ‘two nations’ is divisive, initially a criteria of class²⁴ it has been appropriated as a metaphor for spatial division between the industrial north and commercial south or even a demarcation of the capital and remainder of the Britain.²⁵ Nevertheless, despite its ambivalent use, behind the term lies an entrenched regionalism, an expression of social and cultural difference, deriving in part from economic specialization and subsequent patterns of employment. These spatial and economic divisions were more clearly defined in times of depression, and significantly during the period from the 1970s to the early 1990s when employment patterns became the human consequence of industrial decline and national policy,

²² M. Dinfentass, *The Decline of Industrial Britain 1870-1980* (London, Routledge, 1992) p.13-67

²³ *ibid.* p. 68

²⁴ The term derives from Benjamin Disraeli’s 19th Century novel and social critique *Sybil* or *Two Nations*

²⁵ This uneven spatial impact of unemployment in the United Kingdom has lead some to speak of ‘two nations’: roughly speaking, a line drawn between the Bristol Channel and the Wash. I. Gazeley and A. Newell, *Unemployment in Britain since 1945* March 1999 (School of Social Sciences, University of Sussex) p.3

markedly during the Conservative governments of the 1980s²⁶. National unemployment rose through the 1970s and 1980s, peaking at 13% in 1986, in response to a sequence of macro-economic shocks. The effect of the OPEC oil crises of 1973 and 1979 caused governments of all the major Western economies to adopt firm deflationary policies in the early 1980s,²⁷ and in Ian Gazeley and Andrew Newell's words: "undermined the post-war settlement and destroyed the Keynesian paradigm."²⁸ Despite by the 1990s recession, unemployment being no longer biased towards the north²⁹, culturally speaking regional patterns were long established, with a consequential perceived division.

The city's reliance on a single industry would reflect the shortcomings of such a mono-culture through large scale unemployment during this period. The industrial workforce fell by 187,000 (60%), between 1971 and 1997 and even in 1999 unemployment in Sheffield was 2% above the national average, 33% of the population existing on state benefit.³⁰ The re-organisation of the steel industry in the UK, lead ultimately to a national strike of steelworkers in 1980 and the subsequent loss of 50,000 jobs in the industry in Sheffield alone.³¹ The significance of these patterns of unemployment lies firstly to the degree to which they reflected regional demarcation shaping subsequent local policy for re-generation, and secondly they illustrate the impact on new entrants to the labour market. In the 1970s and 1980s, about a third of all male unemployed were young workers aged less than 24 years, whilst by the mid-1970s one third of all

²⁶ Margaret Thatcher's period in office, 1979-90, was marked by a dismantling of nationalized industries (regionally British Steel Corporation and the Coal Industry), a push for privatization and reduced public spending

²⁷ I. Gazeley and A. Newell, *Unemployment in Britain since 1945* March 1999 (School of Social Sciences, University of Sussex) p.3

²⁸ *ibid.* p.1

²⁹ *ibid.* p.4

³⁰ Figures from the South Yorkshire Objective 1 Single Programming Document, 1999, quoted in L. Moss, "Sheffield's cultural industries quarter 20 years on: what can be learned from a pioneering example?" (*International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Routledge Vol. 8, No. 2, 2002) pp. 211 – 219

³¹ *ibid.* p.213

unemployed men and two-thirds of all unemployed women were under twenty-four years old.³²

The implication being that the burden and hoped for solutions to unemployment were shifting to a new generation.

The immediate reaction to the social situation, directed through creative channels, would become manifest through sub-cultures and popular modes of expression. The nihilistic rhythms of punk, although quickly commodified, were a spontaneous reaction from a section of the community who were capable of providing a response. A youthful demographic who felt increasingly disconnected by social and economic forces over which they had no control but connected through the common language of music and its ability to translate this dislocation. Sheffield's punk scene was visible and varied, but interestingly many were quick to adopt more electronic modes of expression, early manifestations of bands such as the Human League and Clockdva articulating their nonconformity through modernist forms. With a drum machine, sequencer or super-8 projector, frequently cheaper or more available than a guitar amp or drum kit, access and affordability gave modernity an ironic appeal. A translation of disaffection through the panacea of technology would appear to summon, albeit unlike Aldous Huxley's which was deficient in creative expression, a brave new world. The political and economic reality nevertheless shaped social interaction and expression. Very few musicians were immune to an awareness of their position within the local and national polemic, most were actively involved through fundraisers and benefit shows and records³³. The dismantling of the steel industry and subsequent miners strike provided daily reminders of the direct effects of government policy, punctuated by didactic speeches that warned of 'the enemy within'³⁴ and

³² *ibid.* pp.4-5

³³ Example- Keith Leblanc, *Enemy Within* (Rough Trade Records, 1984)– see below. Miners' benefit shows were a constant in most cities during the strike.

³⁴ Margaret Thatcher's reference to the miners as 'the enemy within' polarized the community and subsequently became the title of an electro track released to raise funds for the striking miners, produced by Keith Le Blanc and with a locally produced film clip, which myself and Richard Kirk helped edit.

offered solutions to unemployed workers by telling them ‘to get on their bike’³⁵ The sonic nexus of electronic technology and regional dysfunction seemingly analogous of the city’s duality - global industry juxtaposed with local social forms. The consequence of this conflation of micro and macro determinants became a distillation to a perceived generic ‘Sheffield sound’. The evolution of this ‘sound’ resistant but still nevertheless responsive to local factors of physical environment, economic practices and social interactions and infrastructures. The complexity of creative production forges subjective dynamics with contextual effect, through the dialectic of conscious intent and unconscious consequence. It should perhaps be termed the Sheffield ‘effect’ where such local factors frame the creative process and permit license for generality.

If macro-economic forces were producing local, urban outcomes for creative expression, they were mirrored in some northern cities by political non-conformity. Although perhaps not as vitriolic or combative as Liverpool’s response, where the Trotskyite Militant Left confronted Conservative centralizing policies head on through Sheffield’s long established Labour City Council local initiatives were paramount in structuring policies to negate the process of de-industrialization. The rapidity of the process saw the city transformed from 24-hour shift-based practices to abandoned post-industrial wastelands, reinforced by the subsequent dismantling of the region’s coal industry during the mid-1980s. Parts of Sheffield, like other older city centres were left abandoned with, in Andy Lovatt and Justin O’Connor’s words,

the consequent shattering of local and regional identity brought on by this economic crisis and which this dereliction powerfully symbolized.³⁶

Lack of national strategies to counteract the economic and social consequences of this urban decline led to the cessation of accountability to the national government. The previously

³⁵ In a quote by Employment Minister Norman Tebbit the problems of unemployment could be resolved by lazy workers simply moving to another city – by pushbike if necessary.

³⁷ A. Lovatt & Justin O’Connor, “Cities and the Night-time”, *Economy Planning Practice and Research*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1995, p.127

mentioned epitaph, known locally as, The People's Republic of South Yorkshire,³⁷ a symbolic strategy to cauterize the wound inflicted by government monetarist policies.

The combatant climate of this period goes a long way to help understanding the strong regionalism that permeated community attitudes, fashioned creative responses, and significantly the music sector's sense of inclusion. The Thatcher administration as part of the overhaul of local government structure effected budget restrictions and created a number of quasi-autonomous government organizations, quangos, which assumed responsibilities previously administered by local authorities but now came under the jurisdiction of government-appointed boards dominated by private-sector representatives. This effectively undermined the city council's ability to continue on its path of social reform³⁸, with the Metropolitan County of South Yorkshire abolished by the central government in 1986.³⁹ National initiatives fell short of needs and expectations, in 1981, Sheffield City Council set up the first ever Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) in local government in the UK. This was as Linda Moss has pointed out "the first manifestation of UK local government attempting to take responsibility for shaping the future prosperity of the city".⁴⁰ However the resources available to the employment department, £18 million in its first seven years of existence, were

³⁷ Described by Linda Moss as the Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire. L. Moss, "Sheffield's cultural industries quarter 20 years on: what can be learned from a pioneering example?" *International Journal of Cultural Policy* (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group (Vol. 8, No. 2, 2002) p.212

³⁸ A. DiGaetano and P. Lawless, "Urban Governance and Industrial Decline: Governing Structures and Policy Agendas in Birmingham and Sheffield, England, and Detroit, Michigan, 1980-1997"

Urban Affairs Review, Vol. 34, No. 4, 1999, p.553

³⁹ *ibid.* p.553

⁴⁰ L. Moss, "Sheffield's cultural industries quarter 20 years on: what can be learned from a pioneering example?", *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group (Vol. 8, No. 2 / 2002) p.213

minute in comparison to the massive disinvestments in steel and heavy engineering.⁴¹ As Alan DiGaetano and Paul Lawless observed, if Sheffield were to perpetuate a radical program of local economic intervention, “it would travel a lonely road.”⁴² The path that the city followed became constructed upon the specificity of its political economy. In contrast to other regional centres, such as Manchester, the absence of an effective entrepreneurial infrastructure subsequently required municipal strategies to catalyze regeneration through local creative production.

The Cultural Quarter Shall be Built

Solutions during the 1980s and 1990s to the economic ills of de-industrialization in urban centres catalogue not only defiant regionalism in response to national policies and global forces, but also the important synergy between local entrepreneurialism, political infrastructures and creative currency. Sheffield, an early victim of economic rationalism, became a pioneering model of attempted resolutions. The shift from manufacturing to service and creative industries could never be immediately effective, or implemented as a simple paradigm of economic and social regeneration. Nevertheless Sheffield’s lead would provide an advanced if somewhat premature modality for urban reconstruction through embryonic cultural industries initiatives. The significance of music’s role in this regeneration was its capacity to effect media attention facilitating wider audience response to municipal initiatives. Additionally, the city’s music was a proven success at a time of local economic deceleration - estimates show that Sheffield achieved a 5% share of the singles market in 1982.⁴³ The city’s cultural production, rather than

⁴¹ A. DiGaetano and P. Lawless, “Urban Governance and Industrial Decline: Governing Structures and Policy Agendas in Birmingham and Sheffield, England, and Detroit, Michigan, 1980-1997”,

Urban Affairs Review, (Vol. 34, No. 4,1999) p.565

⁴² *ibid.* p.566

⁴³ A. Brown, *MIPC Music Policy in Sheffield, Manchester and Liverpool*

(Manchester Institute for Popular Culture, Manchester Metropolitan University and Institute of Popular Music, University of Liverpool August 1998) p.2

being an arbitrary economic indicator appropriated during a period of stagnation, was proving to be a sector of vitality at a time of transition.

Although the policy rationale was fundamentally economic - to find workable solutions to long-term unemployment, implemented policies were symptomatic of a nascent shift in the working culture. Casualization, where flexible and temporary forms of employment, often involving fixed-term contracts, seasonal, casual or part-time employment, signalled transformations to urban working practices.⁴⁴ It was also intended to address the broader issue of community and identity, with city centres acting in Justin O'Connor and Andy Lovatt's assessment:

As focal points for, and as symbolic of, a specifically urban way of life seemingly eroded in the 1970s.⁴⁵

Music would quickly become currency in negotiating urban renewal through night-time economies and a return to urban clusters within cities, but Sheffield's early initiatives would structure a cultural quarter that focused not on consumption but rather on production, therefore developing strategies with inherent shortcomings. The deflated local and regional economy would require economic strategies that, in their initial stages, were not dependant upon high levels disposable income or subsequent consumption. Sheffield, a city with an entrenched working culture, saw employment and production as the mechanism of regeneration.

Music production accommodates the post-Fordist model of cultural industrialization and de-regulated patterns of employment. Frequently sole traders those in creative industries inevitably fit into the casual, short-term employment infrastructure. The dominant [mis]conception remains that of art being its own reward; as a consequence the creative process involves little or

⁴⁴ D. Hobbs, S. Lister, P. Hadfield, S. Winlow, and S. Hall, "Receiving shadows: governance and liminality in the night-time economy", *British Journal of Sociology*, Volume 51, Issue 4, 1 December 2000, p.701

⁴⁵ A. Lovatt & J. O'Connor, "Cities and the Night-time Economy", *Planning Practice and Research*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1995, p.127

no pay and seeks no long term security or conditions. Subsequently strategies designed to involve local producers were somewhat arbitrary and attempted to construct regeneration on cottage industry policies which suggested niche involvement doing little to encourage broader community access or consumption. The appropriation of disused city centre space, the Kennings Building, as the focus for local music production in a nascent cultural quarter involved offering lucrative studio space to established producers, The Human League, Comsat Angels and Fon Force,⁴⁶ plus the community recording facility of Red Tape and spaces for local photographic and film production collectives. As O'Connor has pointed out, "the economic aspect [of cultural industries] was mostly used opportunistically by arts agencies or city cultural agencies concerned to bolster their defences against financial cuts and ideological onslaught by the conservative government."⁴⁷ Nevertheless the expedient use of music's assumed ability to create wealth in a revitalised economy stemmed from a desire to acknowledge the importance of popular culture, specifically technology based music, in redefining Sheffield's image in a local, national and global context.

Officially, the Cultural Industries Quarter in Sheffield was set up in 1981, local government initiative at the time anecdotally referred to as an extraordinary leap in the dark, either an ambitious or potentially reckless use of public funds. The initial stage saw the opening of the Leadmill, as an all-purpose music venue, in 1982. The appropriation of an abandoned industrial shell seemed allegorical for the city's re-industrialization and was funded by a partnership of the City Council and UK Urban Programme.⁴⁸ Red Tape Studios opened in 1986, with the express

⁴⁶ Fon Force was a successful production team during the 80s and 90s based around Robert Gordon, founder of WARP records and Mark Brydon of Chakk and later Moloko. Axis studio was developed by members of Comsat Angels

⁴⁷ J. O'Connor, "Cultural Intermediaries and Cultural Industries", in J. Verwijnen and P. Lehtovuori, (eds.) *Creative Cities*, (Helsinki, University of Art and Design Publishing Unit, 1999) p.14

⁴⁸ L. Moss, "Sheffield's cultural industries quarter 20 years on: what can be learned from a pioneering example?" *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group (Vol. 8, No. 2 / 2002) P.214

purpose of job creation and music production training, followed by the leasing of space to existing producers, film and photographic collectives previously mentioned. The strategy of accommodating nationally recognised artists and producers, whilst providing much needed community facilities, appealed to parochial sentiments, whilst disarming critics of popular production, a purely confined to London's media epicenter.

Importantly for the organization and development of the cultural quarter its configuration and co-ordination was fragmented due largely to local government restructuring and national government encouragement to contract out services. The Arts Department of the City Council was closed in 1997 replaced by a Museums Trust. Significantly municipal perceptions of the most suitable infrastructure in which to accommodate the new creative industries had moved from 'arts' to 'museums'. The position of popular culture lost in government restructuring and inappropriate branding. In Moss's analysis, "no public body had overall responsibility for the Quarter, despite its continuing dependence on public funding."⁴⁹ It was therefore in this disjointed and uncertain bureaucratic climate that plans to open the cultural quarter's apogee were declared. The hub of the city's regeneration would be its most nationally and globally recognized product of the post-industrial period, its symbol of regional resilience and its most effective economic cultural tool – music.

From Panacea to Pariah – The National Centre for Popular Music

The story of the ill-fated National Centre for Popular Music encompasses not only issues of cultural policy and urban regeneration but also challenges any conjecture of music's relationship to the creative industries. The centre's dramatic account questions music's function within the community and role in regional identity, highlights the delineation of production and

⁴⁹ *ibid.* p.215

consumption, and raises issues of where the divide between creative production and leisure consumption is drawn. It is fundamentally bound in issues of mobility and identity - human and sonic movement within urban spaces and the construction of post-work identity, through use and access of the revitalised 'cultural city'. As an ironic echo of the environmental residue left behind from the 1970s and 1980s period of de-industrialization, the NCPM today stands, in the real world, an architectural folly, and, in the virtual world, an empty shell. As an embodiment of Sheffield's re-industrialization strategies, this state of the art construction and cornerstone of a cultural quarter whose expressed intention was to appropriate the abandoned infrastructure of the city's past, has itself in turn has been acquired by Hallam University in February 2003 to house its student's union. Log on to any number of websites and you will be able to tour not only the cultural quarter⁵⁰ but also move through a 'virtual' empty husk of the deserted site where it is possible to feel cyber tumbleweed brush past the online visitor, a memento of its ephemeral existence.⁵¹ Opened in March 1999, with £11million UK Lottery funding, the centre was in financial trouble before the close of the year and closed in 2000, a brief and baffling lifespan, the centre committed cultural seppuku before most people had chance learn of its existence.

The centre's free-standing design⁵² was based around four drums each housing a separate concept installation: dance music, religion, love and rebellion and unique singers, curiously including Pavarotti, with the opportunity for visitors to stick their ear to a hole and guess the singer. Interestingly although the title was specific – centre – the building since its inception was known locally as the 'museum'. The latter term denoting a perception of a static, sedentary space that despite its intention of being highly technological and interactive, instead exuded a mausoleum ambience. The centre operated as a curiosity, thematically closer to a science park

⁵⁰ Source: see Sheffield Cultural Industries Quarter - <http://www.ciq.org.uk/>

⁵¹ Source: <http://www.made-in-sheffield.com/places/landmark.asp?PlaceName=NMUSIC>

⁵² The centre was designed by Branson Coates Architects

that institutionalized rather than aestheticised popular music. As Nicholas Barber reported in *The Independent*,

The fact that it offers you the chance to edit a Phil Collins live video only confirms my worst suspicion: this millennial celebration of popular music is stuck in the 1980s.⁵³

Barber went on to add, “I can’t see what the NCPM has to do with Moloko, Babybird or the rest of Sheffield’s current bands. And I shudder to think what Jarvis Cocker would make of it.”⁵⁴

Not surprisingly Cocker was prepared to announce to an audience at the Doncaster Dome at the time of the Centre’s opening that, he regarded it, “a complete waste of money.”⁵⁵ Practicalities of access and use reinforced the unsuitability of sound, even through translation into popular cultural texts, to an institutional environment. Providing the facilities of tactile manipulation and play fails to appreciate the largely discrete levels at which most sounds and rhythms are processed. Writer and journalist Martin Lilleker expressed his disappointment, “at £7.25 per head, it wasn't cheap, especially when you consider that if you were lucky you could manage an hour and a half in the place without running out of things to do.”⁵⁶ He added:

What was glaringly missing was the lack of any celebration of Sheffield, a city with a long history of producing innovative music. The final exhibition, and the most popular, was of Sheffield's history, from the Sixties, Seventies and early Eighties with photographs, Sheffield records, fanzines and various other bits of nostalgia.⁵⁷

The rapid demise of the centre was symptomatic of a lack of public support, both local and national, the inability of a bureaucratic infrastructure to firstly construct a facility that adequately reflected popular music’s function in the community and secondly to incorporate appropriate long term strategies to combat short term recalcitrance. Importantly the centre also

⁵³ Quoted from interview with writer and journalist Martin Lilleker 14.05.05

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

mirrored the cultural quarter's inherent defects, most notably location and objective. Lack of support and failure to attract the anticipated numbers⁵⁸ was fundamentally due to the centre itself misreading the public perception of popular music, its representation and consumption.

Cosmo Landesman describes the experience:

The NCPM is being promoted as an 'education and arts centre' devoted to popular music. But in reality it just mixes the button-pushing, learning-can-be-fun experience of the Science Museum with the trivia treasures of the Hard Rock Café.⁵⁹

Whilst Nicholas Barber in the Independent highlighted the impracticality of the centre's design,

A virtual encyclopedia is nice to browse through on your home computer but you're not going to get much reading done with 500 people pushing behind you.⁶⁰

The need to address music's functionality, its social engagement, its mechanisms of reception and consumption, were clearly absent in the Centre's design. The subsequent transformations in media technology reinforced sound's resistance to its anchoring in time and place. The appearance of MP3s, digital downloads, shared software, social network sites, driven by *MySpace* and *YouTube*, and the ubiquitous presence of mobile technologies would signify that early attempts, by the centre, to contain, regulate, and regionalize music's use were, if well intended, prosaic and parochial.

In providing guidance and instruction into music's meaning fails to respond the listeners' need for subjectivity. To inadequately address music's esoteric nature and reduce the creative process to a series of mechanical prompts marginalizes music's contextual effect and cultural potency.

⁵⁸ The Centre predicted it would attract 400,000 visitors in the first year. Source: L. Moss, "Sheffield's cultural industries quarter 20 years on: what can be learned from a pioneering example?" *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group (Vol. 8, No. 2 / 2002) P.218

⁵⁹ From interview with journalist Martin Lilleker

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

The pressure of public funding, the need to be immediately effective and populist, resulted in a lack of strategies in response to any public inertia. Alternative approaches did exist, offering options as to how popular music and cultural texts could be used to best serve the community. The Manchester Institute for Popular Culture's more academic approach, without the pressure of populist engagements and consumptions, offered alternative trajectories to the presentation and discussion of music and/in policy. The increased mobility and multiple nodes of access for music necessitates greater awareness of both movement and context. Any attempt to construct popular culture through provincial or regional platforms requires it to embrace music's increasingly trans-national nature rather than spatial and chronological compartmentalization, in which music appears as a series of loosely related events.

On a functional level, there were intrinsic local and regional factors which inhibited not only the centre, but also the cultural sector of which it formed a part. The quarter's location to the south of the city centre was within access of rail and bus stations, but historically comprised of small self contained industrial units. Similarly regardless of its proximity to Hallam University the area had little or no passing trade, which in turn is inhibited by a road network designed to bypass the city, offering little pedestrian incentive to access from other areas. On the margins of traditional retail and leisure facilities, bars, gardens and cinemas, the human movement into the quarter was largely destination driven offering few other incentives to encourage activity in the sector. Local producer and DJ Winston Hazell summed up the quarter's lack of animation and cultural consumption:

You've got no reason to go there unless you're called to a boring meeting or to have an office there.⁶¹

The area does not conform to John Montgomery's criteria for successful regeneration, where

⁶¹ A. Brown, "Music Policy in Sheffield, Manchester and Liverpool"
Manchester Institute for Popular Culture, Manchester Metropolitan University and Institute of Popular Music, University of Liverpool, August 1998

“cultural quarters will share the attributes of good urban places in general, offering beneficial and self-sustaining combinations of activity, form and meaning.”⁶² Rather the quarter was primarily focused on production whereas the city and the south west, the West Street - Division Street area, all offered multiple facilities, shops, bars, cafes etc. with the latter close to Sheffield University and related residential zones. This unofficial cultural quarter provided the necessary leisure and retail potential within an evolving night-time economy. Benefiting from higher density and mobility through the city tram network, the area was the result of proactive ‘bottom up’ strategies by commercial and entrepreneurial sectors as opposed to municipal infrastructure top down’ policies actively pursued in the official cultural quarter.

If local movement into the official cultural quarter was moderate, nationally and regionally incentives deemed the area even less attractive. Despite the Centre’s intention of heralding its national strategy to attract visitors from around the country, other than the venue itself there were few other attractions. By comparison, nearby Manchester with a higher density population had not only more comprehensive transport facilities, but an international airport which placed it up in the regional hierarchy. A long established cultural melting pot, augmented by a media infrastructure including Granada Television and a creditable newspaper industry previously incorporating the city published *Guardian*, Manchester was well positioned to capitalize on its own popular music boom of the late 1980s. A traditional manufacturing region, with greater economic diversity and an embedded entrepreneurial culture Manchester was positioned to capitalize on growing service and creative industries. With a blossoming nighttime economy the city’s subsequent cultural sector development (North Quarter), was propelled by local entrepreneurialism and a hands off approach from municipal policy makers. Steve Redmond, editor of *Music Week* argues that Manchester’s approach represented:

⁶² J. Montgomery, “Cultural Quarters as Mechanisms for Urban Regeneration. Part 2: A Review of Four Cultural Quarters in the UK, Ireland and Australia Planning”, *Practice & Research*, (Vol. 19, No. 1, February 2004) p.10

A much more laissez faire one than Sheffield [to] suit the nature of the music industry, which thrives on being left to its own devices.⁶³

Manchester, in short, provided an appropriate model, not only for cultural production and consumption, but also for accessing music within the context of the cultural and built environment. From nationally renowned clubs and bars, such as The Hacienda and the Dry Bar, through to universities and cultural collectives, Manchester Institute for Popular Culture (MIPC) for example, Manchester effected a more cosmopolitan infrastructure. Reinforced by music centred events and forums such as In the City, the integration of Manchester's urban economies and popular cultures indicate an organic growth symptomatic of the city's social and economic diversity. A commercial centre with a diverse economic base it contrasts markedly with the Sheffield's mono-cultural make up that required strategies that required financial public support to initiate the city's re imaging and de-industrialization.

In Linda Moss's analysis, the nature of left-wing politics, giving centrality to employment, was conditioned by culture reliant on public funding which subsequently encouraged the cultural quarter to develop upon a narrow model of cultural regeneration.⁶⁴ Other northern industrial centres reflected, rather than production, more commercial or entrepreneurial histories, which in turn affected greater heterogeneous and diverse cultural characteristics. In comparison Manchester and other cities have developed:

Cultural quarters, which embraced a broader mix of social and economic activity leaving the Sheffield experiment as anachronistic.⁶⁵

⁶³ A. Brown, "Music Policy in Sheffield, Manchester and Liverpool"

Manchester Institute for Popular Culture, Manchester, Metropolitan University and Institute of Popular Music, University of Liverpool, August 1998

⁶⁴ The Centre predicted it would attract 400,000 visitors in the first year. Source: L. Moss, "Sheffield's cultural industries quarter 20 years on: what can be learned from a pioneering example?" *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2002, p. 211

⁶⁵ *ibid.* p.211

The publicly funded early strategies, symptomatic of the city's unique economic and political make-up, also point to more deeply entrenched attitudes to such infrastructure driven solutions. Despite adoption of the term 'cultural industries' as a direct attempt to counteract the traditional belief of the arts and culture as a financially dependent activity the perception remains. Music clings to its dogma of being ideologically unsolicited, in an interview with Adam Brown, Dave Haslam - a Manchester DJ and writer - argues that:

There's cities, like Sheffield, where the Council has taken years trying to figure out how they can develop the music scene and where's it got them? The minute the Council started getting involved in Sheffield, no-one was interested in the city.⁶⁶

Such critiques of cultural policy are also suggestive of music's reluctance to be compromised by accountability to national and regional party policies. Scepticism towards the inherent provincialism of regional regeneration strategies was acknowledged by Steve Beckett, one of the founders of successful Sheffield label Warp Records, who argued that in terms of accessing development funds:

It's always much quicker if you need investment money to go to Warners or someone because accessing public money tends to be very slow. Warners can give you it immediately."⁶⁷

Becket's inference being that music is accepting of its role within market and on the whole more comfortable with commercial as opposed to ideological compromise. The label's subsequent move to London also delivered a major blow to the Sheffield's spatial currency by rejecting the image of the city as an accessible and networked location in favour of London's centrality. The music industry's desire to be distanced from public funding appears to be more successful in the Manchester experience where in Brown's assessment:

⁶⁶ A. Brown, "Music Policy in Sheffield, Manchester and Liverpool", Manchester Institute for Popular Culture, Manchester Metropolitan University and Institute of Popular Music, University of Liverpool, August 1998

⁶⁷ *ibid.* Interview with Adam Brown

Actual investment has been generic and not targeted at music; it has built on existing, organic growth; and the area was already an important site for music production and consumption.⁶⁸

Conversely, in Sheffield, the investment has been highly visible and sought to publicly profile links between funding and music initiatives to establish its measurable effect.

Underlying this need to separate creative production and direct funding is the question of the unholy alliance between culture and industry. Specifically the capacity of popular culture to stand outside public agency is a function which is frequently complicated by visible funding. Bianchini points out “the strategies of the 1980s emphasised political consensus, the importance of partnerships between business and public sector agencies.”⁶⁹ The implied loss of agency to critique through the appropriation of the creative process, in Elly Tams’s view, “feeds into a wider culture in which it is becoming more and more difficult for people with dissenting views to be heard,” reinforcing the belief that, “the rise of enterprise-led cultural and creative policy since the 1980s is part of a rise of right-wing politics across Western societies.”⁷⁰ The reduction of the creative process, in this case music, to ‘craft’ like status risks rendering any critical message redundant or to forcibly push such voices towards inaudible margins. Making the consumption and interaction with cultural industries somehow synonymous with creativity itself blurs the space between culture and commerce, subsequently marginalizing areas of dissent. In Charles Leadbeater’s view “settled, stable communities are the enemies of innovation, talent, creativity, diversity and experimentation.”⁷¹ Sheffield’s music forms, constructed in an environment of non-conformity, risks an erosion of social and cultural relevance through the gentrification of its urban spaces

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ F. Bianchini, “Introduction”, in F. Bianchini and M. Parkinson (eds) *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: The West European Experience*, (London, Routledge, 1993) p. 2

⁷⁰ E. Tams, “Creativity, Entrepreneurship and Gendered Inequality—A Sheffield Case Study”, *City*, (Vol. 6, No. 3, 2002) p.397

⁷¹ C. Leadbeater, *Living on Thin Air*. (London, Penguin, 1999) p.15

The Future Sound of Sheffield

The conflation of Sheffield's sonic delineation and strategies of cultural funding conveys the role of sound in the representation of contemporary urban culture. Popular music operates as cultural collateral and agent of change to continually prescribe identity and community. In the words of Brown, O'Connor and Cohen:

[Music] has provided some of the most powerful, complex, innovative and disturbing cultural products of the last 40 years ... it never received a penny of direct public subsidy and operated completely outside the circuits of official culture⁷²

Nevertheless, urban economies in the past twenty five years have appropriated music to varying degrees to revitalize and re-image the contemporary city through the nighttime economies and cultural industries. The Sheffield model of regeneration reflected the embedded economic and social make-up of the city fashioning a cultural quarter on old micro-economic practices of the industrial period. Although seemingly a victim of its pioneering status it is simply the result of the city's specificity. Sheffield's social, economic and cultural circumstances required the implementation of strategies, which addressed issues of high unemployment and economic implosion. The policies were, by necessity, prescriptive, indicating the shift in local government roles, during this period, from traditional servicing, to one of engineering social and economic change. Significantly strategies were to be instigated and channeled, rather than simply monitored.⁷³ The absence of a dynamic commercial or entrepreneurial sector necessitated a

⁷² A. Brown, J. O'Connor & S. Cohen, "Local Music Policies Within a Global Music Industry: Cultural Quarters in Manchester and Sheffield", Manchester Institute for Popular Culture, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK Institute for Popular Music, Liverpool University, Liverpool, UK

⁷³ Sheffield's cultural quarter continues to develop with 7.2% of Sheffield's working population employed in the creative industries, well above the national average of 4% Source: Sheffield City Council Statistics, 2004.

The sector is also home to a cluster of some 300 small businesses related to film, music and TV, design and computers. Please refer to J. Montgomery, "Cultural Quarters as Mechanisms for Urban Regeneration. Part 2: A Review of Four Cultural Quarters in the UK, Ireland and Australia", *Planning, Practice & Research*, Vol. 19, No. 1, February 2004, p.10

visible and pro-active role from the municipal sector and considerable public funding. Such approaches fed into planned strategies and specific zoning rather than the organic, laissez faire procedures, built on existing areas and economies, which characterized Manchester's later regeneration.

The significance for Sheffield's policies of regeneration is not only economic, but also social. Strategies implemented were symptomatic of the construction of a post work identity. The city's early de-industrialization required premature economic solutions strategies that also addressed the residual impact of the community's loss of purpose. The economic transformations transformed a 'search' for identity brought on by the casualisation of labour where loss of work required a re-defining of personal and community identity. Music's role as an expression of such social dislocation was central, manifested through both cultural production and consumption. Sheffield's early strategies understandably compartmentalized these two components. The development of a specific cultural quarter was framed by the potency of the city's music production but also contextualized by income levels sufficiently low as to preclude the necessary kind of leisure spend for most of the city's population. This kind of reflexive consumption described by Mike Featherstone as, "the aesthetisation of everyday life"⁷⁴ would evolve as the city's economy became revitalized through a growing service sector but would be too late to revive the production based cultural quarter which lacked an adequate flow to sustain cultural consumption, paradoxically leaving the area for a period, with its totemic Popular Music Centre, as semi-derelict.

⁷⁴ A Brown, J. O'Connor & S. Cohen, "Local Music Policies Within a Global Music Industry: Cultural Quarters in Manchester and Sheffield", Manchester Institute for Popular Culture, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK Institute for Popular Music, Liverpool University, Liverpool, UK

Chapter Three - From Chevrolets to Laptops

Part One

Letterman Doesn't do a Top Eleven

We are going to have to face the end of the industrial age," he said. "This didn't just happen last October either. It's been happening here in Detroit since the 1980s. Detroit just got it first, but it could happen anywhere now.¹

Richard Feldman -Former Detroit car-worker, 2009

On June 30, 2005 Detroit Michigan slipped to number eleven in the demographic rankings of the United States of America. Census figures detailed in the twelve months up to July 2004 an exodus of 12,274 which had sufficiently depleted the city's population for Detroit to creep outside the symbolic 'top ten'.² The social drift from the city continued with population figures in 2009 down to less than 900,000 from 2 million half a century before and a jobless rate of almost 30%.³ Perhaps more indicatively, the city had been leapfrogged by San Jose in the heart of California's Silicon Valley. A spokesperson for San Jose's Mayor, Ron Gonzales, commented - "remember David Letterman doesn't do a Top 11 list."⁴ The irony behind the comment failed to acknowledge the true paradox in this slippage, one that alluded to something much more significant than municipal bragging rights. Detroit, in the heart of the Midwest, once the reification of America's physical mobility and manufacturing prowess, symbolized through

¹ P. Harris, *From Motown to Misery: The Bitter Fate of Detroit*, The Observer, 01.11.09, pp.36-37

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/01/detroit-michigan-economy-recession-unemployment?showAllComments=true>

² Detroit Free Press: http://www.freep.com/news/locway/census30e_20050630htm accessed 06/09/05 www.census.gov

³ P. Harris, *From Motown to Misery: The Bitter Fate of Detroit*, The Observer, 01.11.09, pp.36-37

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/01/detroit-michigan-economy-recession-unemployment?showAllComments=true>

⁴ Spokesperson David Vossbrink, http://www.freep.com/news/locway/census30e_20050630htm 06/09/05

the auto industry, had been replaced by a city, in the sun drenched west, whose name encapsulated the nation's transformation to downsized fluidity and technological modernity. This haemorrhaging of both human and financial capital from Detroit has continued unabated. The crisis of capitalism that engulfed global markets in 2008 has proved a body blow to the city's auto industry with the two main manufacturers, Ford and General Motors, losing \$85 billion in the years which followed the slip in municipal rankings,⁵ from carbon to silica, analogue to digital, man to microchip, assembly line to desk top, virility to emasculation, size it appears does matter. The drop in Detroit's population was the most recent stage in a half-century freefall from a ranking of four or five for over six decades, peaking in 1950. The symptomatic loss of Detroit's human capital would find expression through cultural forms, particularly within popular music. The totemic shift from manufacturing's corporeality to the ephemera of digitization, from ten to eleven, would significantly be pre-empted by the city's evolving rhythms and cultural expressions.

The narrative of Detroit's popular music operates not only as an index of America's transformation from an industrial to post-industrial economic structure in the second half of the 20th century, but also signifies the subsequent shift in patterns of cultural production and consumption. As post-war America, in a period of national policy driven self-containment, witnessed what was seemingly a perpetual economic boom. Detroit, Michigan became the symbolic home of Fordist production and 20th Century capitalism's key mechanism, surplus time/money consumption. However by the mid 1980s this new dawn would disintegrate as America's more free market economy lurched from foreign policy disaster to energy crisis as non-interventionist domestic policies sacrificed social stability for laissez-faire ideology and incipient globalization. The corresponding change in the city's representation through music

⁵ 6 November 2008 Ford Motor Co. and General Motor Corp. announced losses of \$85 billion in the previous four years with \$28.9 billion coming in 2008. Source: Detroit Free Press <http://www.freep.com/article/20081109/BUSINESS01/811090451/1014> Viewed online 09.11.08

forms, from factory floor producer to key instigator of technology's self contained fractal revolution, makes Detroit the most prodigious example of music as 'work' and 'post work' cultural expression. This remodelled expression would be contained not only within methods of music production but also within patterns of that music's consumption and related social practices. Just as Detroit's branded identity would transform from the iconic artists of Motown's production floor to Underground Resistance's cyber driven invisibility, so the music's sites of appropriation would shift accordingly transferred from 1960s soul in black American bars, clubs or high school dances and 'all-nighters'⁶ in northern industrial Britain to the sanctified spaces of techno's global practices during the late 1980s and 1990s. What was once popularly transmitted and received via transistor radios, seven inch singles and long play albums would then be accessed through more oblique agencies of digital downloads and vinyl fetishism. Reception and consumption would catalogue in general music's, and here specifically, Detroit's evolving corporeality. This transformation is a reflection, not only of the socio-economic and temporal changes within the city itself, but also tracks global patterns of interaction and mediation, accelerated by technology and telecommunications. As economic and cultural barriers fell away so Detroit's musical representations would also signal the accelerated interjection of technology as a dominant factor in cultural formation. Without reducing technology's role to mere determinism, or simple cause and effect, the complexity of its relationship with social organization and cultural construction would become increasingly apparent in the shift from analogue to digital forms. Technology's ubiquitous presence ensures it permeates all aspects of popular culture and operates as conduit for the proliferation of cultural forms, both reflecting and augmenting these fusions and progressions. Nowhere is this more clearly underlined than in the realm of dance music, which relies on technology at the point of its social practices and as a prerequisite for construction, reception and consumption. Similarly no dance music form reinforces technology's formative role than 'techno' whose nomenclature specifically

⁶ 'All-nighter' was the colloquial term for soul clubs in Britain where discos were frequently used once normal trade had ceased.

acknowledges its tools of production. Techno's authority is anchored to technology and/in place. Not merely the centrality of the mechanised beat but also the recognition of its urban core, none more valid than Detroit.

Detroit, alongside other northern urban centres such as New York, Chicago and Philadelphia⁷, would develop music cultures during the late 20th Century that were symptomatic of patterns in both human mobility and stasis. Patterns that reflected not only the draw of economic necessity, experienced by many poor black, white and immigrant families as the country's industrial infrastructure boomed, but also the later consequences of fin de siècle industrial sclerosis. As people moved so did their cultural representations, morphing and hybridizing not only with each other, but also with nascent technologies and subsequent forms of mediation. Detroit became conspicuous amidst other American industrial centres during the post-war period firstly as its urban economy came to symbolise America's optimism, prosperity and modernity, in short, home of the automobile, but secondly as a symbol of the subsequent demise of this American dream, stigmatized by images of urban collapse and a faltering manufacturing driven economy. Detroit as 'motor city', the centre of production, became the embodiment of efficiency, confidence and provider of the nation's mobility. Music synchronized to the rhythm of driving as car radios heralded this nexus of sound and movement.

Conflicting narratives would nevertheless emerge as America's streamlined, chrome edged utopia would begin to tarnish against a backdrop of domestic disharmony and an entrenched Vietnam War. The country's dependence on fossil fuels combined with the city's mono-cultural

⁷ Chicago through artist such as Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions along with labels like Chess, owned by brothers Leonard and Phil Chess, the respected Vee-Jay label and Mayfield's own Curtom label were the focus of a strong local scene. Philadelphia developed a internationally renowned soul sound largely through the production team of Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff, their Philadelphia International Records (PIR) and such artists as the O'Jays, Ohio Players and MFSB which from 1966 onwards fused soul with a lush pioneering disco sound. Source: N. George, *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*, (New York, Pantheon, 1988)

make up would, in time, witness Detroit's transformation from principal urban signifier of the American dream to unremitting icon of economic torpidity and inner city decay. The social consequences of America's fiscal reshape, from protectionist manufacturer-consumer to free trade exponent and service provider, would be most apparent in cities such as Detroit and through its popular and radical expressions. Changes in music output would signify the residual effects and the human cost of the harsh realities of a reduced government and free market economy, glibly termed Reaganomics. Detroit's music would not only embody this paradigm of human movement and inertia but also come to symbolize the inherent ideological shift from Fordist local production to global, technologically accelerated consumption. Nothing would encapsulate this metamorphosis more than the actual and perceived 'sounds' of Detroit. The city, which more than any other, was pop art's musical outsource, its factory floor, its production line, would later transform into music technology's heartbeat, a global metronomic pulse emitting from its de-industrialized cadaver. Throughout this transformation Detroit, through an erosion of spatial and temporal boundaries, its own degraded perception was challenged. Irrespective of national and global image as moribund cultural hub, judged by Richard Florida's criteria to be America's least creative million plus city⁸, Detroit would redefine itself through musical, particularly electronic, representations.

Without being ensnared by nostalgia, but rather as acknowledgement of popular memory's active role in cultural construction, Detroit's significance inevitably becomes enmeshed in America's post-war domestic and global history. In this context music serves on a micro level as socio-economic barometer and on a macro level as representative of the shifting sands of global interaction and consumption. Popular memory, in many respects, operates as an appropriate framework for the analysis of Detroit's continued relevance in cultural construction. The totemic sounds of the city have, through commodification and cyber technology,

⁸ R. Florida, *Rise of the Creative Class*, (New York, Perseus, 2002)

maintained a prominent position in the re-imagining of Detroit through music festivals, record labels and municipal recognition as well as global marketing of the city through the identifiable symbols of techno and soul. A reflection of the city's demographic make-up, Detroit's output highlights the key role of music in black cultural delineation from circumscribed early blues through to the hit factory of Motown's production line and beyond into Detroit's opaque techno where the city's cultural roots became tangible through sonic swing rather than visible skin tones and iconic configurations. Significantly soul and techno's diffusion would emphasize the complexity of cultural consumption and appropriation. Music's fundamental role in identity formation leads, in the case of Detroit's cultural forms, to the complex relationship between black cultural expression of white commodification - complex particularly as this appropriation is not restricted to regional or national borders. The subsequent cultural transmission, in the case of soul to areas such as northern, white working class or southern, post-colonial Indian Britain and globally in the case of techno, complicates without necessarily negating the binary of black ownership and white hegemonic exploitation. Cultural identity in Hall's words, "is a matter of becoming as well as being,"⁹ something that transcends spatial and temporal limitations. In this context Detroit's significance cannot be assessed solely from within its own boundaries. Post war American popular culture, given factors of increased global technologies and mediation, requires spatial consideration. In addressing the impact of technology on cultural construction, Aronowitz and Menser question geographical determinism:

It is doubtful that any culture, especially nowadays, can ever be identifiable simply as what takes place within its spatial limits ... American culture cannot be totally understood, either pragmatically or ontologically, by descriptions of practices carried on within its geographical boundaries."¹⁰

⁹ S. Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" quoted in bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, (Boston, MA, South End Press, 1992) p.5

¹⁰ M. Menser, and S. Aronowitz, "On Cultural Studies, Science and Technology" in S. Aronowitz, B. Martinsons, and M. Menser, (eds), *Technoscience and Cyberculture*, (London, Routledge, 1996) p.12.

Technology magnifies the illusion, where increasingly, time and space, seemingly, contract.

Issues of eulogy, plagiarism and authenticity are integral to the history of popular music. Cover versions of R&B or soul standards, as well as unattributed 'lifts' of obscure blues pieces, by acts as successful as Led Zeppelin and the Rolling Stones, are woven into pop's narrative. Much later electronic music would bring its own respectful referencing. Techno producers Derrick May and Kevin Saunderson's incorporation of Kraftwerk and Dépêche Mode's essentially white 'euro' nuances suggest peer group acknowledgement. The proud producer culture that accompanies much electronic music gives evidence of an internal audience that seeks peer appreciation. The story of Detroit music is very much enmeshed in this flow and counter-flow of eulogy, attribution and occasional thievery. The city's soul music production becomes not only one of 1960-70s assimilation and resistance within a local and national context but also of a wider sonic discourse, an evolving trans-Atlantic movement built on popular music's affective capacity. Similarly by the late 1980s and 1990s global club culture would restate the city's creative significance. This progressive rhythmic pattern was both real and metaphysical, where nascent trans-urban then global sub-cultures embraced dance music as a vital tool of identity. Here the body was broad site of expression from resistance to conformity, a demonstration that dance music's mere consumption had become a conscious act of production. In Britain, the term 'northern soul'¹¹ not only reflected a regional empathy through symbolic consumption, but was also indicative of a growing global market for black American music emanating from cities such as Memphis, Philadelphia and in particular Detroit. In time the transformation of the city's socio-economic make up from industrial producer to dysfunctional urban centre would become symbolized through its cultural output. The corporate manifestation of Motown's sonic production line would give way to music's dark angel - 'techno' - an embodiment of the city's

¹¹ The term 'northern soul' refers to the music and fashion style associated with the dance scene from the late 1960s onwards centred on clubs in the North and Midlands in England in order to differentiate from the sound heard in clubs in the South of the country.

reciprocal consumption of European electronic minimalism and global technology. Here the rhythmic counter-flow would result in a musical signifier more suited to Detroit's de-industrialized reality of the mid 1980s – early 1990s. As the perennial 'now', driven by popular memory, impacts on readings of the city's history Detroit today offers a more complex sonic bricolage. From the riotous rhythms of MC5's resistant past to the blues soaked functionalism of The White Stripes and from consciously regional 'house' rhythms of Alton Miller, to the enigma of Moodyman and trailer park symbolism of Eminem to the latter-day P-Funk of Joseph Fiddler, Detroit has shed its mono-cultural skin. Nevertheless the twin towers of 'soul' and 'techno' provide the necessary sites of analysis to help understand the city's musical complex make up as it synchronizes with the present flow of global commodities. As evidence of rhythm's movement through time and space, today, in a period of post-soul and post-techno aesthetics, Detroit, to a greater or lesser degree, is residual in all cultures and all cultures are present in Detroit.

The Sound of Young America

Motor City is burning / Ain't a thing in the world that I can do. . . . My home town
is burning down to the ground / Worse than Vietnam.
John Lee Hooker, "Motor City is Burning" (1967)

During July 1967, riots in Detroit saw 43 people die of which 33 were black. Seven thousand, two hundred people arrested and nearly 5,000 state troopers called in.¹² The events proved testament to deep fissures within American society that, in the years since the turn of the decade, had born witness to racially driven riots in urban centres from Atlanta to Chicago. The McCone Commission two years earlier had attributed riots in the Watts area of Los Angeles to urban unrest due to "a deprived class of recent unassimilated migrants into the city,"¹³ racially

¹² D. Augustus Low, (ed) *Encyclopedia of Black America*, (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1981) p.239

¹³ *ibid.* p.240

termed the ‘riff-raff’ theory. The inference being movement to, and within, urban centres had created tensions. Unprepared for the social consequences of post-war industrial boom it had provided the spark to ignite entrenched racial divisions. America, whose economy had almost doubled between 1945 and 1960, was by 1955, with 6% of the world’s population, producing and consuming half its goods¹⁴. The country was showing signs of dysfunction from such accelerated economic growth coupled with the social consequences of emancipation, the mechanization of agriculture and the residual effects of human movement to urban centres particularly to cities in California, the north and Midwest. Between 1950 and 1960 nearly two million southern Afro-Americans along with many poor white farmers had moved to non-southern cities whilst estimates indicate around two million white citizens relocated to suburban areas.¹⁵ Michigan state’s black urban population increased by over 100, 000 during the 1960s, with a 34% growth of the black population in the Detroit metro area between 1960 -1966.¹⁶ The relatively rapid human relocation required to support Detroit’s auto manufacturing industry fused established southern cultural expressions with new economic practices. Against the backdrop of a lingering New Deal environment, Detroit’s latest incumbents experienced unfamiliar spatial and socio-economic conditions.

SOUL BROTHER

(Printed signs posted on the doors and windows of black owned businesses during the riots of 1967)¹⁷

Despite Detroit’s national and global perception during the 1960s as being symbolized through ‘soul’ music, and specifically as the decade wore on, expressed through the collectivism of the

¹⁴ Statistics: *The Times Historical Reference*, R. Overy, (ed) (London, Harper-Collins 2004) p.328

¹⁵ D. Augustus Low, (ed) *Encyclopaedia of Black America* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1981) p.682

¹⁶ *ibid.* p.687

¹⁷ U. Hannerz, “The Significance of Soul” in L. Rainwater, (ed) *Soul*, (Transaction, USA, Aldine, 1970) p.15

Motown label. Within the city itself the construction of this sound was the result of a richer and more organic fusion. Motown came to represent the nation's newfound optimism, functional modernity, and factory methodologies. Nevertheless the constituent parts of this processed sound were as much the result of embedded cultural traditions carried from the agricultural south. Soul a collision of both, its roots in blues and gospel, also gave account of the urban black condition. Like its peer, and recent precursor, rock and roll, soul emphasized, in Gillett's overview of popular music, "the strident, repetitive sounds of city life [which] were, in effect, reproduced as rhythm and melody."¹⁸ In popular music's nomenclature soul, like the blues before it, gave a poignant and emotional counterweight to the dehumanizing processes and incumbent hardships brought on by labour, relocation and industrialization. Soul's expression also reflected not just secular conditions but also showed its roots in religious interactions and practices which were and still remain significant in cultural construction. If artists such as Stevie Wonder and Wilson Pickett became symbols of the city beyond its geographical boundaries, others not so widely acclaimed were highly influential in the delineation of the Detroit sound. The Reverend C.L. Franklin, whose name in popular culture would eventually become eclipsed by his daughter Aretha,¹⁹ was a preacher whose sermons provided tangible links to the practices of those who had relocated from the south and experienced steady sales of the sermons recordings during soul's hiatus.²⁰ These religious practices became popularized through gospel music and in turn the structure of soul music, epitomized as Gillett explains by "tambourines, clapping, a steady four-even-beats-to-the bar rhythm and a call and response harmony structure."²¹ Many of the period's successful singers, infused with religious customs came from south-eastern states, Georgia, Alabama, Florida and Tennessee, their enforced mobility cross fertilizing with musicians and singers operating through the northern cities' growing

¹⁸ C. Gillett, *The Sound of the City*, (London, Souvenir 1983) p.viii

¹⁹ Aretha Franklin began as a singer in her father's church and later went on to a highly successful recording career and became labelled "The Queen of Soul"

²⁰ Rev.C.L Franklin's sermons were recorded and released through Chess Records. Source: C. Gillett, *The Sound of the City*, (London, Souvenir 1983) p.212

²¹ *ibid.*

infrastructure of clubs and record labels.²²

Recalling Hooker's reference to the Vietnam War, the city's music captured the spirit of the period's global collisions. Gerri Hirshey describes soul music as, "untrammelled, emotional, different (and it) fit the times ... played at black activist centers and white fraternity bacchanals." Soul music's mobility also evident as "cassettes traveled in backpacks to Saigon."²³ The Vietnam War was significantly the first military conflict to galvanize global reaction through intense media intrusion synchronized with the same media's fascination with popular music to provide a pervasive soundtrack. Within America the rhythm of Detroit appeared to march in step with the period's dynamic tempo, an expression of optimism bound by uncertainty, unrestrained acceleration erratically driven. Against this backdrop soul music offered a complex array of outcomes. There was the conditional acceptance of, and by, white capitalist America, which Detroit's most successful black label Motown, established by Berry Gordy Jr,²⁴ adopted through its own corporate structure. There was an affirmation of black resistance, from artists such as The Last Poets and Gil Scott-Heron; racial self esteem exemplified by James Brown, *(Say it Loud) I'm Black and I'm Proud*²⁵. Others like the southern Muscle Shoals labels Stax²⁶ and Volt, with artists such as Otis Redding and Rufus Thomas, offered vignettes that told stories which linked the sound and the community from which it emanated. As evidence of a growing social consciousness, Sam Cooke's *A Change is*

²² *ibid.* p.226

²³ G. Hirshey, *Nowhere to Run: The Story of Soul Music*, (London, MacMillan, 1984) p.xii

²⁴ Berry Gordy's sister Anna was first to form a label – Anna – in 1959. Gordy formed a publishing company – Jobete – the same year. In 1960 Gordy formed record company Tamla, subsequent labels Motown 1962, Gordy 1962, Soul 1965, V.I.P. 1965, Rare Earth 1970. – Source: C. Gillett, *The Sound of the City*, (London, Souvenir 1983) p.210

²⁵ James Brown, *(Say it Loud) I'm Black and I'm Proud* (King, 1968)

²⁶ Memphis's Stax label was conscious of its strong community ties and made efforts to retain its active role. In August 1972 many of the artists from the labels roster appeared at Wattstax a concert to raise funds for the Watts Summer Festival. Source: N. George, *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*, (New York, Pantheon, 1988) pp.139-40

Gonna Come and later Marvin Gaye's *What's Goin' On*²⁷ soul music's complexity reflected the mood of national reflection.

With increasing social mobility and media visibility black music, indeed much black cultural production, was brought into contact with a wider audience and, by association, American corporate structures. Greg Tate's analysis sees a cocktail of pragmatism and unavoidable dichotomy in this collision of black expressive culture and white hegemonic social and economic structures, highlighting "black culture's proven capacity to reinvent capitalism's cannibalization and commodification of revolutionary ideas. By necessity [our] radical aesthetic tendencies have evolved within a context where commercial exploitation and excommunication from the mainstream go hand in hand."²⁸ Motown's dalliance with corporate business would inevitably provoke accusations of compromise and collusion however the label's production practices were a manifestation of factory floor America. Renowned guitarist for the Stax label in Memphis, Steve Cropper's symbolic inference of the Motown's demarcated 'white sound', in contrast to the "righteous and nasty [sound of the south] which wasn't Chicago, and it wasn't New York, and it sure wasn't Detroit."²⁹ Motown's ideology was for many decidedly shop floor and shop window.

Gordy's capacity to traverse a narrow line of racial representation and market viability has been born out by the label's place in the wider popular memory, where, as Tate notes, "some black folks were shocked to discover via *The Big Chill* that many whites considered Motown their music."³⁰ The wider claims of cultural ownership for much soul music complicate America's racial narrative. In Yates view "working class origins and middle class acculturation [that] are

²⁷ Marvin Gaye, *What's Goin' On*, (Tamla, 1971)

²⁸ G. Tate, *Flyboy in the Buttermilk: Essays on Contemporary America*, (New York, Fireside, 1992) p.154

²⁹ G. Hirshey, *Nowhere to Run: The Story of Soul Music*, (London, MacMillan, 1984) p.294

³⁰ G. Tate, *Flyboy in the Buttermilk: Essays on Contemporary America*, (New York, Fireside, 1992) p.96

too mixed up in black music's evolution."³¹ Soul music's claims to authenticity are anchored in ownership across a wide racial spectrum. Lyrically the music had the capacity to translate the everyday, it was in Tate's words, "[the black poet's] primary task has been to create, by definition, reality for the members of his or her community, to allow them to perceive their universe in a distinctively new way."³² In the broader community however Gillett notes how, "from 1957 onwards – when record buying tastes were generally similar in the two markets - it is possible that the differences in the music black and white Americans [consumed] would have all but been eliminated. But the two markets remained separate."³³ Soul music had the capacity to operate as a twin helix, as both affirmation of black cultural expression, and as a broader non-racial articulation of the urban condition. Soul, and Motown in particular, took on the mantle of cosmopolitanism, quickly losing the exclusive connection to a singular community that the blues could lay claim. Evident in its sounds, rhythms and attendant styles adopted rapidly in the United Kingdom, the music had become a readily moved and consumed product.

By the time the 1960s, arguably the century's most culturally accelerated decade, had drawn to a close Berry Gordy Jr's Motown label was grossing over \$50million.³⁴ From such inauspicious roots some eleven years earlier, of a moderate loan³⁵ and humble basement office come studio, 2648 West Grand Boulevard, Gordy had created the most successful black owned American company and the myth of Hitsville, USA. The one time chrome trimmer for Ford had successfully created a record label whose mode of production and commodity representation was a cultural and temporal mirror of America's manufacturing economy. The image of Motown being the 'first all black American label' gave significant currency. Gillett outlines the

³¹ *ibid.* p.97

³² *ibid.* p.177

³³ C. Gillett, *The Sound of the City*, (London, Souvenir 1983) p.225

³⁴ D. Augustus Low, (ed) *Encyclopedia of Black America*, (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1981) p.240

³⁵ Motown was begun with \$700 loan in 1959, source: G. Hirshey, *Nowhere to Run: The Story of Soul Music*, (London, MacMillan, 1984), p.122

importance of this perception, “this version of Gordy’s history had mythical importance, because Gordy’s move represents an apparent realization of the American dream, given extra romance because the hero was black.”³⁶ The debatable but symbolic mobility of black Americans through determination, hard work and corporate structures was being reified in the records themselves. Motown’s first hit record came with Barrett Strong’s *Money (That’s What I Want)*³⁷ in 1959 and first million selling record with The Miracles, *Shop Around*³⁸ in 1960.

Nevertheless Gordy’s message of racial self-determination was often in contrast to the reality for the musicians as they moved between the factory floor and studio floor. Many of the singers and players who operated within the Detroit scene were there as a result of the auto industry’s economic pull. Many of Motown’s engine room musicians would jump between the two, Joe Hunter, keyboard player on many of the label’s hit records had moved from Tennessee to seek employment at the Chevrolet plant, James Jamerson, Motown’s legendary bass player a migrant from South Carolina and Richard ‘Pistol’ Allen, again from Tennessee had learnt to play drums on a typewriter. All familiar with jazz clubs, Detroit’s assembly lines and Motown’s infamous ‘snakepit’ studio, these anonymous figures would remain the unaccredited and unheralded masters behind the ‘Sound of Young America’ as Gordy liked to brand the label. This highly successful ‘sound’ a direct result of the skills and creative talents of the players behind the scenes was an ironic mirror of capitalism’s hierarchical structures and inherent exploitation. The synergy between the assembly line and the studio would be evident in the similarity between industrial and creative practices. Motown’s own assembly line worked round the clock shifts with workers’ receiving minimal pay, no accreditation on sleeve notes and no immediate recognition. Here the work cultures of the studio environment, like that of the factory floor, expressed a camaraderie and compliance towards the corporate structure allowing the label’s

³⁶ C. Gillett, *The Sound of the City*, (London, Souvenir 1983) p.210

³⁷ Barrett Strong, *Money (That’s What I Want)*, (Tamla, 1959)

³⁸ The Miracles, *Shop Around*, (Tamla, 1960)

canons of labour and efficacy to supersede the creativity of the individual.

Studio A³⁹

Until the worldwide cinema release in 2003 of the film “Standing in the Shadows of Motown”⁴⁰ the Funk Brothers, the musicians behind the label’s talismanic sound, were largely a footnote in popular music history, attention focused on the image generated by the singers. Keyboard player Earl van Dyke estimated the Funk Brothers “were responsible for the instrumentation that shaped and sold the sound on 250 million records.”⁴¹ Instead, under Gordy’s highly successful but autocratic reign, the polished and sanitized image of Motown’s iconic singers and dancers was the marketed face of ‘the sound’. The homogenized ‘look’ of the label roster was akin to the show room models of Detroit’s other major product. The artists exuded an air of efficiency, functionality and modernity. The label, like Chevrolet, boasted its own company song penned by Smokey Robinson and, as Hirshey observes, extols corporate virtues, “employees are neat and clean. The company is swinging. Unity conquers all.”⁴² As Motown’s success grew, the label formalized its links with the auto industry in a series of publicity shots. The Supremes and Marvin Gaye, amongst others, were photographed in partially constructed cars as they moved along the production line.⁴³

Motown embodied the period’s mass-production and conspicuous consumption, where form embellished content and audience familiarity was the building block of commercial success.

The backbeat provided repetition and feel of generic production, itself suggestive of a hermetic rhythm that had begun to impose itself on the resultant sound. Hebdidge’s sees a musical

³⁹ Funk Brothers: <http://funkbrothers1.tripod.com/id3.html>

⁴⁰ *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, Director- Paul Justman. (Elliott- Scott Productions LLC, 21st Century Pictures 2003)

⁴¹ G. Hirshey, *Nowhere to Run: The Story of Soul Music*, (London, MacMillan, 1984) p.188

⁴² *ibid.* p.127

⁴³ S.E. Smith, *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit*, (Cambridge, Mass 1999)

language emerging from American popular forms, “the new economy based on the progressive automation and depersonalization of the production process and the transformed patterns of consumption it engendered disrupted and displaced the old critical language.”⁴⁴ This nexus of form and function found expression in the label’s autocratic structure generally complimented by the artists’ malleability and compliance. The writing team of Holland-Dozier-Holland⁴⁵ was positioned as a lateral bridge between Gordy’s corporate hierarchy, the blue-collar studio floor and the synchronized sales team of the label’s artist roster. The artists themselves exuded this new language of ‘streamlined’ and ‘styled’ with the label even boasting its own finishing school, singer Martha Reeves explained, “I had to give my girls a crash course on what Motown wanted and what they didn’t. We did have rules to follow.”⁴⁶ This commodity etiquette further embellished by the artists’ stylistic symmetry. The groups signified balance, congruity and a sense of order. Subliminally this approach expressed the label’s desire to demonstrate advancement through conformity, to act in accordance with national traits of progress and unfettered confidence. Equally significant it also introduced a concept of ‘quality control’, imposed by a corporate infrastructure. As Wilson Pickett, Detroit migrant, and extraordinary soul singer, though himself not a Motown artist summarized, “you harmonize, then you customize. Now what kid don’t want to own the latest model?”⁴⁷ The question was automobile or recording artist?

Soul’s position reflected the period’s reading of gender through production and consumption. The post-war period saw manufacturing practices as the continued valorization of masculinity counterbalanced by the feminization of commodity aesthetics. As consumer products, automobiles and records, expressed this delineation, specifically through the agencies of design

⁴⁴ D. Hebdidge, *Hiding in the Light*, (London, Routledge, 1989) p.71

⁴⁵ Motown relied heavily on its writers amongst the most successful were the team Eddie Holland, Brian Holland and Lamont Dozier

⁴⁶ G. Hirshey, *Nowhere to Run: The Story of Soul Music*, (London, MacMillan, 1984) p.151

⁴⁷ *ibid.* p.46

and marketing. Hebdige observes that, “misogynist values [are thus] relayed mechanically through the medium of objects and attitudes towards objects”⁴⁸ where ‘his’ correspond to “functional, scientific, useful,” and ‘hers’ “decorative, aesthetic, gratifying.”⁴⁹ Within this context Motown was somewhat paradoxical. Through the inclusive marketing of its product, the label appeared to distance itself from the inference of this binary, whilst simultaneously maintaining such gender differentiation. This was emasculation through music when some, like James Brown, chose to patrol the male-female border. Brown’s *It’s a Man’s Man’s World*⁵⁰ in 1966 addressed gender polarity head on. Gordy however veiled such notions through the label’s structure, practices and representations. Race and gender at the point of consumption, in keeping with marketing mores, were not seemingly restrictive factors. At the point of production, that Motown was a ‘black’ label was unquestionable,⁵¹ at the point of consumption the label did not politicize its racial make up, nor attempt to camouflage the feminization of its packaged product. The distinction came between the production floor and the record store shelves. The virility and machismo of the music’s bedrock rhythm, forged in anonymity on the studio floor, gave functional structure for the manicured aesthetics expressed through the marketability of the label’s roster of performers. Gillett points out that every effort was made to “to maintain the separate identity of each singer and group,”⁵² although after 1966 the increased commodification of the label witnessed the sound become, as Gillett asserts, more homogenous, seemingly a manifestation of period’s growing manufactured sound, its aesthetic reproduction.

The timing of Motown’s departure from Detroit for Los Angeles in 1971 formalized the label’s evolution - market success, exemplified through its corporate decision making structure. The

⁴⁸ D. Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light*, (London, Routledge, 1989) p.87

⁴⁹ *ibid.* p.86

⁵⁰ James Brown, *It’s a Man’s Man’s World* (King, 1966)

⁵¹ Until relocation to Los Angeles in 1970 the label’s roster was entirely black, Joe Messina (guitar) and Bob Bobbitt (bass) were white musicians, who like the remainder of the Funk brothers were uncredited until 1970 with the release of Marvin Gaye’s “What’s Goin’ On”

⁵² C. Gillett, *The Sound of the City*, (London, Souvenir 1983) p.210

label's relocation marked a shift in the relationship between Gordy and the artists. Martha Reeves, representative of the Detroit factory floor past stated that, "We didn't know what we were supposed to feel,"⁵³ expressing many of the musicians and performers suspension of belief on hearing Gordy's announcement. Prior to the impending relocation, the struggle emerged between the label head and artist Marvin Gaye, who very much represented Motown's displaced future. Gordy saw the singer's release *What's Goin' On* packaged, for the very first time complete with musician credits, as a record which failed to adhere to Motown's strict commodity aesthetics. Musically and lyrically the release resonated with the times, obliquely addressing issues of the Vietnam War and social unrest. As a label Motown was willing to accommodate cultural shifts such as psychedelia, The Temptations *Cloud Nine* and *Psychedelic Shack*⁵⁴ subtext cushioned by symbols of late 1960s ephemera - wah-wah guitars, afros and flares epitomized this 'acid-soul'. Motown's continued assimilation into mainstream popular culture, although accepting of technology's growing importance in popular music, could not afford to be negated by artistic whims or insurgencies by those like Gaye. Increasingly aware of the visual appeal of specific artists such as Diana Ross and The Jackson 5, the television and film industries westward draw gave evidence of corporate mobility now outstripping human mobility. The label, which in Gordy had previously claimed, "expressed the 'rats, roaches and soul' condition of black ghetto life,"⁵⁵ was however not wishing to glamorise the urban experience. Rather than capitalize on the banality of the everyman-everywoman ordeal, Motown was instead an expression of the determination to escape this condition. The reservoir of creativity that had brought gospel, blues and jazz forms to give weight to Detroit's popular practices had been abandoned just as General Motors and Ford employees would soon become the collateral forfeit in America's manufacturing decline. The economic forces circumscribed Motown's message of racial pride, self-determination and social mobility. In Motown's shift

⁵³ Interview: "Standing in the Shadows of Motown", Director- Paul Justman. (Elliott- Scott Productions LLC, 21st Century Pictures 2003)

⁵⁴ The Temptations, *Cloud Nine* (Gordy, 1969) and *Psychedelic Shack* (Gordy, 1970)

⁵⁵ C. Gillett, *The Sound of the City*, (London, Souvenir 1983) p.217

populist black music became decentred and, although acknowledging the importance of Muscle Shoals, the Stax label and the Memphis sound, with it came the symbolic loss of the music's ideological 'place'. Motown's new cosmopolitan, and mythologised, home was in 'time' and popular memory.

Moving on a Twisted Wheel

Long before the wheels on Motown's flight to Los Angeles had touched the runway, the boundaries for soul's territorial claim had been staked within popular music culture. Detroit's totemic positioning could be attributed, in part, to the label's championing of social mobility through assimilation irrespective of skin tone. The now ubiquitous Motown brand, through such mythologized and altruistic beliefs, has acquired sufficient magnitude to sustain both a commodity fetishism and broad cultural appeal. As I write my E-Mac computer spits out Z Trip's rework of the Jackson 5's *I Want You Back*⁵⁶ and sources indicate the sale of a copy of Frank Wilson's (unreleased) *Do I Love You? Motown* single for \$27,000(US).⁵⁷ Both stand as testament to the label's enduring signification and soul's continued fetishization. Outside the label's capacity to market to a seemingly never ending baby boomer thirst for re-formatted product, through nostalgic construction and sonic memory, there still exists a quest by the cultural margins for soul's mythical authenticity. Soul music remains a valuable tool in identity beyond the spatial and temporal boundaries of 1960s Michigan to provide a type of marketable 'authenticity'. The roots of this legitimacy are bound up in the complexity of soul's appropriation by continuing generations of music buyers, producers and cultural stylists who reach to it as a touchstone. A timeless default setting soul, through Motown specifically, attained this power not merely through the music produced by also by its cultural effect, its take

⁵⁶ Various Artists, *Motown Remixed*, (Universal Records, 2005)

⁵⁷ Frank Wilson, *Do I Love You? (Indeed I Do)* [Soul 35019], a copy of which sold for £15,000 in 1998. There are only two copies known to exist. Source: Rare Record Set to Make £25,000 <http://www.thisisleicestershire.co.uk/entertainment/Rare-Motown-record-set-make-25-000/article-863790-detail/article.html> accessed 04.07.09

up by those on foreign shores who sought empathy through sounds and rhythms of American soul.

The continuing momentum of soul music has implications not only as a tool of identity but also within the context of music's own evolution. As lyrical, rhythmic and sonic components of soul's nuances became transposed into funk, hip-hop, R n B and urban, so certain acts and singers model the genre more concisely. American singers Angie Stone, Maxwell, Jill Scott and Erykah Badu closely incorporate soul's affectations into their palette of music styles; whilst in Britain, from the centred singers such as Amy Winehouse, Joss Stone and Jamiraquoi to the more marginal Alice Russell and Quantic Soul Orchestra, contemporary artists have built upon the success of earlier acts like The Brand New Heavies. The specialist club scene with DJ's such as Keb Darge who have embraced the exclusivity of old 7inch singles to the level of true soul music fetishism and through such labels such as the Tru-Thoughts⁵⁸ a form of neo-soul has been created. Here the culturally constructed template of the Detroit sound is adhered to reverentially, formalizing the music's traditions in a stricter modelling of a rhythmic and melodic blueprint that had been maintained through northern soul and rare groove's nuances. The fragmentation of club culture since the hiatus of the 1990s with house and techno's pervasive presence has witnessed a resurgence of the more specialist and marginal club practices, enhanced through media proliferation and DJ mobility. Fanzines, e-zines, on-line radio, as well as national magazine and radio have retained club culture's fractal networks and the DJ's apparent omnipresence. Rare groove and soul, as consistent and inclusive components in southern Britain's dance make-up, along with the more exclusive and systematized expressions of northern soul, have maintained their position within the spectrum of these club practices. DJs such as Norman Jay, Giles Peterson and Keb Darge have sustained soul's momentum.

⁵⁸ Tru-Thoughts: <http://www.tru-thoughts.co.uk>

Soul music's take up, both nationally and globally, by a multiple social groups emphasised the growing networks that music could support. Through international record labels, licensing, independent distribution and a proliferation of popular media from radio and television to magazines and touring shows, the music once contained was now readily available. The subjective nature of earlier blues had been transformed through soul's mediation. The spread of popular practices and expressions - dances, clothes and affectations - through rock 'n' roll and country music had produced a broader, more inclusive, appeal. The 'I' of blues had been superseded by the 'we' of soul. Published in 1975 Michael Haralambos' study of radio airplay given to different types of black music observed a concomitant change in black lyrics, "the backdoor man of blues had been replaced by the soul man, a lover possessed of both guilt and morality."⁵⁹ In Neal's mapping of the 'post-soul' American cultural landscape, which acknowledges, "almost two generations ago, the concept of soul emerged as the most vivid and popular expression of an African-American modernity,"⁶⁰ and where this expression "[soul] has also been an aesthetic interconnected with the marketplace and the consumerist desires of black and white audiences alike."⁶¹ This cultural consumption was multiple and complex reaching across ethnic divisions.

Soul displayed its inherent traits of being both inclusive and exclusive, of oneness and otherness. The music showed its capacity to express the lived and shared experience. The music resonated to those who had witnessed first hand geographical relocation, urban transformation, social exclusion and economic realignment. It was such experiences for subsequent generations that would, in Neal's description create a shared 'post-soul aesthetic'. Within America, the children of soul came to maturity in the age of Reaganomics and "experienced the change from

⁵⁹ M. Haralambos, "Right On; from Blues to Soul in Black America" quoted in G. Hirshey, *Nowhere to Run: The Story of Soul Music*, (London, MacMillan, 1984) p.315

⁶⁰ M.A. Neal, *Soul Babies*, (New York, Routledge, 2002) p.3

⁶¹ *ibid.* p.7

urban industrialism to de-industrialism, from segregation to desegregation, from essential notions of blackness to meta-narratives on blackness.”⁶² The inclusive ‘we’ of soul, an expression of plurality to those for whom music was part of the complex of identity, was also built upon the much more exclusive ‘we’ of soul, an expression of how difference became a clear defining factor. The shared ‘same’ of America’s soul generation was part of a lived continuum very unlike the empathetic ‘other’ of Britain’s northern soul follower affected but quarantined through nostalgia. If the post-soul aesthetic existed it was complex in nature. Neal’s children of soul felt no compunction to abide by soul’s canons or even acknowledge that the term itself was little more than an externally constructed abstraction; outside America the music was clearly tethered to 1960s Detroit.

The soul scene in the midlands and northern Britain remains one of the country’s most enduring insulated music cultures building on a club infrastructure that has existed since soul music’s apogee in the mid 1960s. Still sustained through club nights, weekend events and in an online environment through specialist and fan websites⁶³ the scenes’ roots were highly specific.

Consolidated around a mere handful of venues: Sheffield’s Mojoes (see Chapter: *Sheffield Isn’t Sexy*) and later Heartbeat, Stoke-on-Trent’s Torch, Manchester’s Twisted Wheel and the Wigan Casino, although not simultaneously or continuously open, being amongst the most renowned.

The scene, which embedded itself amongst the urban industrial areas, became regionally classified by journalist the late Dave Godin as ‘northern soul’ to distinguish between the music preferences of the north and south. In Milestone’s comprehensive appraisal of the scene, this demarcation of soul was problematic as rare soul scenes existed in the south, fans traveled long distances and “the music does not originate from the north or anywhere else in the UK but from

⁶² M.A. Neal, *Soul Babies*, (New York, Routledge, 2002) p.3

⁶³ Northern Soul: <http://www.northernsoulmusic.co.uk/> Wigan Casino: <http://www.wigan-casino.co.uk/> Twisted Wheel: <http://www.thetwistedwheel.co.uk/>

North America.”⁶⁴ These regional peculiarities reflected not only subtleties of music taste but associated norms and practices; fashions and drugs although not absent outside the northern circuit became identifiable and self-propagating characteristics.⁶⁵ The rare soul scene distinguished itself from the more popular representations of the genre, where Motown artists regularly occupied the British charts, as the influx of American imports after 1968 fed a growing fetishization of soul. Although the quantity of music was sufficient for the scene to prevent stagnation it was suitably exclusive to ensure soul remained relatively obscure and unobtainable. Vinyl became imbued with preternatural qualities, rare records which were not reinforced by any tangible presence or promotional imagery came to represent not only soul’s otherness, but also its esoteric allure.

Soul power was drawn from the margins. It was de-centred, the music of the second-city, created by and drawn upon by those who were on the periphery in urban terms. Milestones points to a more peripheral urban empathy, “an [urban] industrial area which is not the city, but the edge of the city; an urban landscape without a cultural infrastructure.”⁶⁶ Detroit, soul’s totemic home, not a readily imagined global centre such as New York or Los Angeles but an oblique industrial hub, the reification of American manufacturing transferred to northern Britain, its own productive base. Northern soul remains a proud if overlooked and unarticulated resistance. The scene’s frenzied dances and accompanied hedonism taking place in traditional northern industrial spaces such as ballrooms and working men’s clubs strangely reminiscent of competitive and spectacular dance practices of early century northern industrial Britain.⁶⁷ And within these spaces were the seeds of future club culture that would emerge through clubs such

⁶⁴ K. Milestone, “The Love Factory” in S. Redhead, (ed) *The Clubcultures Reader* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1997) p.153

⁶⁵ *Northern Soul: This is England* (Granada Television):
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbEuq54FcBg>

⁶⁶ K. Milestone, “The Love Factory” in S. Redhead, (ed) *The Clubcultures Reader*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1997) p.157

⁶⁷ *ibid.* p.164

as the Hacienda in the work of DJs such as Mike Pickering and Ian Levine and musicians Dave Ball and Shaun Ryder, northern soul's lateral movement would see it fused with house music, the gay scene, popular and rock music respectively.⁶⁸

Say It Loud ...

I stay in the beat. I stay in the pulse⁶⁹

James Brown

It was black expressive culture's increased visibility and more overt politicization as the decade wore on that, in part, caused northern soul to be cut adrift, but which would however enable the music to speak more directly to other communities. Artists like James Brown sought to connect directly to their audience, keeping as he said in step with the beat, for him the 'pulse,' of the time. Gilroy observes the growing link to a wider black diaspora and the incorporation of African iconography, with acts such as Sly Stone, Roy Ayers and Aretha Franklin, which "spoke to blacks directly and repeatedly on the subject of their African heritage but withdrew directly from a white audience."⁷⁰ The tenets of Black Nationalism to, 'Think Black, Talk Black, Act Black, Create Black, Buy Black',⁷¹ were outside the remit of Detroit soul that resonated in white working class Britain but would nevertheless impact on the country's black communities. The close affiliation of African-American music culture to the political environment from which it emerged helped create a level of community empathy. As Gilroy observes, the "knowledge of these struggles was transmitted into black ghettos and

⁶⁸ Mike Pickering would become renowned as a house DJ at Manchester's Hacienda nightclub and form the band M People, Ian Levine an renowned DJ and remixer in the gay scene, Dave Ball achieved chart success with bands Soft Cell and The Grid, covering a Northern Soul classic: Gloria Jones, *Tainted Love* (Champion, 1964) with the former, Shaun Ryder became the singer with bands, The Happy Mondays and Black Grape.

⁶⁹ *The Night James Brown Saved Boston* (BBC 4, broadcast 05.12.09)

⁷⁰ P. Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991) p.178

⁷¹ *ibid.* p.177

communities all over the world,⁷² and consequently taken to the hearts of these communities beyond their spaces of creation. Just as significantly was the music's capacity for social inclusion, it was the 'we' of soul, as primarily a dance style that gave momentum to its function in identity formation. As Gilroy observes "the more esoteric"⁷³ new jazz styles, which were also evolving representations of black radical expression, failed to reach ghetto communities outside America in the same way as soul's rhythmic template.

Soul music's capacity to shape black communities outside America physically and philosophically was determined by, in Gilroy's term, being, "bound together in the framework of diaspora by language and history,"⁷⁴ It would, however, reach outside this exclusively Pan-African union to a broader formation and "[a] consensus of an oppressed nation,"⁷⁵ incorporating other communities marginalized by white hegemonic ideologies. Banerjea and Banerjea⁷⁶ detail soul music's affective resonance within post-colonial Asian Britain.

Soul, [then], made its first appeal to British children of Asian migrants, as an 'underground' cultural resource, invested with currency of alterity and addressed with a spirit of fortitude. These appeared to be eminently marketable qualities to embattled and marginalized young Asians faced with the prospect of popular cultural extinction.⁷⁷

In this context soul, albeit through later productions from Philadelphia as much as Detroit, occupied a significant space for many British Asians trapped between the binary of excluded post-colonial homes - an imagined subcontinent and a hostile white Britain. Wary of essentializing Asian culture and reducing its links to black music as the simple bifurcation of racial discourse, which in the view of Hutnyk et. al. "renders Asians invisible and marginal the

⁷² *ibid.* p.172

⁷³ *ibid.* p.177

⁷⁴ *ibid.* p.184

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

⁷⁶ K. Banerjea, and P. Banerjea, "Psyche and Soul: A View from the South" in S. Sharma, J. Hutnyk, and A. Sharma, (eds) *Dis-Orienting Rhythms: The Politics of New Asian Dance Music*, (London, Zed Books, 1996)

⁷⁷ *ibid.* p.113

practices of (sub)urban cultures,⁷⁸ it is important to see the link in a more complex cultural construction. Soul and black dance music have been a significant element in the subsequent development of Asian dance music from bhangra to hip hop and electronic hybrids. It must be stressed that British Asians were marked by their heterogeneity and although music had the capacity to bridge difference more localized and familial factors were at play. As the decade progressed this syncretic process would develop to the extent that, in Bill Osgerby's observation, "second and third generation British Asians had actually configured their own 'transcultural' identities."⁷⁹ However the Asian identification with soul music at this time was unlike that configured in northern soul.

As with its white northern counterpart, Asian difference and resistance still framed the discourse with soul music. Spatially Banerjea and Banerjea's narrative of Asian soul was contained within a suburban hinterland bound by South Eastern underground zones 3/4 and the M25 motorway. Like the encroaching wastelands of the industrial north, this was a liminal zone of factories, commercial hangars and mundane housing estates, but unlike its counterpart Asian links to soul were not inclusive in that culture but instead marginalized. Banerjea and Banerjea give evidence to the exclusive make up of the rare soul scene where, in pointing to Asian invisibility in the Asian owned Streetsounds⁸⁰ album sleeves as symbolic prohibition "Asian folk [were] denied their rightful inheritance as both consumptive and productive Soul heads."⁸¹ Instead being the outside 'other' in this cultural binary. Soul's community constructed through perceptions of difference had ironically produced another 'we' in this process. In such a black /white binary

⁷⁸ S. Sharma, J. Hutnyk, and A. Sharma, (eds) *Dis-Orienting Rhythms: The Politics of New Asian Dance Music*, (London, Zed Books, 1996) p.4

⁷⁹ B. Osgerby, *Youth Media* (Oxon, Routledge, 2004) p.175

⁸⁰ Between 1980 and 1989 Asian Morgan Khan's 'Streetsounds' label licensed rare soul and early electro tracks from the USA and released them on a series compilation albums in Britain.

⁸¹ K. Banerjea, and P. Banerjea, "Psyche and Soul: A View from the South" in S. Sharma, J. Hutnyk, and A. Sharma, (eds) *Dis-Orienting Rhythms: The Politics of New Asian Dance Music*, (London, Zed Books, 1996) p.107

discourse Asians were marked as a hidden community even within the context of music occupying peripheral spaces, here soul being utilized to define otherness even within its own sub-cultural tenets.

In music's visceral nature the variables of time and place are dismantled and reconstructed in the process of forming cultural communities. Just as the Kingston Jamaica becomes rebuilt through the rhythms of reggae so soul music's affect gives evidence of this process. Not confined to 1960s Detroit or Memphis, nor 1970s Philadelphia, a post-soul aesthetic appropriates the music and its symbols through popular memory and parameters of difference. The realignment of space and time enables soul to resonate through such communities affiliated by social practices and for whom soul's rhythmic template is fundamental. Here the movement of rhythm is via the cultural output rather than the mobility of people themselves. Soul's deconstruction relies on symbolic rather than physical progression, very few of those who utilize the music as a tool of identity can reach beyond a mediated and imagined Detroit as their point of reference.

This constructed home of soul is enmeshed with its potent signifiers marching in step to key events and factors of post-war America - the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, factory floor production and mass consumption, black expressive culture, urbanization and aspects of social mobility. Spatial factors attach soul to the American south and cities of the Midwest, metropolitan centres, bars and nightclubs and globally linked communications. Importantly however soul is bound by discourses of resistance, of racial interaction, of class structures, ethnicity and gender alignment, which in turn frame the post-soul aesthetic. Valorized by popular memory the rhythm and music maintain their significance. The music's capacity to retain this position through the exclusivity and collectivity of soul's 'we', an expression of both alterity and community. From soul's reception within America as both an expression of

African-American culture and white appropriation, to its trans-national deconstruction by white working class and Asian communities the dichotomy of resistance and acceptance becomes apparent. The empathetic bond evidence of soul's continued movement. Significantly the children of soul, the carriers of this post-soul aesthetic would come of age in Detroit's post-Fordist reincarnation; by the mid-1980s the residual effect of Motown and Reaganomics would find its own expressive culture as techno heralded a new culture of global resistance.

Part Two

Speramus Meliora; Resurget Cinerbus

I remember driving in from Chicago and seeing the hi-tech headquarters for Ford and then most extreme poverty I have seen in my life, five minutes later. There's just no hope at all. It's just complete despair. Young girls on the street. You can imagine Derrick May sitting up in his flat and looking out on Detroit. You can really see a city shaping a music.⁸²

Kirk DeGiorgio – British Techno Producer

The Latin motto for the city of Detroit translates as, "We hope for better things; it will rise from the ashes," uttered according to legend by the co-founder of the University of Michigan, Father Gabriel Richard, after the devastating fire of 1805 wreaked near destruction on the city. History's cyclical tendencies have rendered the words an eerie and prophetic mantra for postindustrial Detroit as it continues to resurrect its redundant perception from the ashes of the manufacturing peak of the 1950s and 1960s. Social and economic disruptions have arguably had a more profound effect on Detroit than any other American centre as the city's sense of symbolic status evaporated. The auto industry's hemorrhaging of human capital stigmatized Detroit as the pariah of lost post-depression euphoria and national optimism. In the late 1980s British musician Kirk DeGiorgio's journey to Detroit, in the hope of meeting his techno idols, offers a telling description of city's self-immolation. The nation's downsizing, to a less

⁸² D.Toop, *Ocean of Sound*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 1995) pp. 213-4

demanding (read taxing) and fluid service sector driven economy, was tantamount to urban abandonment. In the words of Jack White, from one of recent Detroit's more successful artists, The White Stripes, "it's sort of grey and desolate, a very un-modern American city. Really behind the times."⁸³ White echoes sentiments that the city has still, "never come back from the riots"⁸⁴ which witnessed business and white middle class residents flee to the suburbs after 1967, many admitting, "I've never been below 10 Mile."⁸⁵ This symbolic delineation between black urban and white suburban merely serves to emphasize Detroit's continued image of dysfunctionality, but is also an indication of music's capacity and determination to confront the division, both real and perceived.

What seemed to be Detroit's self sacrifice - economic and social assurance for dynamic cultural expression - seems overly deterministic, it nevertheless provides structure for understanding the city's popular music output. More importantly Detroit itself has, in recent times, begun to focus attention and capitalize on its cultural collateral, choosing to celebrate its musical heritage rather than subordinate it to the perception of the lost Motor City. In 2002 the Detroit Historical Museum opened an exhibition entitled *Techno: Detroit's Gift to the World*, a celebration of the city's 'other' global rhythm. The irony being Detroit had remained, for long, in a state of denial about its darker signifier in preference to techno's older and more gregarious, celebratory sibling, Motown. For Detroit to incorporate its bastard automated offspring into the city's reconstructed image tells more of the music's translation and filtering through global rather than regional processes. Techno's recent respectability is an indication of its once resistant power compromised by the inevitability of time and its incorporation into the wider sphere of commodified club culture. As evidence of the once progressive form's rapid transformation to an acceptable expression, Eminem, himself a pugnacious chronicler of the contemporary urban

⁸³ Interview, Keith Cameron, *The Guardian* newspaper, Saturday March 29, 2003

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ 8 Mile Road, depicted in the film *8 Mile*. 2002, directed by Curtis Hanson and starring Detroit hip hop artist Eminem, symbolizes the border between 'downtown' and the suburbs

condition, offered perspective on his hometown's 'other music', advising: "it's over nobody listens to techno".⁸⁶ Subjectively this statement was merely a barbed attack on fellow musician Moby, but nevertheless resonant of the music's now compartmentalized relevance. The exhibition and the lyrics capture the extreme perceptions of techno's place in the present cultural milieu: a circumscribed and overprescribed music unable to reinvent itself, stumbling over the markers of its own obsolescence, and a now curated cultural curiosity. That the music was contained by its own rhythmic and tonal template reinforces the argument that techno, like all music, should be engaged on its own terms to assess its wider cultural significance. If, in this narrative, soul at the point of production fused a folk tradition, from slave rhythms and the blues, with a growing urbanization, then techno came as a result of a break in this tradition. It is within the context of this break that techno's regional and global affect should be assessed.

Nothing Comes From Nothing. Everything Comes From Something

Detroit's cultural phoenix, techno, is contextualized by social and economic transformations and changing patterns of cultural mediation in the period that followed the manufacturing zenith of the Motown period. If, in techno pioneer Derrick May's words, "nothing just comes from nothing, everything comes from something,"⁸⁷ then these are the significant 'somethings' to which he alluded. The city and nation's fractured political and economic trajectory in the post-industrial and post-civil rights era was concomitant with a developing global fusion of audio cultures within this volatile environment. The post-soul period, governed by the social consequences of the shift from Keynesian to neo-liberal economic and political structures, was also framed by growing global mediation and technologically driven modes of production and

⁸⁶ Eminem, *Without Me*, (Aftermath/Interscope, 2002)

⁸⁷ Interview with Derrick May by M. Rubin, "Techno – Days of Future Past", in P. Shapiro, (ed) *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music* (New York, Caipirinha Productions, 2000) p. 130

consumption. The paradox being that Detroit's demise due, in large part, as a consequence of the auto industry's increased automation, would begin to find expression through technological forms. The city's post-industrial landscape, in shifting from the factory floor and fixed time and place arrangements, would similarly find a music expression which reflected and reinforced the perception of this switch from collectivity to the alienated and atomized individual. The music, connected by technology through seemingly dehumanizing processes, became counterbalanced by social practices that were rooted in leisure rather than workplace cultures.

The emergence of a black middle class alongside an entrenched urban underclass suggests techno was 'of' the metaphorical ghetto but not 'from' the ghetto. Detroit's techno narrative springs from a hub of high school friendships, the so called Belleville Three⁸⁸ – Derrick May, Kevin Saunderson and Juan Atkins signified changed social dynamics. Saunderson recalls, "it was pretty racial still at the time, 'cos it was a decent area. You had to have a little bit of money. The houses were off lakes, and there wasn't a lot of black people there. So we three kind of gelled right away."⁸⁹ So much so techno's key protagonists from suburban Detroit challenged the city's dual make up, which Natumba defines as, "a black town surrounded by a white noose,"⁹⁰ and George Clinton set musically as, "chocolate city and vanilla suburbs."⁹¹ That the music would find translation more through trans-urban cultures rather than factors of regional demarcation suggested an expression of this social displacement. If soul celebrated the fusion of a folk tradition with increased urbanization, then post-soul techno marked the escape from urban disintegration through the panacea of technology and its potential global nexus. Detroit's new sound became a symbol of changing determinants of identity; the loss of community

⁸⁸ Atkins, May and Saunderson grew up in the satellite town of Belleville 30 Kilometres southwest of Detroit.

⁸⁹ S. Reynolds, *Energy Flash*, (London, Picador, 1998) p. 3-4

⁹⁰ K. Natumba, "Nostalgia for the Present: Cultural Resistance in Detroit 1977-1987" in G. Dent, (ed) *Black Popular Culture* (New York, New Press, 1998) p.174

⁹¹ Parliament, "Chocolate City", (Casablanca, 1975). Although, on release, considered to be a reference to Washington DC it has been more generally applied to a number of North American cities.

through the process of deindustrialization and associated work cultures. Techno's make up, less anchored to old Detroit began to forge links to a broader and less visible community, a new form of mobility. A community integrated increasingly through technology but decreasingly inhibited by spatial or temporal considerations. Although, seemingly beyond factors of race, gender and class, networks that through the specificity of access – to technology, leisure and consumption - would still become apparent. Juan Atkins, acknowledged as one of Detroit techno's leading producers was clearly drawn to the music's inherent ideology - self-assertion through technology. He articulated the sense of frustration: "the system is bent on keeping people in despair, hopeless, not wanting to achieve anything."⁹² Challenging the city's technological displacement and stagnation, Detroit's social and economic mobility became substituted by global alignment through technology's virtual mobility.

In contrast to most music styles, whose nomenclature is often externally imposed, by critics, journalists or the communities from which they evolve, techno was self-prescriptive. The artists themselves defined their sound and gave club music a new 'brand'. Taking its name from a chapter in Alvin Toffler's utopian vision *The Third Wave*, entitled 'Techno Rebels' the new music's chief instigators sought to cast off folk tradition. That the music was a continuation of a black cultural narrative is unquestionable, its first wave exponents, Derrick May, Kevin Saunderson and Juan Atkins were all young African- American residents of the city. Although inheriting Detroit's musical past the 'Bellville Three' were also the consequence of a post-soul fracture in this account Motown's flight from the city and the auto industry's decline had brought about changing cultural conditions. If, as the post-industrial environment was beginning to demonstrate, change was measured through technological innovation then it was through technology itself that Detroit would find expression. In Atkins words, "Detroit is unlike any

⁹² The comment in reference to the Model 500 releases "No UFOS" (1985) Source: M. Rubin, "Techno – Days of Future Past", in P. Shapiro, (ed) *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music* (New York, Caipirinha Productions, 2000) p.116

other city in the transitions it has endured. When your surroundings change, you go through change.”⁹³ More importantly techno’s instigators embraced the music’s very invisibility. It played down aspects of race that were more conspicuous in blues, soul, disco and funk as an affirmation of authenticity. Rather, in Atkins words, “repudiating ethnic designations.”⁹⁴ Detroit’s new rhythm, concealed by technology’s secrecy, denoted a break in the folk tradition, which had relied, until now, upon music’s ‘fixed performance’ as a community bridge and symbol of authentic affirmation. However there was acknowledgement of the beat’s continuing role. Grounded in performance rather than composition, in Simon Frith’s assessment, “black music is based upon the immediate effects of melody and rhythm rather than on the linear development of theme and harmony.”⁹⁵ Central to music’s value as a cultural commodity was studio technology’s capacity to capture and translate this moment in time, distilling the human emotion into a reproducible mass product. Techno clearly saw itself as part of this recording tradition that linked producer and audience.

Techno was shaped in a post-Vietnam War, post-Watergate period, in which America’s sense of unbridled confidence had become severely compromised. Recession and ‘stagflation’ stalled credit driven consumption with a concomitant loss of control and sense of security. In 1974, with inflation above 10% and unemployment at 7%, the nation witnessed its highest respective rates since the end of World War II and diminished the perception of government infallibility in guiding the economy. By 1980 inflation had reached 13% and the consumer price index indicated the cost of living had doubled between 1967 and 1979.⁹⁶ America’s productivity, once

⁹³ Interview D. Sicko, “The Roots of Techno”, *Wired*, 2.07 Jul 1994, online: <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/2.07/techno.html>, accessed – 12.10.05

⁹⁴ M. Rubin, “Techno – Days of Future Past”, in P. Shapiro, (ed) *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music* (New York, Caipirinha Productions, 2000) p.116

⁹⁵ S. Frith, *Sound Effects*, (New York, Pantheon Books, 1981) p.16

⁹⁶ G. Donleson-Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century*, (New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 2000) pp. 497-504

a global leader, had slipped to twentieth place in the world rankings⁹⁷, evidence of the industrial giant encumbered by archaic manufacturing practices. The economic boom during the 1960s, based on cheap oil, had gone never to return, by 1973 the nation's dependency on imported oil had risen to 36%⁹⁸ and, significantly for Detroit, by 1980 30% of new cars were imported, a direct assault on the city where an estimated 45% of its jobs were lost in the period 1967 to 1982⁹⁹ with a subsequent unemployment rate of 20% by 1981-82.¹⁰⁰ The American economy's transformation from creditor to debtor, with a national deficit, by the end of Reagan administration, of \$3 trillion rising to \$4 trillion by 1992¹⁰¹ was indication not only of a dependence on foreign capital but also indicative of growing globally connected capitalist economy. A nation's corporate wealth was not necessarily most effective when contained within its own borders. The social consequences of this economic shift, where human capital in manufacturing became residual forfeit, would become manifest in an increasingly fragmented urban population. This was not only apparent in the stark reality of statistics (in the 1980s black unemployment was double the national average, with median income half that of the white population)¹⁰² but also through patterns of social dysfunction. Racial and social fragmentation had created a visible underclass where gains in civil rights, and attitudes to gender and sexuality, had had been arrested during the ensuing recession. The loss of work cultures, a disconnected, suburban middle class and a growing sense of alienation were highlighted by the 1990 census, which indicated 25% of the population lived alone.¹⁰³ Such social factors, which were valorized by a consensus political shift to the right, became embedded by neo-conservative structures. The papering over of racial and social cracks, brought about by such economic

⁹⁷ *ibid.* p.504

⁹⁸ Oil imports had risen from 12% to 36% between 1968 and 1973. Source: G. Donleson-Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century*. (New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 2000) p.497

⁹⁹ M. Rubin, "Techno – Days of Future Past", in P. Shapiro, (ed) *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music* (New York, Caipirinha Productions, 2000) p.113

¹⁰⁰ G. Donleson-Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century*, (New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 2000) p.504

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* p.556

¹⁰² *ibid.* p.512

¹⁰³ *ibid.* p.575

transformations, became fleetingly apparent to the wider community with incidents such as the Los Angeles riots, the Rodney King beating and the trial of OJ Simpson.

Detroit's an industrial city. It's a wasteland of ideas. Detroit is a place where you can only dream of what the rest of the world is like.¹⁰⁴

Detroit techno's petri dish was immersed in these social and economic conditions; a city that had by this time come to signify the nation's torpidity. Nevertheless in the period since Motown's symbolic relocation west the popular cultural landscape had been transformed and the sonic materials, with which the music would be constructed, had begun to change. Within America soul's rhythmic motif had been deconstructed emerging as firstly funk and then disco where the associated social practices projected club cultures into black, urban and ultimately suburban environments. Funk continued blues and soul's racial delineation, becoming an extension of its narrative and developing itself from technology's mediation with these southern and urban expressions. The Temptations had acknowledged psychedelia with wah-wah guitars; Sly Stone continued this trend in extending soul's expressive palette; Stevie Wonder had embraced new technology, Moogs and banks of polyphonic keyboards on stage and in the studio; Curtis Mayfield and Isaac Hayes both unlocked the music's affective potential producing soundtracks for films which addressed the black urban condition whilst James Brown's strident minimalism became funk's rhythmic paradigm, in turn mutated by bass playing prodigy Bootsy Collins when he left Brown to join George Clinton's Funkadelic. Funk's spontaneity was fixed by the reinforcement of blues and soul's bedrock rhythm, grounded in the dexterity and interplay of musicians. However the concept of 'the band' had begun to effect greater democracy and accountability shedding their anonymity at the expense of the iconic singer or group. Funk began to parallel the evolution of jazz as a collective

¹⁰⁴ DJ and Producer Derrick May, quoted in M. Rubin, "Techno – Days of Future Past", in P. Shapiro, (ed) *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music* (New York, Caipirinha Productions, 2000) p.129

expression where the front of stage singers were being relegated as the sole consumable product instead elevating the players to parity and emphasizing the tempo, texture and effect rather than celebrating the crafted pop song and the choreographed performance. The transformation of rock 'n' roll to rock as a white artistic expression had, as a consequence, rendered soul's popular form somewhat hollow, reminiscent of Tin Pan Alley and the Brill Building's manufactured sentiment. Funk, in contrast, took soul's emotive expression into the post-civil rights period, bands such as Parliament happy to spar with their counterparts in rock. With accompanying theatrical excesses, funk could harness the technology now available to the larger, louder, more flamboyant, more aesthetically expressive rock gig.

If funk's form began to stretch the limitations of time set out in the traditional three minute pop song it did however continue the folk tradition of authenticity being grounded in the dynamic of the fixed performance and extension of community expression. Disco, although a continuation of Detroit's production line methodology and Motown's the iconic star system, nevertheless started to become suggestive of technology's mystique and effect. The music, in subordinating all to the process of production, although crucial in the pop song, now in effect celebrated technology's mediation and began to challenge the captured performance's grasp on authenticity. Like funk and jazz, disco inverted the pop song's slavish attachment to time. If this point of production was a determining factor, disco and funk's conditions of consumption were also evidence of a changing cultural landscape. No longer restricted to the medium of radio and the live performance's subjugation to the song's accurate reproduction, rhythmic music could now look to the album, the nightclub and the gig as its sites of appropriation.

If soul was, in essence, black dance music, its transformation to funk's delineation of race was matched by disco's delineation of the body. The period's reconfiguration of sexuality had witnessed the body's elevation as a site of expression and identity contextualizing black music's

significance for white consumption. Dancing and clubs became an important space for interaction and expression, suspending the binaries of black / white, male/ female and straight / gay, which were more prominent in rock's phallogentric make up. The blurred constraints of regulated physical interplay, that accompanied dance music's more populist forms, were now encouraged by music which was felt as much as heard. In Frith's appraisal, "redolent with sexual tensions and possibilities, as private desires get public display, as repressed needs are proudly shared."¹⁰⁵ Importantly disco's fusion of leisure and pleasure, in a display of abandonment and reach for jouissance, began suspending time, space and responsibility as a portent of house and techno's attendant hedonism in the 1980s and 1990s club boom. The growth in leisure activities, which accompanied increased consumption and surplus time, had witnessed a concomitant growth in music's visibility in first world countries. Disco in particular had become a white and trans-suburban cultural commodity, captured and celebrated as a metaphor of social mobility in *Saturday Night Fever*. Black American music had long been appropriated and translated by white European musicians, spearheaded in the 1960s by acts such as The Animals, The Yardbirds and The Rolling Stones who reshaped the blues in suburban London's clubs and bars. Just as soul was consumed by working class cultures, disco became a visible (and profitable) middle class suburban commodity. Donna Summer, a black solo artist, became reinvented and re-imported when transfigured through producer Giorgio Moroder and the Munich studio's electronic rhythms and melodies.¹⁰⁶ The effect of this was to confirm an emerging rhythmic counter flow and significantly transform the synergy of singer and musicians as a captured performance, replacing this with a technology that was now essentially creative rather than merely functional and transcriptive.

¹⁰⁵ S. Frith, *Sound Effects*, (New York, Pantheon Books, 1981) p.19

¹⁰⁶ Donna Summer, *I Feel Love*, Producer Giorgio Moroder (Casablanca, 1977)

The Secret Life of Machines

It's like George Clinton and Kraftwerk caught in an elevator with only a sequencer to keep them company.¹⁰⁷

Derrick May

The increasing global interaction of music motifs, both in terms of production and consumption, had been accelerated by popular culture's relentless and systematic mediation. Music's voracious consumption had been encouraged by the industry's exponential growth and facilitated by the attendant expansion of the music media. If funk had re-prescribed black expression to a richer rhythmic and textural template, and disco had inverted club practices to a hedonistic suspension of time and place, they were both to become framed by a post-punk, corporate world. Detroit like other cities lived the paradox of urban disintegration interrupted by an MTV pop culture, a collision of a brash corporate white America with an increasingly marginalized black urban population. Just as *Saturday Night Fever* had filtered its vanilla soundtrack through, largely, white actors and dancers, thereby rendering the music and its link to black cultural expression indiscernible, so MTV would deny access to black artists - although by the mid 1990s the rap and hip hop videos would receive the most popular ratings amongst white American youths aged between eighteen and twenty four.¹⁰⁸ The watershed of club culture's containment came with the Disco Sucks campaign in the late 1970s. The campaign was instigated by Detroit radio DJ Steve Dahl who was aggrieved that the proliferation of disco, and popularity of artists such as Donna Summer and Chic, had begun to replace his own favoured rock acts Led Zeppelin and the Rolling Stones. Dahl encouraged listeners to phone in requests for disco records which he theatrically smashed live on air.

Polarising audiences the movement reached its height when 59,000 people attended a campaign

¹⁰⁷ Derrick May's frequently repeated description of his unique sound. M. Rubin, "Techno – Days of Future Past", in P. Shapiro, (ed) *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music* (New York, Caipirinha Productions, 2000) p.113

¹⁰⁸ T. Mitchell *Popular Music and Local Identity: Rock, Pop and Rap in Europe and Oceania*, (London, Leicester University Press, 1996) p.30

event to publically destroy disco vinyl. The movement signified a homophobic and racist response to the music, today it remains a key topic of discussion in regard to music's capacity to polarize.¹⁰⁹ In targeting disco's superficiality it also served as an attack on black music as well as a virulent response to what others saw to be the emasculation of rock 'n' roll's tradition. Quite simply it branded white rock as 'authentic'. In nailing disco's coffin shut this in turn provided dance music an opportunity to distance itself from the ephemera associated with the popular form to return to its darker spaces and largely invisible roots. Out of pop's spotlight clubs would provide the most tangible bridge between producer and consumer and a lessened compromising media effect. Although the relationship between the artists, labels and promotional infrastructure still remained complex and financially circumscribed in many respects the DJ began to operate as the most significant interface between producer and audience.

Significantly, although major corporations had become dominant as disco became a multi-million dollar industry by the late 1970s,¹¹⁰ the genre's roots lay in the independent sphere. In many cases, as with the smaller independent Casablanca and its relationship with multi-national Warner Brothers¹¹¹, corporate record labels retained the audience base and kudos of independence through the distribution and promotional support of the smaller label. The long standing tradition of independent labels discovering and nurturing embryonic talent only to be colonized by larger, wealthier record labels is a well documented aspect of popular music. Within dance music, smaller independent labels have been a significant component of appeal. The commodity fetishism and collectability of independent releases have underpinned the value to its audience, retaining its links to the cultural margins, expanding the aesthetic community

¹⁰⁹ B. Meyers, "Why 'Disco Sucks!' Sucked", *The Guardian* 18.06.09 Available online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/musicblog/2009/jun/18/disco-sucks> Viewed 24.06.11

¹¹⁰ Disco had become an \$8 billion –per-year industry in the USA and accounted for over half the singles and albums in Billboard's top 100s. Source: ¹¹⁰ S. Frith, *Sound Effects*, (New York, Pantheon Books, 1981) p. 244

¹¹¹ S. Frith, *Sound Effects*, (New York, Pantheon Books, 1981) p.120

beyond the local and framing claims to authenticity. Within America, music, through bars, clubs, radio stations and record shops was integral to the black cultural community infrastructure, in Nelson George's words part of "the full complement of city life"¹¹² which sustained jazz and rhythm and blues in the post war period. Techno however represented a new post-soul expression that would seek other audiences that existed beyond this cultural community. Outside America and the culture of dance music, the feasibility of an effective independent network was being demonstrated. The DIY aesthetics of punk, in Europe and particularly the United Kingdom, had if nothing else, provided a glimpse of how effective a counter industry could be, providing a model of an independent infrastructure that could successfully service the needs of the cultural margins. Techno's roots lie in this alternative ethos as much as in funk's rhythmic motif or disco's expression of physical and emotional jouissance. Punk's counter corporate ideology was sufficient to nurture an environment where in Frith's estimation, "independents sold enough to establish a viable alternative record business, with its own network of studios, shops, clubs and charts."¹¹³ The immediacy of early Detroit techno would in part benefit from this alternative infrastructure that had developed in post-punk Britain, and which would embrace the trans-Atlantic rhythm more readily than a home grown audience. Oppositional rather than mass appropriation would be the foundation of techno's long-term currency.

In sketching out the landscape for the post-soul, post-punk world in which techno would be consumed, it is perhaps important to address the changing cultural environment for the conditions of production for Detroit's 'second sound'. Having witnessed profound social, economic and political transformations, which would stigmatize the city, its resurrection through cultural production would follow a very clear narrative, evolving from an immediately discernable sound and conspicuous producers. The key Belleville protagonists represented

¹¹² N. George, *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*, (New York, Pantheon, 1988) p.xiii

¹¹³ S. Frith, *Sound Effects*, (New York, Pantheon Books, 1981) p.156

techno's roots of precise self-determination and a path which positioned nostalgia only in the context of progression. Technological representation became an expression of authenticity, global consumption as opposed to regional or national ambitions, pragmatic invisibility rather than iconic status.

In this context, new technology began to configure spaces in order to activate both innovation and imagination. No longer defined in terms of novelty, its function was to surpass the listener's expectations in May's words, "the element is the passion. The element is the desire to do something visual with just the sound."¹¹⁴ Here as a subaltern response to rock and pop's increased visibility, filtered specifically through new multimedia technology, club culture provided an antidote to MTV and promotional videos. The music began to function instead, through a resistant invisibility. Without access to the promotional funds of larger corporate record labels club music's more marginal elements would signal a return to the primacy of sound and beat alone. The airwaves, and to a greater extent the dance floor, would become the significant agents. MTV and mainstream print media's failure to acknowledge black club culture represented a return to the music's potent edge that the suburbanized Motown and popular disco had blunted through wider consumption. In Frith's pre-techno analysis, "the attraction of black music for hip youth, whether the blues in the 1920s or Rastafarian music [today] lies in its danger, in its very exclusion of white fans from its cultural messages."¹¹⁵ Techno would find its oppositional audience, in this liminal zone, amongst these fans who were keen to appropriate the music's innovation and raw energy. Club music, in the technological forms of electro, techno and house would again become cultural capital in a resistant rather than the dominant ideology.

¹¹⁴Derrick May. Interview, N. Levine, Chicago Inner View Magazine, viewed online http://www.chicagoinnerview.com/archives/dec03_derrick_may.htm © 2005 Chicago Innerview. Accessed 10.11.05

¹¹⁵ S. Frith, *Sound Effects*, (New York, Pantheon Books, 1981) p.23

Techno sought meaning and interpretation at the point of production as well as consumption. Early producers, looking for approval from an internal audience, established their own position in the popular music narrative by embracing new studio tricks and production tools. It was essential they were seen to forge a new path that was not inhibited by claims of nostalgia or the expectations of market forces.

We created our own illusion of what we didn't have, and that's why techno music has always been called the accident. That's why people always want to ask, 'How could this have happened in Detroit? How the fuck could this have happened?' It happened because we didn't have it, we had to create it.¹¹⁶

However, as with all cultural production, its external audience was required to become active in framing the music's meaning, in Frith's assessment, "because virtually all cultural theory is written on behalf of the consumer, it is she or he who is taken to rescue the real meaning of the record from its market form."¹¹⁷ Techno's meaning was clearly being negotiated in the space between the studio and the dancefloor.

The need to construct a level of authenticity at the point of production made techno crucial in cultural terms. Just as with early rock 'n' roll and improvisational jazz what was being consumed was not simply a product but a process. May himself admits, "I don't think we realized what we were really doing, we just followed our passion and it turned into something. It took Juan Atkins making his music to be our way out. He was my friend, he taught me, and I showed Kevin."¹¹⁸ May, under in his guise as Rhythim is Rhythim, released the defining *Strings of Life* on his own Transmat label, which on release defied categorization. The artist and track names however pointed to a conscious alignment of black and European cultural motifs offering itself as a paradigm of afro-futurism. The track constructed from a mistake, a piano riff from a

¹¹⁶ Interview E. Mitkos Eye Weekly – online magazine - Eye - 06.20.02
http://www.eye.net/eye/issue/issue_06.20.02/thebeat/may.html. Accessed: 12.10.05

¹¹⁷ S. Frith, *Music For Pleasure*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988) p.6

¹¹⁸ Interview E. Mitkos Eye Weekly – online magazine - Eye - 06.20.02
http://www.eye.net/eye/issue/issue_06.20.02/thebeat/may.html. Accessed: 12.10.05

friend's ballad, which May had recorded, also had no bass line. The process of reconfiguration and lack of conventional rhythmic form were suggestive of *musique concrète* and importantly outside soul, blues or disco's now prescriptive formats. Paradoxically May was content to abandon the producer's absolute control; happy to submit to the unpredictability and nuances of analogue technology. The track was suggestive of jazz's fluidity and spontaneity, where each recording captured a unique performance. Despite the impression of technology's inherent function being one of faultless reproduction, here it permits the producer or musician to manipulate each variable and specific parameter. As a consequence it means electronic music can in essence be an authentic rather than generic form. Techno was a frozen moment every bit as authentic as early folk and blues or a best seller from Motown's infamous Snakepit. Early electronic music was structured around the need to find meaning in both the processes of production as well as in the commodity itself. Techno's global spread was thus developed along two fronts.

The promise of technology's path to change seemed to be contained in some part by its capacity to transcend racial constructions, the future it was assumed was not ethnically circumscribed. Although electronic music's early protagonists were European, they existed outside rock's white phallo centric hegemony; rather they suggested an alternate ideology and mode of expression. In post-soul Detroit, the Belleville school friends looked to European popular and electronic music to provide the important synergy with black cultural forms as the way forward. Crucial to the development of the Detroit sound was radio and the specifically the role of Charles Johnson whose alter ego, the Electrifying Mojo, opened up the black community to a broader sonic palette during the early 1980s. Flying in the face of convention Johnson played an eclectic selection of funk, disco and electronic music, a mix of Parliament, Yellow Magic Orchestra, the B52s and Kraftwerk with a self-prescribed doctrine of

‘counterclockwiseology’.¹¹⁹ Techno innovator Eddie Flashin’ Fowlkes remembered how Johnson “played Kraftwerk’s, *Computer World*, the whole album, every night,” on its release in 1981.¹²⁰

May’s aside, of the fusion of ‘Kraftwerk and George Clinton’ as being a new expressive form, was no mere media grab or glib sound-bite but rather a conscious declaration of artistic intent. Clinton’s funk was suggestive of technology’s metronomic drive and gave evidence of black expression being anything but insular. Not only was it overly deterministic to regard any musician as being incapable of looking outside his own cultural backyard for inspiration but it also ignored evidence of rhythmic counter flow. By the mid 1980s the fragmented and decentred nature of popular culture resulting from this process of rhythmic flow, appropriation and incorporation had blurred distinctions between popular and high art, black and white, rock and pop into commodity capitalism’s eclectic and existential mix - postmodernism. This fractal progression of sounds, rhythms, texts, images and their subsequent readings created in Mitchell’s terms, “a seemingly borderless bricolage of pop music history,”¹²¹ and on a more oblique level in Toop’s assessment, an “ocean of sound.”¹²² Juan Atkins expressed delight but no surprise on discovering Kraftwerk drummer, Karl Bartos, considered James Brown as a major influence.¹²³ Acts such as The Human League and Depeche Mode were as Kevin

¹¹⁹ Johnson held positions at Detroit stations: WGPR(FM) from 1982-82 and WJLB 1982-85. His most celebrated show ‘Midnight Funk Association’ was aired in the early 1980s on WGPR Detroit’s first FM station. Sources: M. Rubin, “Techno – Days of Future Past”, in P. Shapiro, (ed) *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music* (New York, Caipirinha Productions, 2000) p.113 and S. Reynolds, *Energy Flash*, (London, Picador, 1998) p.6

¹²⁰ M. Rubin, “Techno – Days of Future Past”, in P. Shapiro, (ed) *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music* (New York, Caipirinha Productions, 2000) p.114

¹²¹ T.Mitchell *Popular Music and Local Identity: Rock, Pop and Rap in Europe and Oceania*, (London, Leicester UniPress, 1996) p.13

¹²² D.Toop *Ocean of Sound*, (London, Serpent’s Tail, 1995)

¹²³ Interview with D. Sicko, *Wired Magazine* issue 2.07 (Jul 1994) Accessed online <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/2.07/techno.html> 12.10.05

Saunderson readily admitted “a big influence on us,”¹²⁴ and importantly as Atkins had suggested this represented black expression as filtered through a trans-global culture. This filtration and external translation would in turn be symptomatic of techno’s wider reading and consumption. Detroit’s new sound would be produced and consumed through the global membrane of a burgeoning post-work leisure culture.

It’s More Fun To Compute¹²⁵

We shape our tools. Then our tools shape us.¹²⁶
Marshall McLuhan

Marshall McLuhan’s reduction of technology’s regulatory role in man’s development may leave us fearfully on a path towards mere determinism, but nevertheless raise the point of technology’s prescriptive role. The tools that shaped the America’s rise to manufacturing prowess saw a quantum leap in the process of the urbanization of the nation’s west, north and Midwest. Labour-intensive manufacturing accelerated the process of relocation and the fusion of cultures. The resulting changes workplace practices and collective responses were matched in other manufacturing nations. Reactions to the massification of both production and commodity consumption were felt in worker and intellectual student uprisings in Europe in 1968, delineated along class lines just as America witnessed racially driven riots during this period as evidence of collective responses. The subsequent transformation towards a decentralized and compartmentalized service economy shaped, in considerable part by factors of automation and digitization, would respond in kind with more fragmented opposition.

¹²⁴ “From New York city to Motor City” Interview with Kevin Saunderson
<http://www.trustthedj.com/KevinSaunderson/bio.php?djid=1609> Accessed 12.10.05

¹²⁵ Kraftwerk “It’s More fun To Compute” - Computer World (Kling Klang / EMI, 1981)

¹²⁶ M.McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1964)

The USA figures demonstrated that although auto production rose from 11 million cars in 1960 to 13 million in 1990 changing production techniques meant this was at the expense of 15,000 industry employees in real terms, 25% of the total workforce¹²⁷. Evidence of capital's increased fluidity and growing global patterns of movement had become apparent by the 1980s where the automobile industry's response to competition and outdated production practices had been in the form of joint ventures, initially with German and Japanese then Korean and Chinese manufacturers.¹²⁸ This pattern of deregulation with regard to national borders and capital movement was mirrored within the sphere of media and music, as Japanese corporations bought into American record companies (as with Sony and CBS) and overseas competitors such as the Australian entrepreneur, Rupert Murdoch for example, made huge inroads into the nation's media.¹²⁹

The processes of economic rationalization encroached upon social formations and cultural practices. The post-work world would begin to impinge upon historical and geographical conventions to reflect and valorize these processes. Representations of art, music, sport and leisure became crucial determinants of identity, leading many observers to lament the loss of folk traditions. Popular music's function in cultural expression and community cohesion has meant its inherent immediacy has caused rapid reaction and lead to cries of loss of authenticity and branding as harbinger of cultural doom. Nelson George's account of *The Death of Rhythm and Blues* written at the point of Detroit's sonic and rhythmic reinvention addressed what was outlined as "something missing in black America and the symptoms of the illness are in its music."¹³⁰ If such fears of cultural loss could not be arrested nor reversed, they could however be contextualized and appraised. George's concerns over the continued response to white

¹²⁷ S. Aronowitz, et al "Post Work Manifesto" in S. Aronowitz, and J. Cutler, J (eds) *Post-Work* (New York, Routledge, 1998) p.43

¹²⁸ *ibid.* p.52

¹²⁹ S. Aronowitz, and W. DiFazio, *The Jobless Future*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1995) pp.7-8

¹³⁰ N. George, *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*, (New York, Pantheon, 1988) p.xv

appropriation and consumption of black expressive culture show attitudes still torn over the dilemma of assimilation or self-determination. Tony Mitchell's rightful understanding of George's "justified anger at the injustices, exploitation and neglect suffered by African-American musicians," nevertheless looks more towards a wider framing of authenticity, rather than "homogenized notions of black and white creation and documentation."¹³¹ However these concerns over the atrophy of black culture, symbolized through the corrosion of rhythm 'n' blues, point to a wider discourse. In echoing Atkins' words of 'repudiating racial designations' techno was a counterpoint to emerging African-American nationalism and suggestive of a progressive black historical narrative, one that did not negate ideas of an African diaspora but rather looked to a sympathetic and imagined technological community in step with the radical utopianism Gilroy saw as inherent in the former.¹³² Techno's emergence at this juncture denoted a break in black expressive culture's internal narrative bound by factors of geography and history to signify a more fragmented sonic and rhythmic milieu. In this period of transformation, and beyond to the present, the issue has become how representations of gender, sexuality, race and class, once circumscribed by factors of locality, regionalism and nationhood are constructed within an increasingly globally connected and mediated world? More specifically how popular music as a cultural expression is structured in a technologically accelerated and changing socioeconomic environment?

If popular music operates as both a barometer of, and to reinforce, wider social and economic structures factors in techno's evolution and inherent decline were showing an immediate and pervasive effect. America's shift towards automation within the workplace was being systematically reproduced in the community. An exponential rate of growth in computers in

¹³¹ T. Mitchell, *Popular Music and Local Identity: Rock, Pop and Rap in Europe and Oceania*, (London, Leicester UniPress, 1996) p.10

¹³² P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (Cambridge, Mass. University of Harvard, 1993)

USA saw an estimated six thousand personal computers in 1972 become six million by 1985.¹³³ The figures inferred a changing workplace environment, a growth in computer consumption with an accompanying shift in technological literacies. The normalization and embedding of computer technology would not only point to changing decentred modes of work and leisure but also suggest reinforced gender, class and racial divisions. The post-industrial laissez faire environment with increased capital fluidity, deregulation, reduced government, increased unemployment and under employment would precipitate changes in social alignment. A growing service sector necessitated changing technology based literacies with a greater emphasis on individual responsibility and malleability rather than national or collective interjection - for example through trade unions or welfare strategies. In this period of advanced commodity capitalism the need for access to higher levels of education and skills development would emphasize such social divisions. Eventually creative industry strategies would need to be enacted to offset regional de-industrialization in second-tier cities such as Detroit, Manchester and Sheffield. Ironically personal computers played a minor role in the early electronic music forms of electro, techno and house, which utilized specific and purpose built music technology. Analogue drum machines, keyboards, sequencers and processors required very specific literacy requirements and at this point non-transferable skills. Early breakbeat and hip-hop, before the dawn of samplers, were dependent upon turntable manipulation and human dexterity rather than computer software literacy. Nevertheless these changing tools signified methods of production were moving towards creative and expressive technology as well as workplace automation and digitization.

The changing workplace environments were incrementally shifting away from industrial collectivism towards atomized spaces. Aronowitz highlighted how, “units are smaller, divided

¹³³ G. Donleson-Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century*, (New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 2000) p.518

from each other”¹³⁴; both nationally and globally workers were becoming more isolated from each other but also forming more complex relationships. If not through work tasks then through work cultures; post-industrial workplaces gradually reinforced labour as an alienated rather than collective endeavour. Technology was beginning to encroach upon traditional considerations of both space and time. Conventional perceptions of class delineation were becoming superseded as new and contradictory service and creative classes overturned the polarized distinction between the ‘producers’ of surplus value and the ‘appropriators’ of surplus value. In place of an eroded manufacturing sector more prevalent service industries had begun to introduce a multiplicity of repressions and exploitations, highlighted by Newman¹³⁵ and Toynbee¹³⁶, as part of the complexity of an infrastructure exacerbated by the growth of consumer credit and separation from ownership of means of production. The evolving creative worker, which the autonomous techno producer represented in embryonic form, would suggest in Shorthose and Strange’s analysis, a “new formal economy”¹³⁷ a new broad class criteria, (Florida)¹³⁸ and ultimately, in Redhead’s assessment, a more formalized synergy between government and creative industry as a “realm of endeavour and “‘project’ for state intervention in modernity”¹³⁹. These new digital artisans integrated through what could be described as neo-syndicalist structures and were becoming marked by an anti- corporate autonomy with auto-didactic skills and literacies. The decentred worker looked towards self-management, and in particular, with respect to the capacity to regulate time, the variable which was now the most prized commodity.

¹³⁴ S. Aronowitz, *The Last Good Job in America*, (Lanham, Maryland, Rowman and Littlefield, 2001) p.170

¹³⁵ P. Toynbee, *No Shame in My Game*, (New York, Russell Sage Foundation/Vintage 2000)

¹³⁶ B. Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, (London, Granta, 2002) and *Hard Work*, (London, Bloomsbury, 2005)

¹³⁷ J. Shorthose and G. Strange “The New Cultural Economy, the Artist and the Social Configuration of Autonomy,” *Capital and Class*, (No.84, Winter 2004), p.47

¹³⁸ R. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, ((New York, Basic Books, 2002)

¹³⁹ S. Redhead “Creative Modernity,” *MIA*, (No.112, August 2004) p.9

Techno was not simply a cultural expression, which symbolized this evolving global capital environment, or a commodity that would be consumed through this interconnected economy but more importantly it was a music that reflected the processes of automation and atomization. Techno moved through networks of mutually exclusive, creative nodes that were increasingly unimpeded by factors of time and place. The changing perception of the nation and its primary function was transforming. In the USA reaction to recession had become characterized by downsizing with subsequent loss of jobs, security and expectations. The notion of the hollow state that shifted away from Keynesian interventionist policies and social spending to leave a society, in Aronowitz's post work analysis, where "many Americans gave up hope that a government would be able to solve the puzzle of an economy that creates millions of jobs at the same time it wipes out millions more."¹⁴⁰ Instead, there was a leading towards the idea of a 'metastate' that was driven by transnational corporations unhindered by national boundaries. Paradoxically this social dislocation was occurring in an economic environment that was functioning beyond scarcity and in De Fazio's estimation a "free market in hyper form [and] creates profit at every itch and scratch,"¹⁴¹ which through statistical redistribution has "accomplished the appearance of increased equality through statistical manipulation without accomplishing real equality of income."¹⁴² The tools, which were shaping this reality, in theory freed the individual from work as primary function but in practice simply restructured social and economic class divisions. Technologically driven science functioned as a quasi religion and new tool of domination. Scientific rationalism became ideologically embedded, as digital technology appeared to camouflage social and economic inequalities to herald a first world neo-renaissance.

¹⁴⁰ S. Aronowitz, et al "Post Work Manifesto" in S. Aronowitz, and J. Cutler, (eds) *Post-Work*, (New York, Routledge, 1998) p.39

¹⁴¹ W. DiFazio "Why there's no Movement of the Poor" in S. Aronowitz, and J. Cutler, (eds) *Post-Work*, (New York, Routledge, 1998) p.151

¹⁴² *ibid.* p.161

The commodification of knowledge in the new global economy not only elevated new skills and literacies to restructure outmoded economic and social configurations, but also impacted upon perceptions of work and leisure. Ownership of the means of production, as in the industrial economy, hardware as such, operated as an inhibitor in many cases when goods could be produced more cost effectively outside national borders where conditions and wages were not constrained by collective bargaining. Regulated manufacturing costs to constrain prices and an expanded service sector emphasized flexible, decentralized and, in the case of the knowledge economy, autonomous workers, representations of the new class alignments. Consumption associated with the expanded leisure industries, which absorbed workers in the newer knowledge and service classes, would catalyze post-work notions of identity as an expressive culture but also highlight growing inequalities. Outside of past social contracts and welfare strategies new ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ would, through casualisation, frame an emerging underclass, often, in fiscal terms indistinguishable from Florida’s notions of a creative class. Technology, in supposedly liberating the individual from the tyranny of unnecessary labour and its surplus as a negotiable commodity, would not be equitable in its rewards. Leisure often synonymous with decline in productivity and an unnecessary effect of economic collapse paradoxically came burdened with perceptions of negativity. As Aronowitz observes, “late capitalist society is engaged in a long-term historical process of destroying job security, while the virtues of work are ironically and ever more insistently being glorified.”¹⁴³ Non-work, anchored to the ethics of the industrial age, brought about notions of guilt and insecurity inferring a lack of self-support and concomitant value to society.

Music as both a creative industry and cultural expression would signify these changes in perception of work and leisure through the same tools. New creative technologies would spotlight the distinctions between ‘work’ and ‘labour’. Aronowitz points to the need for

¹⁴³ S. Aronowitz, et al “Post Work Manifesto” in S. Aronowitz, and J. Cutler, (eds) *Post-Work* ((New York, Routledge, 1998) p.40

alienating labour to be counter balanced and contextualized, “it’s not all about money, it is equally about what and who we have become.”¹⁴⁴ More specifically Arendt emphasizes work is not the same as labour.¹⁴⁵ Labour represents a transitory process and is clearly linked to factors of production, consumption and negotiable surplus. Work infers a durability of the world and has an objective existence outside the equation of production and consumption, work functions as an end in itself. In this regard techno expresses the wider struggle for definition and identity through the capacity to control of the use of time as the dynamic variable in the leisure ecology. Those involved in the evolving creative economy are aware of their autonomy and capacity to negotiate time, and to a lesser extent place, now the prized commodities in the productive system. The new class of knowledge producers looks to a more holistic approach to the productive or creative process as opposed to the systematic piece work division of labour where fixed time was appropriated for collectively negotiated variables of wages and conditions. Techno, as a process rather than a mere commodity, was consumable as an expressive and resistant response to this post-work, post-time environment.

What Language Do You Speak?

When I listened to Detroit records back then they didn’t sound like anything I’d ever heard before – I couldn’t describe it.¹⁴⁶
Richie Hawtin

If techno was a process it was also a language, which required its creators and mediators to translate. Richie Hawtin, a white musician and DJ born in Oxfordshire but raised in Windsor, Ontario, within sight of Motor City across the Detroit River, became one of the music’s most

¹⁴⁴ S. Aronowitz, *The Last Good Job in America*, (Lanham, Maryland, Rowman and Littlefield, 2001) p.7

¹⁴⁵ S. Aronowitz, and W. Di Fazio, *The Jobless Future*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1995) p.331

¹⁴⁶ Richie Hawtin, DJ and Producer quoted in interview with D. Jenkins *International DJ Magazine* 065 September 2005, p.38

significant filters. Ideally positioned not just spatially but also temporally, as club music would reach its apogee, particularly in Europe, during the late 1980s and early 1990s and Hawtin, an articulate producer and performer, frequently under his Plastikman guise, would be a ubiquitous presence on the club and festival scene. During this epoch techno would signify the most progressive strand of dance's sonic milieu a rich tapestry which embraced Chicago's house music with its direct precursor, disco, alongside electro, hip-hop, latin, and funk, whilst ironically incorporating chosen elements of more commercial pop and marginal rock. In this period club music remained ill defined and purposefully eclectic.¹⁴⁷ These other loosely prescribed genres required less translation for the clubs' sonic consumers evolving more directly, as in the case of house music, from a linear narrative. Even if more technologically deconstructed, as say with Grand Master Flash's *White Lines* or *The Message*, these tracks operated within an accepted paradigm that could be traced back to George Clinton's funk and the urban polemics that had been present in blues and soul or more immediately produced by artists such as Gil Scott Heron. Even house music's more electronic and progressive output, emanating from nearby Chicago, showed conspicuous links to earlier disco. Releases such as Phuture's *Acid Tracks* and Larry Heard's *Washing Machine* and *Can U Feel It*, despite the incorporation of elements of sonic maelstrom, were rooted in a known template, lacking Detroit techno's more challenging, polyrhythmic, dynamic. Rhythm is Rhythm's *Nude Photograph* and Model 500's *Info World*, were not such an easy fit. Despite the producers' conscious hybridization of funk and Kraftwerk's sequential rhythms, (themselves through syncopated delays, suggestive of African polyrhythms), consumers were required to construct a fresh

¹⁴⁷ Pioneering clubs, such as London's Shoom, run by Danny and Jenny Rampling, which between 1988-90 was held at various London venues from aerobic gyms in London Bridge to mainstream West End nightclubs developed a specific culture of music diversity as means to import and promote the iconic Balearic sound which had evolved on the Mediterranean island of Ibiza a long standing multicultural holiday destination, particularly favoured by bohemians, artists and hippies. Eclecticism would extend to less predictable tracks being played by DJs: Alex Patterson (The Orb) would often incorporate rock songs, such as Iggy Pop, "The Passenger" alongside dub reggae and techno in his DJ sets. Paul Oakenfold would play Mandy Smith's pop hit "I Just Can't Wait"(1988) at his pioneering London Balaeric club "Spectrum.

paradigm. Other than precedents in more classical experiments with minimalism through the layered rhythms of Steve Reich and La Monte Young, as Phillip Sherburne¹⁴⁸ has catalogued, Detroit's sound came with no clearly identifiable popular forerunners. Atkins detailed how the sound was positioned to rapidly exploit changes within club culture's late 1980s evolution.

I think maybe half of them referred to their music as 'techno'. However, the public really wasn't ready for it until about '85 or '86. It just so happened that Detroit was there when people really got into it.¹⁴⁹

Techno required decoding, chiefly by those with the required literacies, primarily the producers, technicians and DJs, who could come to terms with the music's prescriptive processes.

Significantly for techno's proliferation earlier European electronica, with acts such as Can, Neu, Faust and Kraftwerk themselves enabled the music to be more readily decoded than within American dance culture.¹⁵⁰ As Hawtin observes it required time and translation - "over the last fifteen years we've created a whole new language to describe electronic music so it's much easier to quantify and explain what things sound like."¹⁵¹

Techno's relative minimalism offered a sparse antidote to rock's overproduction very much as it operated in opposition to commercial music's visibility. Its inherent challenge came not augmented by vocal confrontation, as punk had done, but rather from a wordless resistance that questioned a cultural status quo by sonic assault. In time Detroit's template would fragment into compartmentalized global definitions and subgenres that accommodated the sound as everything from trance's youth driven mass consumption to gabba's machine gun chauvinism and from the laptop language of glitch to hardcore and embryonic drum and bass. The

¹⁴⁸ P. Sherburne "Digital Discipline: Minimalism in House and Techno", in C. Cox. and D. Warner, (eds.), *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, (New York, Continuum, 2005)

¹⁴⁹ Interview with D. Sicko *Wired Magazine* issue 2.07 (Jul 1994) Accessed online <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/2.07/techno.html> 12.10.05

¹⁵⁰ Alex Seago's assessment of what he terms "The Kraftwerk Effect" *Atlantic Studies*, (Vol.1, No. 1, 2004) looks at the complexities of in his words, 'glocal' taste formation and the decentralized function of the German music culture.

¹⁵¹ Interview with D. Jenkins *International DJ Magazine* 065 September 2005, p.38

translation of this sonic language was dependant on the spaces of consumption where DJs and producer-performers would operate, in Frith's terminology, as 'gatekeepers'¹⁵². Techno records and later digital formats via onstage laptops would operate as 'DJ tools' where the record, track, loop or sequence was not a finite entity, but rather a malleable component or building block. This sonic production and deconstruction rooted in minimalism, created in Shelburne's words as, "a kind of musical Esperanto- itself fundamental to the DIY zeitgeist of the 80s and 90s."¹⁵³ This not only highlighted the ephemeral nature of the club experience, forever rooted in the constant 'now' (always moving forward yet with the illusion of standing still), but which also repudiated the 'where'. The universality of the sound and the experience which techno signified through the DJs' meta-performance indicated the music's global proliferation and fractal development. This process would inevitably undermine Detroit's significance, to the extent the city would rapidly be circumscribed, as it had with soul, by factors of nostalgia, as the 'local' would become enveloped, not only by its inherent invisibility, but also by its universal encoding.

Rhythm has always been the life of the party and now more than ever it is perhaps the life of the art itself.¹⁵⁴

If techno was to be globally encrypted its wordless cipher was as much rhythm as it was sound. Technology had liberated rhythm from the constraints of human capabilities. Digitization and as a consequence 'time-stretching'¹⁵⁵ made the once impossible a reality; physicality was no longer

¹⁵² S. Frith, *Sound Effects*, (New York, Pantheon Books, 1981)

¹⁵³ P. Sherburne "Digital Discipline: Minimalism in House and Techno", in C. Cox. and D. Warner, (eds.), *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, (New York, Continuum, 2005) p. 321

¹⁵⁴ J. Pareles "The Rhythm Century: The Unstoppable Beat," *New York Times* (3 May, 1998), Arts and Leisure Section, p.1 in C. Cox. and D. Warner, (eds.), *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, (New York, Continuum, 2005) p.386

¹⁵⁵ Digital technology enabled a sampled 'loop' to be manipulated in a way that the tempo could be increased or decreased without a subsequent change in pitch. Although this process, named 'time-stretching' lie at the foundation of jungle and drum and bass and breakbeat loops its application to techno's more electronic rhythms meant 'tech' sound could be incorporated to produce subgenres of all these rather arbitrary definitions.

an aesthetic inhibitor. More importantly the mechanism of rhythm had been transformed, from the dexterity of human syncopation to technology's capacity not simply to mimic but rather to go beyond into a new paradigm of rhythmic interplay, where sounds and beats could interact with metronomic precision. The dynamics of a live drummer interacting with other percussionists and musicians had been at the heart of all dance styles: jazz, swing, be-bop, soul, funk, rock and disco, with the advantage of improvisation. Rhythmic and sonic interplay had been a basis of these styles; be-bop's constant interchange (as with Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker) had been at the heart of Motown soul's percussive dynamism, the backroom Funk Brothers all accomplished jazz musicians and as Robert Palmer observed, "[James] Brown, his musicians and his arrangers began to treat every instrument as if it were a drum."¹⁵⁶ This capacity to improvise operated as an expressive tool and remained at the root of live music's folk tradition. Technology allowed for live rhythm's factory floor functionalism to be superseded by programming's infinite potential of tempo, syncopation, sound source, interplay and structure.

Composer and performer Ben Neil rightly sees the synergy between high art and the popular music: "two worlds that rarely intersect, but seem inevitably drawn together at this juncture in history,"¹⁵⁷ as being fundamentally joined through rhythm. If differences between systems music minimalism and techno, or drum and bass, exist in production, (tonal style), and consumption, (market delineation and spaces of access) then both are, in Neil's words, "defined in terms of the presence or absence of repetitive beats."¹⁵⁸ Underpinned by the structure of rhythm the Detroit sound sought the sonic freedom present in more progressive or avant-garde

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in: N. George, *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*, (New York, Pantheon, 1988) p.101

¹⁵⁷ B. Neil, "Breakthrough Beats: Rhythm and the Aesthetics of Contemporary Computer Music", in C. Cox. and D. Warner, (eds.), *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, (New York, Continuum, 2005) p.387

¹⁵⁸ B. Neil, "Breakthrough Beats: Rhythm and the Aesthetics of Contemporary Computer Music", in C. Cox. and D. Warner, (eds.), *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, (New York, Continuum, 2005) p.387

forms, extending beyond the traditional song structure. In this sense techno, freed from obligation to the singer and song, reached subconsciously towards jazz in its cultural narrative rather than blues or soul. The freedom of form present in Ornette Coleman rather than George Clinton's Funkadelic permeates more through early representations such as *Strings of Life*. Post-Detroit electronic producer, Kirk deGiorgio focused his jazz-tech productions very much on the basis of techno being a continuation of the jazz funk of Herbie Hancock and George Duke.¹⁵⁹

The cipher of techno suggests a rich complexity. The tonal and rhythmic components of the music are both implicit and explicit, consciously expanding European and American narratives and traditions, whilst attempting to structure a progressive language framed by nascent music technologies. Where techno moves from this point requires the understanding of complexities and subtleties of these aesthetic and technological languages. That music dies, or at least becomes circumscribed by its own nostalgic limitations, is irrelevant. Techno must be seen in the context of those emerging leisure and consumer cultures and very specifically the social and economic conditions from which it emerged.

Long Live the Underground

Detroit Techno Militia is a record label and a grassroots DJ/Producer collective dedicated to preserving the legacy of true Detroit electronic music and its proliferation around the world. We believe in what we do, and take pride in contributing to a tradition that has deeply inspired us. Detroit Techno Militia soldiers work to maintain and preserve the significance of techno made in our native city.¹⁶⁰
Detroit Techno Militia Website

¹⁵⁹ S. Reynolds, *Energy Flash*, (London, Picador, 1998) p.222

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*

Although Europe, and particularly during the genre's first wave, British club culture, both aesthetics and infrastructure, would provide a more conducive environment for techno. With due acknowledgement of Dusseldorf and Kraftwerk's heritage, for many the sound's authenticity would be spatially grounded in Detroit, Michigan. Artists such as Stacey Pullen, James Pennington, Kenny Larkin and Carl Craig then Richie Hawtin, Theo Parrish and Moodyman would represent the city's second and third waves respectively. These artists would subsequently valorize techno and specifically a paradigm of the 'Detroit Sound'. The delineation of body and machine would signify the city's sonic representation and be reconstructed in nightclub spaces throughout the urban and suburban world. Subjective factors would converge upon the sound to create a recognizable and easily digested commodity. The Toffler inspired designation became clearly stamped when 10 Records, a subsidiary of Britain's Virgin Records, released a sampler of the Michigan sound, "Techno: New Dance Sound of Detroit".¹⁶¹ This early licensing strategy ensured techno's space of production was immediately prescribed by its place of consumption. Subsequent Detroit producers, like Juan Atkins, would embellish this constructed prototype of 'the sound.'

I was more surprised when I first went to Europe and found that white kids could enjoy dance music. In this country it's very hard for creative thought to escape capitalism.¹⁶²

The nomadic movement of Detroit's first wave of producers as they moved from Midwest and northern cities not only fuelled an interest and subsequent fusion of club sounds but also instilled a sense of necessary mobility. Kevin Saunderson an intermittent traveller to New York to visit his brothers was inspired to write a track (Reese, *Just Want Another Chance*) in response to visits to Manhattan's legendary Paradise Garage, whilst Atkins and May would frequently

¹⁶¹ Various, *Techno: New Dance Sound of Detroit* (10/Virgin 1988)

¹⁶² Juan Atkins, DJ and producer, Interview with D. Sicko *Wired Magazine* issue 2.07 (Jul 1994) Accessed online <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/2.07/techno.html> 12.10.05

make the trip to Chicago to buy music and absorb the city's embryonic 'house' sound.¹⁶³ The early Detroit records sold well in Chicago and despite a healthy home city electronic and nascent techno scene it indicated club music and the DJ culture's growing decentred nature. That the more challenging sound found its roots in Europe did not surprise May who theorized his techno was better received there before his hometown "because they seem more open-minded and less influenced by mass media than Americans."¹⁶⁴ More significantly was the idea that techno and house stepped into UK club infrastructure as in Simon Reynolds's appraisal of the period's dance culture, "eighties style culture dominated London clubland."¹⁶⁵ More accepting of a post-punk, rare groove eclecticism techno became another component of the city's Balaeric cocktail, where music became part of a mutating style bricolage. In contrast the more compartmentalized American music scene could not immediately accommodate techno's non-rock or non-black circumscription. Drugs, "pop's hidden motor"¹⁶⁶ would become a contentious element. The European club scene would quickly become synonymous with a perception of techno, each fuelling the others inclination, through ecstasy and amphetamines, to hedonism and acceleration particularly as the scene in Britain rapidly moved away from a contained, style focused urban culture to a more provincial explosion as the rave scene evolved. The Detroit producers would collectively distance themselves from rave culture's openly celebrated drug aesthetic, believing the rhythm and sound alone fuelled the dance zeitgeist. Nevertheless the idea of their music being propelled by global rather than local or regional forces suited the producers' ideology. Saunderson himself achieved the most significant success

¹⁶³ Derrick May lived in Chicago briefly connecting with producer / DJs Ron Hardy and Frankie Knuckles. Returning to sell a Roland 909 drum machine to Frankie Knuckles to pay the rent Source: M. Rubin, "Techno – Days of Future Past", in P. Shapiro, (ed) *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music* (New York, Caipirinha Productions, 2000) p.116

¹⁶⁴ Interview E. Mitkos Eye Weekly – online magazine - Eye - 06.20.02
http://www.eye.net/eye/issue/issue_06.20.02/thebeat/may.html. Accessed: 12.10.05

¹⁶⁵ S. Reynolds, *Energy Flash*, (London, Picador, 1998) p.xiv

¹⁶⁶ J. Savage, *England's Dreaming* (London, Faber & Faber, 1992) p.191

as his work with singer Paris Grey, as *Inner City*¹⁶⁷, realized commercial success. Ironically the original name 'Inter City' was suggestive of the music's inherent mobility and trans-urban appeal. Derrick May used the clocks on his apartment wall, showing the time in London, Tokyo and New York, as a display of the cosmopolitan life of the DJ/producer.¹⁶⁸ The rhythm of techno time was global time.

Maybe you should pay more attention to what you're buying or what you're listening to.¹⁶⁹

If subsequent Detroit producers believed they were adhering to a strict template that confirmed authenticity, the reality was that the point of access, in the clubs themselves, was beginning to determine the music's dominant tone, tempo and structure. But regardless of these externally imposed considerations, artists such as those associated with Underground Resistance, could begin to determine meaning beyond the point of consumption. If European clubs were dictating darker, faster, drug conducive rhythms, the producers could vindicate the Detroit sound through ideologies that expanded the black, urban and technological nuances of the first wave of producers. The political ambiguity that characterized the Belleville Three's tech-funk fusion would be reinforced by Underground Resistance's chief protagonists, Jeff Mills, Mike Banks and Robert Hood, into a more direct polemic that had distinct ties to Detroit's social and political past.

¹⁶⁷ *Inner City's Good Life and Big Fun* (10 Records, 1989) achieved commercial and club chart success

¹⁶⁸ Jeff Mills, DJ and Producer, please refer to M. Rubin, "Techno – Days of Future Past", in P. Shapiro, (ed) *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music* (New York, Caipirinha Productions, 2000) p.117

¹⁶⁹ S. Reynolds, *Energy Flash*, (London, Picador, 1998) p.207

Similar to the restoration of historic architecture; we are not tearing down and building anew. Rather using the existing structure as a basis for our own endeavors. Detroit has always had much to offer musically and it is our mission to make it known to the rest of the world for generations to come

Underground Resistance is label for a movement, a movement that wants change by sonic revolution. We urge you to join the resistance and help us to combat the mediocre audio and visual programming that is being fed to the inhabitants of earth. This programming is stagnating the minds of the people; building a wall between races and preventing world peace. It is this wall we are going to smash. By using the untapped energy potential of sound we are going to destroy this wall much the same as frequencies shatter glass. Techno is a music based in experimentation; it is sacred to no one race; it has no definitive sound; it is music for the future of the human race. Without music there will be no peace, no love, no vision. By simply communicating through the experience of sound techno has brought people of all nationalities together under one roof to enjoy themselves. Isn't it obvious that music and dance are the keys to the universe? So called primitive animals and tribal humans have known this for thousands of years! We urge all brothers and sisters of the resistance to create and transmit their tones and frequencies no matter how so called primitive their equipment may be. Transmit these tones and wreak havoc on the programmers.

Long live the underground

Underground Resistance Creed¹⁷⁰

Underground Resistance's clear anti-corporate stance suggested not only techno productions strident self-sufficiency but also its inherent syndicalism, looking to structure a global network of compatible producers and consumers. Urging "all brothers and sisters of the resistance to create and transmit their tones and frequencies no matter how so called primitive their equipment may be,"¹⁷¹ in a vision of sonic revolution that challenged the corporate music industry and accompanying media. 1992 Underground Resistance established the subsidiary label, World Power Alliance, which produced one-sided vinyl with its reverse side displaying messages to the pan-techno underground.¹⁷² Reflective of techno's Dionysian manifestations that offered a clear dialectic to house's utopian signification, Underground Resistance, in

¹⁷⁰ Underground Resistance Creed: <http://www.undergroundresistance.com/creed.html>
Accessed: 31.08.05

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*

¹⁷² <http://www.undergroundresistance.com/creed.html>

Accessed: 31.08.05 and S. Reynolds "Energy Flash" (London, Picador, 1998) p.207

Reynold's view, "embodied a kind of abstract militancy ...not just through rhetoric but through fostering their own autonomy."¹⁷³ In their "Message to the Majors", the label gave a subtext of "Hard Music from a Hard City",¹⁷⁴ operating as an uncompromising sonic symbol of Detroit's industrial past and its stark urban present. The label was nevertheless prescriptive and encouraged a model of self-determination in favour of corporate paths to success. Founder Jeff Mills explained, "most of the conversations were structural – whether we should have employees, what type of rules, if any, the label would run by."¹⁷⁵ Although co-founder Mike Banks's approach was more suggestive of Detroit's radical past, the city not only providing a substantial base to Martin Luther King Jnr.'s Civil Rights Movement¹⁷⁶ but also as birthplace of the Nation of Islam¹⁷⁷, as Banks ignores requests for interviews arguing that the history of Detroit techno should be written by a Detroit native and someone black.¹⁷⁸

The label's strategic visibility, or invisibility, offering no photographs, interviews or media dalliance of any description was reinforced by graphics and merchandise inclined to militarism. War was declared on what was considered to constitute commercialism and mediocrity. This image affectation was perhaps as Reynolds suggests a reflection of the Banks' family's army past but more importantly of a growing "the military chic"¹⁷⁹ that had begun to accompany the European drive for tough, minimal, less syncopated rhythms and embodied in bands like Front 242 (Belgium) Nitzer Ebb and Meat Beat Manifesto (UK). The synergy of Detroit techno and the European clubs scene's drive for metronomic minimalism saw a number of producers

¹⁷³ S. Reynolds, *Energy Flash*, (London, Picador, 1998) p.205

¹⁷⁴ M. Rubin, "Techno – Days of Future Past", in P. Shapiro, (ed) *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music* (New York, Caipirinha Productions, 2000)

¹⁷⁵ S. Reynolds, *Energy Flash*, (London, Picador, 1998) p.205

¹⁷⁶ As a subsidiary of Gordy's Motown label the Black Forum label was established in the late 1960s as an outlet for spoken word releases that included Amiri Baraka, Stokely Carmichael and Martin Luther King Jnr. Source: S.E. Smith, *Dancing in the Streets: Motown and the Cultural Roots of Detroit*, (Cambridge, Mass. 1999) p.17

¹⁷⁷ S.E. Smith *Dancing in the Streets: Motown and the Cultural Roots of Detroit*, (Cambridge, Mass. 1999) p.82

¹⁷⁸ S. Reynolds, *Energy Flash*, (London, Picador, 1998) p.205

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*

relocating Blake Baxter and Jeff Mills established themselves in Berlin in early nineties the city's Tresor label and club scene and that of Frankfurt with labels such as Force Inc. and Harthouse reflected a larger and more consistent European electronic club culture. Labels such as Network (Birmingham) and Warp (Sheffield) were the frontrunners in Britain, reflecting electronic music's broadening base from physicality of the dance floor to the cerebral unwind of the ambient, chill out room. This all gave evidence of a trans-Atlantic movement and importantly a network of supportive nodes of production and consumption, very much consistent with Underground Resistance's anti-corporate autonomous ideology.

If Underground Resistance gave evidence of stark minimalism framing a clear political and economic ideology and Banks' own Red Planet project continued the tradition of black science fiction, or Afro-Futurism, which linked jazz visionary Sun Ra, George Clinton and the Belleville Three, then techno's inherent funk would return from an unlikely source. Richie Hawtin, an important mediator of the Detroit sound, was able to draw together the skeletal forms of European minimalism, the tech-step of Detroit and the warmer funk of Chicago house. Along with friend and DJ partner John Aquaviva, the Plus 8 label¹⁸⁰ was founded in 1989, with the first *Future Sound of Detroit* release. A clear observation and response to the changing scene from club to 'rave' heralded a new era of DJ functionalism. Events became generic and experiential. Larger bills produced shorter more competitive DJ sets, each one bidding to lift the tempo and intensity to higher levels fuelled by amphetamine, ecstasy and psycho-tropic supplements that left the producers strangely at odds with consumers. Hawtin and Aquaviva who had translated and transferred the rave scene to Detroit, organizing warehouse parties in the city's abandoned industrial shell, were themselves left "aghast"¹⁸¹ at the brutalism and hedonism of the European progressions that began to form 'hardcore' and very specifically

¹⁸⁰ Plus 8 is a reference to the Technics turntable's ability to pitch (or rather speed up and slow down) a record, plus 8 being the maximum or fastest pitch or speed.

¹⁸¹ S. Reynolds, *Energy Flash*, (London, Picador, 1998) p.213

‘gabba’¹⁸² although releases such as Circuit Breaker’s *Overkill* and Cybersonik’s *Thrash* in 1992 reinforced this Dionysian body rock. Hawtin’s own response, through his alter ego Plastikman, was clearly an attempt to reintroduce a more soulful Chicago induced sound,

The complexity of the Detroit sound in the post-techno period captures the attempt to realign the city’s cultural and political narrative as a series of loosely connecting forms, but with an acknowledgement that the twin towers of soul and techno cast shadows over the city. Many artists progressed the forms within the context of other rhythmic modes – hip-hop, jazz and drum and bass. Carl Craig, whose debut album, *Landcruising* (1995) was a clear homage to Kraftwerk’s *Autobahn*, would later, through his Inner Zone Orchestra guise, create a lo-fi template for drum and bass with *Bug in the Bassbin* and become a touchstone for producers who wished to make less dance floor orientated electronica. Craig himself, in establishing the Planet E label and introducing the prolific though enigmatic Moodyman, continues Detroit’s racial and technological narrative. Banks and Underground Resistance would more clearly and bombastically attempt to give techno a political shape and anti-corporate ideology that could be more readily articulated in hip-hop through Public Enemy and the Wu Tang Clan. Techno’s inherent self-doubt and uncertainty, which accompanied a somewhat ambiguous relationship with the local and racial narrative, left it floating unable to anchor securely to place, lacking the visibility of other beat music, it was as Carl Craig assessed: “rap stayed street, rap stayed urban, techno went somewhere else.”¹⁸³ Techno’s wordless Esperanto left it as a bastardized and fragmented global movement whose real strength lay in its capacity to challenge its own meaning.

¹⁸² ‘Gabba’ which is Flemish for ‘buddy’ and was localized by the Rotterdam club scene, became identifiable through its rapid tempo (up to 160 beats per minute), and simple tonality, was popular in the tougher environment of the this working class city and synonymous with amphetamine use.

¹⁸³ M. Rubin, “Techno – Days of Future Past”, in P. Shapiro, (ed) *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music* (New York, Caipirinha Productions, 2000) p. 121

Chapter Four - Europe Endless

Kraftwerk, Modernity and Movement

We play the machines and the machines play us. We want to orchestrate the mechanic ballet of urban life.¹
Ralph Hutter

I don't think they even knew how big they were among the black masses in '77 when they came out with 'Trans-Europe Express'. When that came out I thought that was one of the best and weirdest records I ever heard in my life. I said, 'scuse the expression, this is some weird shit! Everybody just went crazy off that.'²
Afrika Bambaataa

The rhythms of American post-war optimism first synchronized and then tamed, the inherent primitivism of rock n roll through the seemingly infinite potential of youthful consumption. In turn Europe, although itself awash with rock and pop's signifiers, would emerge marching to the sound of a somewhat different 'tin' drum. If European aspirations, in the period after 1945, were marked by the material austerity and an entrenched apprehension that necessarily followed from being a major theatre of war, Germany's hopes were built upon a deeper, collective and self-induced amnesia. This social ambience – 'Year Zero', or Stunde Null, as the emergence of West Germany in 1949 was referred to – presented an unheralded cultural vacuum that was to be filled by a generation that remained as uncertain of its past as it was of its future. Conscious of this ambiguity, of the need to construct a brave new world from a damaged past, German artists and musicians picked through the flotsam of a lost modernity to make sense of a 'present' increasingly detailed by symbols of American commodity culture. The shaping of post-war Germany was one that rekindled an earlier modernity. As Andrew Blake observed, "we experience, indeed we often define, the 'modern' through an increasing ache for the 'past' we

¹ Ralph Hutter: Interview, *Actuel Magazine*, November 1991,

<http://paginas.terra.com.br/arte/kwcybercafe/actuel91.html> - Accessed: 19.09.06

² Afrika Bambaataa quoted - D. Toop, *Rap Attack #3*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 2000) p.130

ourselves have constructed”³. It was this modern which reflected upon the past, significantly through its reification of ‘the machine’ that would, though the Düsseldorf sound of Kraftwerk, impact on popular music rhythms in a truly global context.

The uncertainty that accompanied Europe, and most specifically Germany’s, new dawn offered an apparent blank canvas on which a reconstructed Europe could take form. Kraftwerk co-founder and ideological architect, Ralph Hutter, saw the potential of this restart:

We realized we had to start from zero. It’s an amazing opportunity we didn’t have to reject anything. It was an empty space. And that same feeling was everywhere. The different art forms, literature, film and painting were everywhere in Germany in the late ‘60s. They were blossoming.⁴

Significantly, for Hutter and his musical doppelgänger Florian Schneider, the retention of some form of national cultural encoding was an essential counterbalance to American encroachment. It was from the rubble of post-war Germany, which contained the dust and shattered pieces of Weimar’s hope of progress as well as the dismantled infrastructure of a totalitarian military machine, that new social and cultural compacts would be formed. Whilst for some artists such as Joseph Beuys, the vacuum could be filled with a new contract between man and nature, for others the lost spectre of modernity could be resurrected through the collusion of commerce and materialism – of *technik* and *kultur*.

The attempted construction of new social contracts that would redress the balance of perpetual binaries – man and machine, worker and industry, nation and corporation, urban and rural, nature and technology, ideological east and west – would continue to frame the social and cultural remapping of a new Europe. A search for a broader social responsibility, a

³ A. Blake, *The Land Without Music*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997) p.12

⁴ Kraftwerk: *Mojo Magazine* August 2005 - Viewed online:
http://kraftwerk.technopop.com.br/interview_115.php Accessed 17.10.06

cosmopolitanism which, under the subsequent encroachment of global forces, Robert Fine would define though its:

Aims to reconstruct political life on the basis of an enlightened vision of peaceful relations between nation states, human rights shared by all world citizens, and a global legal order buttressed by a global civil society.⁵

Increasingly apparent was that both global market forces and local considerations were conditioning the grander economic structures that framed societal changes. Urban upheavals on both sides of the Atlantic in 1968 emphasized the cracks in the shiny surface of a hoped for new cosmopolitan Europe and the fractured modernity of America's dream, whose increasingly military economy was bogged down in the maelstrom of Vietnam and the global theatre. The idealized pan-European community that infused Kraftwerk's sonic future visions looked to expand the nexus of man and technology, both in harmony, both in motion. Here Kraftwerk's new citizens journeyed from 'Smallville', or more specifically Heimat, to the new metropolis on an autobahn, which in music journalist, Biba Kopf's, terms "goes on forever".⁶ The important duality of a technological community forged through Heimat, that specific German construction of 'homeland' - the nostalgic conflation of village, landscape and language, signified a longing for the lost hopes of utopia. Kraftwerk hoped to build upon this specificity, Hutter emphasizing to American journalist Lester Bangs:

We are the first German group to record in our own language, use our electronic background, and create a Central European identity for ourselves... we create out of the German language, the mother language, which is very mechanical, we use as the basic structure of our music. Also the machines, from the industries of Germany⁷

⁵ R. Fine, 'Taking the "ism" out of cosmopolitanism', *European Journal of Social Theory* 6 (2003), pp.451-70 quoted in Z. Bauman, *Europe: An Unfinished Adventure*, (Cambridge, Polity, 2004) pp. 42-43

⁶ B. Kopf, "The Autobahn Goes on Forever", in *Undercurrents: The Hidden Wiring of Modern Music*, R. Young (ed), (London, Continuum, 2002) p.143

⁷ L. Bangs, "Kraftwerkfeature", (*Creem*, September, 1975) reprinted in *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 1996)

Such perceptions of modernity, built in the margins of imagined futures and resonant pasts, floated above the increasingly fragmented plurality of a new or post-modernity to render such visions as an idealized 'other'. The modernist's objectives of a social and cultural Shangri-la, now corrupted by industrial capitalism's failure to liberate society from a life of servitude and austerity, rendered such aspirations as an illusory but nevertheless desirable ideal. Significantly there was a sense that social progress had been arrested as a result of America's accelerating industrial-military economy and a technological modernity tarnished by war and 'the bomb'. The need for this interpretative (or reflexive) stance was reinforced by a belief in progress and aspiration. Zygmunt Bauman emphasizes modernity's inbuilt mechanism to advance.

Psychically, modernity is about identity: about the truth of existence being not-yet-here, being a task, a mission, a responsibility.⁸

Kraftwerk's metaphors of movement and momentum underline the rejection of any notion of cultural inertia, because, "to be modern means to be on the move."⁹ Such re-appropriated modernity in post-war Europe stands as an affirmation of self-confidence, a conviction of its own authority, a statement of unequivocal progress and objective truth. Such singularity of vision ran in contra flow to the increasingly fragmented and market framed modernity that revoked previously defining determinants of time and space, invoking the essentialism of nation, progress and technology. Kraftwerk's continued vitality and relevance in contemporary music, where their DNA is identifiable in everything from techno, house, trance, trip-hop and electro, pop to hip-hop, indicate the place retained by past perceptions of modernity within present cultural pluralism.

⁸ Z. Bauman, *Postmodernity and its Discontents*, (New York, New York University Press, 1997)

p.71

⁹ *ibid.*

In mobilizing their European specificity, a precise identity, configured though technology and nationhood within a globally mediated and commodified cultural milieu has rendered Kraftwerk an enviable 'other'. The group's potency lies in the appeal of its sonic symbolism to those who refuse to release their grip on the belief in salvation through a technological future. What lead journalist, Andy Gill, to proclaim: "that without this whitest of white groups, the history of black music in America would have been completely different,"¹⁰ was an identified need by those who sought to retain the modernity of the machine. A technological authenticity could be used in shaping social reality. The music world's continual plundering of the group's past analogue, and present digital, sound-banks validates the view of a modernity whose authenticity was fixed in technology. Kraftwerk operate as a touchstone to empower those who maintain a belief in technology's function in driving a grander societal narrative. This was a call for the cathartic powers of the machine to cure the ills of social and cultural fragmentation, to resist claims for the end of measurable progress, to complete modernity's 'mission'. Those caught up within the cultural maelstrom sought in Lester Bangs words, "hovering clean far from the burnt metal reek of exploded stars, the intricate balm of Kraftwerk."¹¹ The group's sound, its uncluttered metallic simplicity, the clean lines and triplet delays appeared to reach infinity. Kraftwerk quite simply offered the listener an opportunity to wash away the dirt and grit that accompanied the funk of popular culture and look to the future's endless horizon.

What carried Kraftwerk's vision through was an understanding of the iconography of the modern, its clear aesthetic and slavish attention to symmetry and detail. Not surprisingly, for two students of decidedly middle-class backgrounds, one the son of an architect, was that their ideas of reconstruction would look to past symbols of a built modernity, to visualize a future in the post-war void. Ralph Willett's study of national reconstruction against the backdrop of a

¹⁰ Interview – A. Gill, "Do the Men Play the Machines? Or the Machines Play the Men?" *Mojo*: April 1997, <http://www.scifi/~phinnweb/krautrock/mojo-kraftwerk.html> Accessed 28.09.06

¹¹ L. Bangs, "Kraftwerkfeature", (*Creem*, September, 1975) reprinted in *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 1996) p.155

strident American presence confirms a regeneration incorporating “functional modernism.”¹² Projects that invoked the designs of Germans in exile, Walter Gropius, Hans Scharoun and Mies van der Rohe to reinstate, “a central Bauhaus idea of a socially conscious architecture symbolizing freedom and individuality.”¹³ Here a peacetime cosmopolitanism projected a society seeking to evolve towards an ideal type of community. Nevertheless, in the period of Stunde Null, the perception of an idealized cultural community was one in which fashion, leisure and entertainment were framed by the ideas of American mass culture. At this point American ‘streamlining’ and European ‘modernity’ were suggestive of an attainable ‘brave new world’ that would help obliterate memories of 1930s depression and 1940s war. Willett observes that through magazines, television, films and music the tantalizing and evocative images:

That proclaimed American modernity and power constituted a fabulous dream for the wretched and deprived of a devastated Europe [a] utopian world, a future of glass cities, superhighways, teardrop cars and a helicopter in every garage.¹⁴

The tendency remains to build an image of a post-war German society that simply erased its past to create a new generation who, like film director Wim Wenders, as Robert Kolker and Peter Beiken observed, “wilfully, perhaps inescapably, were born into a state of historical amnesia,”¹⁵ and whose cultural landscape was colonized by American imagery. Kraftwerk however chose to contextualize their new and idealized society with signifiers that fused both Germany’s heimat and a suspended modernity. A cultural imprint which was clearly built around a German and pan-European otherness that moved to the mechanical rhythms of automobile, train and that quintessential union of man and machine, the bicycle.

¹² R. Willett, *The Americanisation of Germany, 1945-1949*, (London, Routledge, 1989) p.49

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ R. Willett, *The Americanisation of Germany, 1945-1949*, (London, Routledge, 1989) pp. 75-76

¹⁵ R. P. Kolker and P. Beiken, *The Films of Wim Wenders: Cinema as Vision and Desire*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993) p.29

Through the symbiosis of technik and kultur post-war insecurities would be overcome to mobilize a new cosmopolitanism that incorporated an iconic past, through representations of pastoral homeland and residual modernity. From European urban and suburban to global dissemination Kraftwerk's specificity would move from its singular home to become a vital component in the multiple realities of a contemporary cultural milieu. The blurring of spatial and temporal boundaries that accompanied this de-centred and increasingly mediated world would be reflected in changing perceptions of motion and mobility - from real to virtual, from physical to simulation. New movement would be, as one performer in John Cage's seminal *Imaginary Landscape No. 4*¹⁶ described, "similar to an automobile ride at night on an American highway in which neon signs and patches of noise from radios and automobiles flash into the distance."¹⁷ A figurative journey that was bombarded by images of the familiar and the alien, built upon technology, ambience and a sense of dislocation. The grander narratives of modernity, rooted in the soils of industrial economic structures, would transform in late capitalism but nevertheless be resolute and permeate through this new modernity. Modernity's persistence would be sustained through the lingering belief in technology's utilitarian rewards and the mechanics of progress that tied future hopes to the safety and security of a nostalgic past.

Ohm Sweet Ohm¹⁸

Life is timeless
Europe endless

Parks, hotels and palaces
Europe endless
Promenades and avenues
Europe endless

¹⁶ John Cage, *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* (First performed 1951, published 1960) See: <http://www.johncage.info/workscage/landscape4.html>

¹⁷ Quote Harold Nurse: D. Toop, *Ocean of Sound*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 1995) p.36

¹⁸ *Ohm Sweet Ohm* – Hutter / Schneider *Radio Activity* (Kling Klang, 1975)

Real life on postcard views
Europe endless
Elegance and decadence
Europe endless¹⁹

Much of the town was still destroyed. I remember the streets were still of bomb holes, it was a bit like it is in Lebanon now.²⁰ Florian Schneider

The negative space of 'stunde null' represented a cultural void that required a generation to replenish the space with dislocated memories of an un-lived past and aspirations for future communities yet to be built. The rhythms that drove such designs and hopes were filtered through both the sounds and images of the new Germany. The films of Werner Rainer Fassbinder, Werner Herzog and Wim Wenders reinforced the momentum of the post-war period as much as the cyclical rhythms of Can, the trance like pulse of Tangerine Dream or the metal on metal of Kraftwerk. The inculcation of a reconstructing German nation by the market ideology of a brash American presence positioned such artists, musicians and filmmakers with a polarized sense of themselves. Such artists and musicians absorbed the visual and auditory signifiers of rock n roll and mass consumption in what would seem a synchronous fascination and abhorrence. Constructing an identity, both individual and collective, under the pervasive glow of American cinema and to the rhythm of a trans-Atlantic beat, was the new European condition. All this is more keenly felt in a divided West Germany, which was tolerating a considerable military presence within its borders.

Although the Americanization of civilian life was not a new or unexpected phenomenon, Europe having experienced the effects of cultural imports through jazz and the cinema between the wars, it was a systematic incursion that was expanding exponentially through developing patterns of communication and mediation. As Willett observed:

¹⁹ *Europe Endless* – Hutter / Schneider *Trans-Europe Express* (Kling Klang, 1977)

²⁰ Florian Schneider – Interview Pascal Bussy, 1991, P. Bussy, *Kraftwerk: Man, Machine and Music*, (London, SAF Publishing, 2005) p.19

The period of the Occupation, one marked by economic colonization, cultural imperialism, and the re-education programme, was the prologue to a more developed Americanization.

Tangible products rapidly followed the symbols and sounds of American life, heard on forces radio and witnessed on the quickly resurrected cinema screens.²¹ Lucky Strike cigarettes, comic books and chewing gum were portents of a McDonaldisation yet to come. Such cultural markers helped fill the vacuum for a Germany that felt the pressure, by extracting itself from its recent narrative, to locate identities in sounds and images that helped reconcile its past disruptions and misdemeanours. The space which became increasingly filled by such images of Americana drew on the illusions, of flickering cinema screens and dissipated rhythms of popular music, that were representative of an American nation which itself had, only in the 20th Century, begun to construct its sense of self within a global perspective. It was also indicative of the growing centrality of the 'sign' in an expanding commodity culture. Kraftwerk themselves would become fully immersed in their own constructed persona, a self-regulated simulation of man and machine that would seem to vindicate Baudrillard's assertion that, "it is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself."²² However for now, in the immediate aftermath of global conflagration, it was as one protagonist in Wenders' seminal road movie, *Kings of the Road*, would proclaim:

The Yanks have even colonized our subconscious.²³

²¹ Robert Katz highlights the importance of the cinema in the rebuilding programme: "One of the initial steps the American occupiers undertook in the reconstruction of Germany was the rebuilding of its motion picture theaters. This was done not for the entertainment of the former enemy but rather in accordance with the 1947 directive that sought to provide the Germans with 'information which will influence them to understand and accept the U.S. program of occupation'." – R. Katz, *Love is Colder Than Death: The Life and Times of Rainer Werner Fassbinder*, (London, Jonathan Cape, 1987) p.18

²² J. Baudrillard, *Simulations*, (New York, Semiotext Inc, 1983) p.4 babe just check what you are using are you referring to Simulations and Simulacra? You may have a different version - mine was dated 1981 – just check this

²³ *Im Lauf der Zeit* – 'Kings of the Road', Producer: Miedemann, Director: Wim Wenders, Wim Wenders Produktion, Munich, 1976)

In the climate of ‘Wirtschaftswunder’ – economic miracle - Wenders’, who, like Hutter and Schneider, had grown up in industrial Düsseldorf, constructed his own hybridized German culture from the auditory and visual motifs of Americana that penetrated his world. Listening to American Forces radio, absorbed in Hollywood films and unsure about the culture that was offered to him, Wenders embodied a generation whose identity was built upon the rhythms of rock n roll, claiming: “it was the first thing I appreciated, like everybody else, that wasn’t inherited. There was nobody to teach me to like it.”²⁴ Like the tape recorder, the camera functioned as a device to store, repeat and reproduce. This platform enabled Wenders to construct his observations of this nascent, sign driven, German identity, just as Kraftwerk shaped their impressions around the language of reproduced and environmental sounds. German cinema and popular music each informed the other through stories of modernity and disrupted identities. Wenders’ cinema like Kraftwerk’s music was fuelled by a consensus, but unspoken, insecurity and the urgent need to move forward, mobilizing the dynamics of motion and emotion, to fulfil an ambition that in Hutter’s words: “Europe itself can become a great multi-cultural society. That’s what we’d like to say with our next record.”²⁵ The desire to show movement and progression, to be ‘on the road’ as it were, mirrored America’s ‘on the move’ constructions of modernity. Both were desperate to rid themselves of the past, of economic depression and, in Germany’s case, political madness.

Os²⁶

The rhythm of life in most of America was created by the railroad, and pre-war blues and country records were often little more than imitations of the locomotive using jugs and guitars.²⁷

²⁴ J. Dawson, *Wim Wenders*, trans. Carla Wartneberg, (New York Zoetrope, 1976) p.10 quoted: R. P. Kolker and P. Beiken, *The Films of Wim Wenders: Cinema as Vision and Desire*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993) p.11

²⁵ Actuel Magazine - November 1991 -

<http://paginas.terra.com.br/arte/kwcybercafe/actuel91.html> Viewed 19.09.06

²⁶ Source: Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania: www.rrmuseumpa.org/.../autobahn.jpg

²⁷ P. Shapiro, “Automating the Beat: The Robotics of Rhythm”, in *Undercurrents: The Hidden Wiring of Modern Music*, R. Young (ed), (London, Continuum, 2002) p.134

Kraftwerk, like Wenders, were preoccupied with the inherent momentum of rock n roll and the music's allusion to the mythology of the road, specifically its quest for lost or, more significantly, unknown frontiers. Such metaphors of movement, along allegorical highways, continually permeate American popular music tradition from Robert Johnson to Woody Guthrie, Bruce Springsteen, Canned Heat and Steppenwolf, to the post-beat poetry symbolism of Bob Dylan and the epic post-punk nihilism of Jonathon Richman's *Roadrunner*. The pulse of movement and anticipated progress drove the motorik beats of Chuck Berry's teenage fantasies and in Peter Shapiro's phrase "the piston-pumping train rhythms" of Bo Diddley.²⁸ Kraftwerk themselves had always shown a strong affinity for the music of the Beach Boys and Detroit's Iggy Pop,²⁹ the former's pastiche of 1960s American automobility a key influence, the latter symbolic of the nation's metallic and industrial motor rhythms. Hutter himself confessing: "although we are not aiming so much for the music; it's the psychological structure of someone like the Beach Boys."³⁰ Such perception of movement along America's lost highways transposes the cosmopolitan autobahns and railways of a resurrected Europe.

This move away from the city – in its traditional sense – and towards historical settlements for modern nomads reaches its culmination in the sunny, grassy dormitory towns of the post-war period, specially designed for families and road traffic.³¹

Albrecht Wellmer, *The Persistence of Modernity*

Robert Kolker and Peter Beiken's observation that "the urban street or the highway, seen from the window of a moving car, dominates the image pattern of Wenders' films,"³² provides a

²⁸ P. Shapiro, "Automating the Beat: The Robotics of Rhythm", in *Undercurrents: The Hidden Wiring of Modern Music*, R. Young (ed), (London, Continuum, 2002) p.134

²⁹ Hutter and Schneider took the opportunity to see the Beach Boys perform when on tour in the USA (Source: P. Bussy, *Kraftwerk: Man, Machine and Music*, (London, SAF Publishing, 2005) p.83) and through their association with Davis Bowie made connections with Iggy Pop. Both Bowie and Pop were referenced in the lyrics to *Trans-Europe Express*

³⁰ L. Bangs, "Kraftwerkfeature", (*Creem*, September, 1975) in *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 1996) p.158

³¹ A. Wellmer, *The Persistence of Modernity*, (Cambridge UK, Polity, 1991) p.101

³² R. P. Kolker and P. Beiken, *The Films of Wim Wenders: Cinema as Vision and Desire*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993) p.28

clear link to Kraftwerk's ability to construct an onomatopoeic bridge of lyrics and sounds. A simulation of car horns, pistons and panting cyclists, illustrated a capacity to produce a flawless transcription of the moving event that renders any visual interpretation somehow meaningless. For Hutter and Schneider theirs was a journey into and through sound, a journey both spatial and temporal. Schneider himself was quite conscious of their attempts to embark on a post-war sonic journey that invoked past destinations of Germany's social topography, admitting: "even for us, Autobahn is a bit nostalgic now, even in the Seventies our image of the autobahn was a bit idealized."³³ Kraftwerk's journey was intended to resurrect the ideals that had been forcibly abandoned during the previous decades. Hutter provided a rationale for the group's attempts to recapture a lost modernity:

The culture of Central Europe was cut off in the thirties, and many of the intellectuals went to the USA or France, or they were eliminated. We [Kraftwerk] are picking it up again where it left off, continuing this culture of the thirties, and we are doing this spiritually.³⁴

This nostalgic construction, which Hutter confessed as having, "something ethnic to it,"³⁵ transposed past motifs of heimat with cosmopolitan constructions of bourgeois Europe. All along autobahns towards the new utopia of Albrecht Wellmer's "sunny, grassy dormitory towns."³⁶ Kraftwerk were to travel through this 'endless Europe' not merely along virtual autobahns but also along phantom railways that fetishized a Europe once framed by genteel decadence and bourgeois affectations. This facsimile of a pan-European community would "Rendezvous on Champs-Elysees" and in Vienna "sit in a late-night café" before returning "to Düsseldorf City to commune with fellow cultural travellers, "Iggy Pop and David Bowie".³⁷

³³ P. Bussy, *Kraftwerk: Man, Machine and Music*, (London, SAF Publishing, 2005) p.55

³⁴ Quoted: P. Bussy, *Kraftwerk: Man, Machine and Music*, (London, SAF Publishing, 2005) p.29 Source unknown

³⁵ Interview – A. Gill, "Do the Men Play the Machines? Or the Machines Play the Men?" *Mojo*: April 1997. Viewed online – <http://www.sci.ifi/~phinnweb/krautrock/mojo-kraftwerk.html> Accessed 28.09.06

³⁶ A. Wellmer, *The Persistence of Modernity*, (Cambridge UK, Polity, 1991) p.101

³⁷ Lyrics: *Trans-Europe Express* (Kling Klang, 1977)

The railway itself, having ceased to operate, was symbolic of a romantic sense of loss that circumscribed Kraftwerk's rudimentary and nostalgic European otherness. This increasingly simulated alterity, a highly stylized, airbrushed and detailed representation of a mechanized future built from past symbols of trains, cars and radios that embodied the exotic and unfamiliar. It was this unknown and as yet unexplored world that confronted Afrika Baambaata as "some weird shit". Kraftwerk's hypernatural home signified a culture that was both alien and yet strangely resonant. To New York's urban milieu symbols of European sophistication would appear bourgeois, exotic and displaced yet the group's retreat into a simulated world would seem increasingly appropriate for a generation immersed in a virtual realm of video games, television and sound technology. Kraftwerk's nostalgic travels into a circuit board reality, where role-playing and simulation were dissolving previous determinants of identity, would begin to impact on those who were keen to appropriate alien or exotic sounds and signs to shape their reality, to affirm their own position in this brave new world. Rock n roll's mythology of 'the road' that had become ingrained in Wim Wenders film iconography and informed the rhythms of Kraftwerk's journeys by autobahn and railway, to their refurbished European home, were now being re-appropriated by the virtual mobile world of America's urban dance cultures.

The capacity of Kraftwerk's constructions of home and their signifiers of mobility to resonate through to urban dance cultures was grounded in the evolving and fragmenting perceptions of modernity. More specifically a resolute belief in technology as a mechanism of desirable progress; one which, rather than a retreat from civilization, was a vital component in its advance. Technology in providing a synthesis, however illusionary, of old and new, of past and future, was suggestive of man's ability to maintain control and implement order. This nostalgic construction of modernity, as an ideological and symbolic epoch, would carry the trope of accelerated human movement and the de-centring of cultural production through media and market forces.

Imagining the Modern

The typically modern view of the world is one of an essentially orderly totality; the presence of a pattern of uneven distribution of probabilities allows a sort of explanation of the events which – if correct – is simultaneously a tool of prediction and (if required resources are available) of control.³⁸
Zygmunt Bauman

We are not artists, nor musicians. First of all we are workers.³⁹
Ralph Hutter

The roots of western modernity are buried deep in the soils of the Ages of Reason and Enlightenment, which heralded the organization of a mass society in the prelude to industrialization. This process commenced what Bauman would term “the torturous emancipation of Reason from its slavish subservience to tradition.”⁴⁰ The broadening of secular education, the appearance of the printed word and developing patterns of communication would be significant in negating the anchor of custom and tradition. Culture, a term not coined until after the 18th century, once freed from its agricultural connotations, unshackles social bonds once tethered exclusively to the rhythms of nature and the church. The construction of a managed society would mark the evolution of ‘the state’ – a means of regulating society. Nevertheless with these structural transformations comes modernity’s counterbalance, the rational proposition of ‘the common good’. As Marshall Berman’s great analysis of modernity’s dialectic, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, decrees, one hopes upon hope that, “the modernities of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow will heal the wounds of the modern men and women of today.”⁴¹ The construction of a modern society had encoded within it a prescriptive ideology - the philosopher’s methodology for constituting the world. A proposition, which, as Bauman notes, may seem absurd to contemporary observers, “to whom the ‘fashioning’ of humans by

³⁸ Z. Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters*, (Cambridge, Polity, 1987) p.3

³⁹ Ralph Hutter interview: P. Bussy, *Kraftwerk: Man, Machine and Music*, (London, SAF Publishing, 2005) p. 72 (Published *Vinyl Magazine*, Holland, 1984)

⁴⁰ Z. Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters*, (Cambridge, Polity, 1987) p. 62

⁴¹ M. Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air*, (London, Verso, 1981) p.23

their societies is one of the trivialities of existence.”⁴² It is within this European tradition of social organization, one tempered by a sense of altruism, that the notions of industrial and post-industrial modernity were constructed. Kraftwerk’s belief in pan-European progress remains one deeply rooted in a technological romanticism that would seek to liberate the modern man. Such ideas, essentially fixed in the tenets of freedom, look to man’s liberation from necessity, to be set loose from a dependence on nature through the tools of technology, to sever the real and psychological bonds of servitude.

Scrutinized through the contemporary lenses of pluralism, and mediated fragmentation, modernity’s perceived self-referential and clearly branded status is in Bauman’s words one:

which allows the view of modernity itself as an enclosed object, an essentially complete product, an episode of history with an end as much as a beginning.⁴³

Perceptions are grounded more frequently in iconography than ideology, which marks modernity as a specific epoch. Such emphasis on visualization, the symbols of modernity reflect the shift into the second phase of industrialization, from entrepreneurial to monopoly capitalism from the end of the 19th to the first quarter of 20th centuries, where consumption and desire would begin to replace past determinants of work and production. Ideals of progress would become reified through coherent visual principles that were suggestive of progress. Here, as Terry Smith observes in his study of modernity’s aesthetics:

Focus is on the role of visual imagery within the so-called second industrial revolution in the United States, that is, during the rise of mass manufacturing, linked to mass consumption. This revolution marked a new phase in the history of modern societies.⁴⁴

⁴² Z. Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters*, (Cambridge, Polity, 1987) p. 81

⁴³ *ibid.* p. 117

⁴⁴ T. Smith, *Making the Modern*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993) p.6

If utopia could not be reached it could at least be imagined, designed, manufactured, objectified and consumed. Significantly this reification of the modern as a mass produced commodity would render it, as Peter Beilharz notes, “a middle-class project, par excellence.”⁴⁵ Nevertheless although the perception of the modern, constructed during a period of monopoly capitalism’s dystopian effects -great social upheaval, displacement, poverty and economic hardship – it should not be reduced to a set of visual icons, nor a simple discourse. This over simplification was as Smith observes, “subject to the powers of imagery of modernity as a broad regime of visual ‘truth,’ becoming a theme (or set of themes) within it.”⁴⁶ Mass reproduction and mediation, through advertising’s guiding hand, were however distilling the modern to an idealized universal theme.

In moving away from the parochial and particularistic, towards universality, infers structural progress and an objective truth. Modernity’s inherent ordering and manipulation of probabilities walks a dangerous path of social management or engineering. A subjugation to efficacy and social control, which Beilhraz surmises is, “a project, and not only a period, and it is, or was, a project of control, the rational mastery over nature, the planning, designing and plotting which led to planomania and technocracy.”⁴⁷ Here the desire to change the world “becomes a habit, or at least a duty.”⁴⁸ The attractions of such paradigms of modernity lie in the romanticism of pure and symbolic, yet unfulfilled, progress, which remained, as Smith observes, “a fragile dream, collapsing quickly into the practicalities of wartime demands.”⁴⁹ For Kraftwerk, and subsequently urban American dance communities, immersed in a post-Vietnam social and cultural reality, the invocation of such past ideals of a brave new world was enticing. The

⁴⁵ P. Beilharz, “Introduction”, *The Bauman Reader*, P. Beilharz (ed), (Oxford, Blackwell, 2001) p.6

⁴⁶ T. Smith, *Making the Modern*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993) p.354

⁴⁷ P. Beilharz, “Introduction”, *The Bauman Reader*, P. Beilharz (ed), (Oxford, Blackwell, 2001) p.6

⁴⁸ *ibid.* p.6

⁴⁹ T. Smith, *Making the Modern*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993) pp.10-11

seductive signs and sounds of technological utopia neatly packaged as a virtual future that echoed a streamlined past.

In a commodity culture dominated by the sign, the more malevolent inferences of modernity's social structures are overridden by the gloss of its iconography. Significantly one that retained the safety of nostalgia, the security of a now endured past. Kraftwerk's idealized modernity is one which refuses to shake off its past, constantly reaffirming its pre-industrial other, disappearing into a pastoral simulation on an infinite autobahn, a phantom railway and virtual bicycle. Such considered juxtapositions were, as group biographer Pascal Bussy observed, "to become a regular trick in the Kraftwerk arsenal, of simultaneously playing about with modernity and nostalgia of their imagery."⁵⁰ Hutter himself alluding to the group themselves as: "musical workers in an electronic garden,"⁵¹ suggestive of a twin tracked retreat to an Arcadian otherworld through the prescriptive balm of technology. This resurrected utopia was, in Hutter's words, a desire to "look forwards as well as backwards at the same time. The French call it retro-futurism."⁵² The group's heimat imagery becoming increasingly augmented and finally superseded by an equally nostalgic construction of a once imagined future, significantly one that was pushing them towards self-regulating simulation, a series of sounds and signifiers which moved more easily through their mediated environment.

The image of the robot is very important to us.... We always found many people are robots without knowing it.... In Paris, the people go in the Metro, they move, they go to their offices, eight in the morning – it's like remote control. It's strange⁵³

Kraftwerk's evolving virtual world would, following *Trans-Europe Express*, see them transcend their restricted physicality by replicating the group with their robotic selves. These were not

⁵⁰ P. Bussy, *Kraftwerk: Man, Machine and Music*, (London, SAF Publishing, 2005) p. 73

⁵¹ Kraftwerk - *Mojo Magazine*: August 2005.

http://kraftwerk.technopop.com.br/interview_115.php Accessed 10.10.06

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ Florian Schneider – P. Bussy, *Kraftwerk: Man, Machine and Music*, (London, SAF Publishing, 2005) p.175

merely supplementary characters but replacement identities that would begin to synthesize their previous European bourgeois otherness with signifiers resonant of past ideals of technological futurism. The release of *The Man-Machine*, in 1978, mobilized the imagery of Russian constructivist, El Lissitzky to reinforce the symbolism of the worker, the mechanized man, but also to begin to mobilize Kraftwerk as corporate icon, where the individual member becomes subsumed into a collective symbol, more easily consumed, more readily moved through the increasingly mediated music industry. The group and its effect now completely given over to its representation, as part parody and part caricature, they would break from their scientific laboratory environment merely to enable their robotic and simulated selves to function as musicians or entertainers.

From Baudrillard's perspective the robot is unlike the automaton, which operates as analogous of man, or merely ersatz. The robot is his equivalent, a dutiful worker, where, "its only truth is its mechanical efficacy."⁵⁴ As such, it fulfils the ideal of industrial modernity functioning as the labour-saving device both liberating and socially providential, replacing the servitude and drudgery of the worker. Reified in images from modernity's seeming potent period of monopoly capitalism, through films such as Chaplin's *Modern Times*⁵⁵ and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*⁵⁶, the latter a track title from *The Man-Machine* release, the robot remains the enduring symbol in man's quest to control his environment. Kraftwerk were, for writer Lester Bangs, affirmation that, "anything a hand can do a machine can do better. An addendum would seem to be that anything a hand can do nervously, a machine can do effortlessly."⁵⁷ By relinquishing control to the machine, the group could begin to fulfil the quest for the 'perfect beat'.

⁵⁴ J. Baudrillard, *Simulations*, (New York, Semiotext Inc, 1983) p.94

⁵⁵ *Modern Times*, Director: Charlie Chaplin, (Universal Artists, 1936)

⁵⁶ *Metropolis*, Director: Fritz Lang, (Paramount, 1927)

⁵⁷ L. Bangs, "Kraftwerkfeature", (*Creem*, September, 1975) in *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 1996) p.156

The robots were a moving exhibit behind glass, but then we were touring in Japan and other places and we missed them. I think they missed us too.⁵⁸

Identifying themselves as the source, the referential model from which the group was now simulated and reproduced enabled Kraftwerk to dissolve individual personalities within a collective, a meta-corporate brand that synthesized man and machine, artist and robot, image and sound, reproduced product and ideology into a singular entity. Mindful of Baudrillard's assertion that, "it is dangerous to unmask images, since they dissimulate the fact that there is nothing behind them,"⁵⁹ original doppelgangers, Hutter and Schneider were at pains to ensure departing drummers, Wolfgang Flur and Karl Bartos did not let the facsimile become damaged by tales of normality or prosaic lifestyles.⁶⁰ The collective image could only be effectively maintained through a balanced foursome that projected a co-operative ideology with a corporate motif.

Both Hutter and Scheider were conscious of modernity's inherent capacity expand - to reproduce and replicate. The name Kraftwerk itself, meaning 'power station', was a generic term and symbol throughout Germany, this, and the autobahn sign with which it was intrinsically linked, were symbolic of European regeneration. The group had already incorporated the traffic cone as an effective 'readymade' on their *Tone Float*⁶¹ release, an acknowledgement of pop art's burgeoning impact on music and associated iconography. Significantly the group's corporatization reflected Andy Warhol's methodology of creativity through devolved production and replication, what he referred to as his 'kinetic business' -

⁵⁸ Ralph Hutter – Kraftwerk Interview - *Mojo Magazine*: August 2005.
http://kraftwerk.technopop.com.br/interview_115.php Accessed 10.10.06

⁵⁹ J. Baudrillard, *Simulations*, (New York, Semiotext Inc, 1983) p.9

⁶⁰ The publication of Flur's book- W. Flur, *Kraftwerk: I Was a Robot*, (London, Sanctuary, 2000) was followed by a number of litigious claims and counterclaims.

⁶¹ Released under the name Organisation – *Tone Float* (RCA, UK, 1970)

“because it was going on without me.”⁶² Here the individual was sacrificed for a grander sonic heritage, where as Hutter would claim, “one day when we have stopped or died, maybe someone else will be able to continue with these ideas and sounds.”⁶³ The subjugation of the self for the collective and creative good through the processes of reproduction and tools of technology, Kraftwerk’s circumscribed future world entered into a fragmented and rapidly accelerating electronic reality.

The group’s ability to incorporate and inform modernity’s expanding multiple realities has ensured enduring significance. As technology democratized music production and eroded its linearity, Kraftwerk’s specificity has provided a resilient bulwark against contemporary trends of hybridization and ‘loss of author’. The plundering of sonic databanks and the dissolution of permissible sounds has irrevocably blurred past perceptions of time and place. Through a highly stylized construction of a lost, but resonant modernity, they have resisted curse that afflicts most popular artists. By enduring what Bauman describes as, “a century notorious for its love of fashions,”⁶⁴ their unique branding has held out against the inherent disposability of popular music. In their role of helping the expanding and complex ‘beneath the radar’ network of global music cultures Kraftwerk signify an important transition of modernity. The group, in late capitalism, embarked on a simulated journey from the confines of geographical borders to inner and outer space.

⁶² A. Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again*, (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975) p.92

⁶³ Interview – Sylvain Gire, Broadcast of French Culture / Coda (28.01.92- 01.02.92) Quoted in P. Bussy, *Kraftwerk: Man, Machine and Music*, (London, SAF Publishing, 2005) p.176

⁶⁴ Z. Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters*, (Cambridge, Polity, 1987) p.125

Looking for the Perfect Beat

Once set in motion, cultural processes acquire their own momentum, develop their own logic and spawn multiple realities confronting individuals as an outside, objective world, too powerful and distant to be resubjectivized.⁶⁵

Zygmund Bauman

The creative energy of computers, the idea of everybody being able to make music.⁶⁶

Ralph Hutter

Progress in an industrial society mobilizes its social structures through labour practices, to a network of post-industrial communities, which in turn socialized and found cultural connection through patterns and practices of consumption. This reflected, until the mid-to-late 20th century, the dynamic of the American economy. Up until this point, perceptions and manifestations of popular culture were strongly tied to a mass consumer economy that had developed in America in advance of its European counterpart, encumbered by the effects of war. The expansion of a mass consumer society, with the concomitant acceleration of communication and media technologies, increasingly impacted on American popular cultural forms. If these forms were not superseded they were at least increasingly contextualized by European, and in turn global considerations. Kraftwerk's expressed democratization of music through technology represented a shift in effect and indicated, through both economic and cultural mechanisms, a transformation of modernity's grander narratives. Bauman's concerns over the "multiple realities confronting individuals" and a potential 'tragedy of culture'⁶⁷, where individuals struggle to assimilate cultural products, indicates society's efforts to resubjectivize the wider reality in which they exist. Past ideals of modernity are not lost but remain significant in popular culture's growing complexity, one in which a creative economy would play an identifiable role.

⁶⁵ *ibid.* p.114

⁶⁶ Ralph Hutter Kraftwerk Interview, *Mojo Magazine*: August 2005.
http://kraftwerk.technopop.com.br/interview_115.php Accessed 10.10.06

⁶⁷ Z. Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters*, (Cambridge, Polity, 1987) p.114

The impact of Kraftwerk, new and outside an American music culture, which was largely self-informed, indicated of a blurring of spatial boundaries. Until now chiefly a popular cultural exporter, America, through its urban dance communities, had begun to import, not only sounds but, sonic ideologies. As Giorgio Moroder's Munich productions had infused disco's waning appeal with the metronomic efficiency of the machine, so Kraftwerk reinforced and extended the conflation of the body and technology. Nevertheless despite Hutter's fascination with the popular appropriation and dissemination of their rhythms, commenting:

In America there was always a large part of the audience which was dancing, the black audience, Hispanic, hispano-American, etc ... Electronic music is really a world language, it is the music of the global village,⁶⁸

It was, as David Toop observed, a much wider effect as, "Kraftwerk managed to invade almost all record-buying markets in America, from easy-listening to R & B."⁶⁹ If America had an understanding of the links between electronic music and modernity that Kraftwerk represented, it did have antecedence. Locked into the national psyche the sound effects and electronica work of composer Raymond Scott who would provide, during the 1960s, much of the music to accompany television ads that were backdrop to the majority of American households.

Acknowledged by DJ Spooky: "The compositions of Raymond Scott are etched, it seems, into the fabric of 20th century culture like some strand of DNA sequence coding our collective memory for future-mutations."⁷⁰ Scott's sounds would continue to surface in hip-hop in coming years.⁷¹ Scott's work, described by R.E.M. guitarist Peter Buck as "like nothing so much as the-

⁶⁸ Interview – Sylvain Gire, Broadcast of French Culture / Coda (28.01.92- 01.02.92) Quoted in P. Bussy, *Kraftwerk: Man, Machine and Music*, (London, SAF Publishing, 2005) p.122

⁶⁹ D. Toop, *Rap Attack #3*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 2000) p.130

⁷⁰ Paul Miller a.k.a. DJ Spooky, Raymond Scott website, <http://www.raymondscott.com/> Accessed 27.07.09

⁷¹ Scott was described by musician Mark Mothersbaugh as "an audio version of Andy Warhol." His work would be used as a sound source in a number of hip-hop related recordings from the Gorillaz, *Man Research (Clapper)*, (2001), J Dilla, *Donuts* (2006).

<http://www.raymondscott.com/> The University of Missouri-Kansas City Library hosts a Raymond Scott archive <http://library.umkc.edu/spec-col/manhattan.htm> and the Raymond Scott Collection page <http://library.umkc.edu/spec-col/raymond.htm>

future"⁷² identified electronica as a cosmopolitan rendering of modernity and alterity. However if the wider American community confronted a novel otherness in the group, the rhythms and sounds were something more systematically deconstructed by a dance culture increasingly facilitated by technology. Afrika Baambaata's seminal *Planet Rock*, in grabbing parts of two Kraftwerk tracks – *Numbers* and the specifically the melody from *Trans-Europe Express* – not only had territorial boundaries been transgressed but affordable and accessible technology had been mobilized to invoke Kraftwerk's modern ideology. For a generation of America's urban youth, who had come of age with microchip technology, video games and a science fiction blurred reality, the group embodied ideas of 'future music', which as Toop suggests is frequently one, "imagined in terms of technological hybridization – all winking lights and digital exchanges across alien cultures."⁷³ The appeal of the group indicated a generation for whom future movement, unlike that for their parents which had been physical mobility, even displacement, theirs was externally invoked and imagined. As Peter Shapiro realized, "hip-hop was the first music to realize that travel wasn't necessarily about physical motion anymore, but a virtual journey inside your own headspace."⁷⁴ Kraftwerk's increasing reference to their simulated selves, as robotic Aryans, reinforced such ideas of technological and exotic otherness.

American electro and nascent hip-hop in embracing the rhythms and sounds of the German avant-garde, not only consumed its motorik symbols to such an extent that as Biba Kopf observed, "for a short while in the late 1980s, some rap stars found Volkswagen and Mercedes insignia sexier than Cadillac fins,"⁷⁵ but also engaged with the structures of a new form of cultural exchange. The literal incorporation of tangential sounds and machine rhythms into

Accessed 30.08.09

⁷² Raymond Scott website <http://www.raymondscott.com/> Accessed 27.07.09

⁷³ D. Toop, *Ocean of Sound*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 1995) p.188

⁷⁴ P. Shapiro, "Automating the Beat: The Robotics of Rhythm" in *Undercurrents: The Hidden Wiring of Modern Music*, R. Young (ed), (London, Continuum, 2002) p.135

⁷⁵ B. Kopf, "The Autobahn Goes on Forever", in *Undercurrents: The Hidden Wiring of Modern Music*, R. Young (ed), (London, Continuum, 2002) p.143

American dance cultures broke with past ideas of assimilation and effect. If European jazz and blues had emulated its American sources, technology now allowed for a more tangible and concrete appropriation of other informants, ones which, since the development of the recorded sound, had always been suggested. Creative use of work and professional and domestic technologies - tape machines, turntables and with regard to sampling, the computer - stimulated new methodologies that incorporated the bottomless reservoir of recorded products available. This in effect broke music's linearity, embedding the past in the present, eroding indicators of authenticity, geographies of space and time, and significantly began the process of dismantling the structures of music's creative and corporate economies.

Alex Seago's tracing of the group's sonic legacy, *The Kraftwerk-Effekt*, tracks "the aesthetics, production methods and global distribution of contemporary electronic dance music,"⁷⁶ to demonstrate cultural fragmentation, hybridization and the decentring of popular music trends. Global flows of people, capital and iconography emphasize a weakening of an Anglo-American centre to produce networks of independent local scenes, that Connell and Gibson⁷⁷ highlight in their study of new geographies of production accelerated by computer technology's democratization of production and distribution. Kraftwerk and the dissemination of their sonic and rhythmic templates hold a significant place in this spread of new 'globalized' nodes, which have loosened much music production from the industry's corporate grip. In Seago's words:

While the "Big Five" recording companies seek with increasing desperation to find success in a centre that no longer exists, global pop today is less of a coherent "scene" than a plethora of atomised, non-linear, globally interconnected "micro scenes" loosely held together by global media.⁷⁸

The seeds of this decentring of popular music culture, which for Seago can be found in the

⁷⁶ A. Seago, "The Kraftwerk EffeKt: Transatlantic circulation, global networks and contemporary pop music", *Atlantic Studies*, (Vol. 1, No 1, 2004) p.103 - Accessed 10.08.05

⁷⁷ J. Connell and C. Gibson, *Soundtracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place*, (London, Routledge, 2003)

⁷⁸ *ibid.* P.88

German rock music of the late 1960s and early 1970s, of which Kraftwerk were a part. Nevertheless the post-war European, cosmopolitan aesthetic which bands such as Can, Popol Vuh and Faust sought and that, for Seago, “was distinctly original, genuinely innovative and marked by a single-minded intelligence”⁷⁹, failed to resonate within a broader cultural context. Such bands, largely grounded in rock’s expressive tradition, have maintained marginal cultural collateral, in contrast to Kraftwerk’s circumscribed technological modernity that continues to filter through contemporary electronic music. The group remained determined to incorporate the German language, name and iconography, unlike most of its contemporaries who translated their music through American names and ironic affectations of rock culture. Consequently Kraftwerk’s specificity has ensured they remain central in the contemporary milieu, with producers, in Kopf’s words:

Cruising along the internet’s digital highways instead, their computers are the prosthetic limbs with which they extend their reach way beyond geographical borders.⁸⁰

Kraftwerk’s cultural capital remains resilient in the face of fragmented and loosely bound neo-tribes⁸¹ and the fuzzy boundaries of a post-media world. Within this complex social reality the group’s technologically prescribed ideology, a simplistic but altruistic future vision, they represent a re-contextualized hope of modernity. Beilharz’s assertion that, “modernity is still a project, unfulfilled but just so, because [it is] unfulfillable,”⁸² emphasizes modernity’s enduring presence in a contemporary environment characterized by a limitless number of autonomous models and practices. Bauman challenges the idea of modernity’s conclusion proposing, “modernity is very much with us. It is with us in the form of the most defining of defining traits:

⁷⁹ A. Seago, “The Kraftwerk EffeKt: Transatlantic circulation, global networks and contemporary pop music”, *Atlantic Studies*, (Vol. 1, No 1, 2004) p.90 - Accessed 10.08.05

⁸⁰ B. Kopf, “The Autobahn Goes on Forever”, in *Undercurrents: The Hidden Wiring of Modern Music*, R. Young (ed), (London, Continuum, 2002) p.152

⁸¹ M. Maffesoli, *The Time of the Tribes*, (London, Sage, 1996)

⁸² P. Beilharz, “Introduction”, *The Bauman Reader*, P(eter) Beilharz (ed), (Oxford, Blackwell, 2001) p.6

that of hope, the hope of making things better than they are.”⁸³ Kraftwerk is a filament in the complex fabric of modernity, where as David Toop observes, there are, “people plugging in to remind themselves of life as it was when they were plugged out, twisting their isolation into something resembling community”.⁸⁴ It was here that the conflict emerged over what sounds and rhythms are permissible in their attempts to shape a social reality from increasingly fragmented cultural networks.

⁸³ Z. Bauman, *Postmodernity and its Discontents*, (New York, New York University Press, 1997) p.80

⁸⁴ D. Toop, *Ocean of Sound*, (London, Serpent’s Tail, 1995) p.89

Chapter Five - Paid in Full: The Commodified and Social Rhythms of Hip-Hop

Black music always used to go straight to the people ... Big business speaks on that music now, before it gets to the people. Starts on the streets? Shit don't start on the streets, it starts in the boardroom.¹
Chuck D (Public Enemy)

Today's youth culture proceeds from a different premise. Instead of standing outside society, it tries to work through it, exploiting and exacerbating its contradictions to create unpredictable possibilities for the future.²
George Lipsitz

Such is the extent of a particular genre's musical reach that it warranted, in the eyes of music historian Guthrie P. Ramsey, for the period to be branded the "Age of Hip-Hop".³ The music's ascendancy and the broader transitions affected under its cultural umbrella, made it comparable to that of the 'jazz age' in the 1920s and as significant a cultural epoch as rock became in the 1960s. Hip-hop's pervasive effect being such that, as Ramsey observes any failure to seep through into every cultural crevice signifies, "its absence may be understood as a reaction against it."⁴ By invoking the terms rap or hip-hop, as defining and descriptive labels, assumptions are immediately made. These musical modes and cultural formations are largely formed by the dissemination of its tropes and symbols through the global media. Hip-hop is unequivocally perceived as the dominant expressive tool of young, black America, significantly male, urban in make up and one that is without doubt, as Public Enemy's Chuck D was quick to observe of its blue-chip credentials, 'big business'. Nevertheless the genre's thirty-year history requires hip-hop to be viewed in its complexity, one that builds upon but reaches beyond its

¹ Chuck D from Public Enemy quoted: M. Foreman, *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*, (Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2002) p.278

² G. Lipsitz, "We Know What Time It Is" in *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*, A. Ross and T. Rose (eds), (New York, Routledge, 1994) p.25

³ G.P. Ramsey Jr., *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004) p.164

⁴ *ibid.* p.164

fundamentally racialized and national construction to incorporate aspects of global reception and consumption. The rhythms of hip-hop, springing from eclectic sources that defied sonic insularity, would proliferate through space regardless of attempts at cultural protectionism by those who dared claim ownership. The task of those who declared cultural tenure felt increasingly threatened, unable to cling to a point of origin, as the digital age made such sources increasingly difficult to anchor. Many, like author Irvine Welsh, lamented its relentless drive to cultural dominance, claiming:

1980s, the last decade with a vibrant youth culture. We'd had teds, punks, casuals and ravers, but now we have just a derivative of global-hip-hop culture that's all over the world.⁵

However much as hip-hop progressed through its commodified forms, across racial, geographical and class divides, offering an off-the-peg urban authenticity, it nevertheless maintained an inherent sense of connection and community that were encoded at its point of inception. As such the age of hip-hop was shaped by its sonic characteristics but moved by loosely interpreted values and attendant social practices, many of which are more firmly adhered to outside hip hop's generic commercial tropes. In the more marginal and esoteric communities of beat-makers, scratchers and rhyimers hip-hop evolves through the social rhythms that often eschew its blue chip credentials.

Hip-hop's informal codes of behaviour emerged as America, moving into a period of economic rationalism and reduced government, showed signs of civic disengagement that, in Robert Putnam's terms, formed a systematic and progressive loss of social capital⁶. The significance of popular music was its capacity to create liminal and informal communities outside the institutionalized and regulated social groupings, the bowling clubs and political affiliations of

⁵ I. Welsh, "Credo", *The Independent on Sunday*, 13.07.08, p.39

⁶ R.D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 2001)

Putnam's 'lost' America. New means of communication generating new communities, transformed the traditional structures of 'neighbourhood' and role of localism. As the rhythms of hip-hop moved, they enfolded more intricate social values that were able to recapture the eroded ethos of reciprocity through social bonding and bridging across a growing global network. Renowned rapper, the late Guru, expressed his belief in hip-hop's function in providing social assistance claiming, "I look at life like this: if you know something or have the knowledge, it is your civilized duty to pass the knowledge on to someone who needs it."⁷ Further elaborating on the significance of his group Gangstarr's name:

It means three things: Street knowledge, intellect, and spirituality ... We're like a survival kit.⁸

The music's encoding of group and social values problematizes hip-hop's more overarching messages of self-determination through individual empowerment, where displays of wealth and consumption are deemed justifiable and socially prescriptive. Nevertheless the often-submerged collective codes reflect alternative networks of connectivity to provide other important mechanisms for the culture's growth beyond its national borders. Hip-hop would begin to occupy contradictory positions from outlaw to corporate, resistant to complicit, and would significantly, in Paul Gilroy's words, colonize, "the interstices of the cultural industry on behalf not just of black Atlantic peoples but of the poor, exploited and downpressed everywhere."⁹ In resisting the urge to reduce this fragmenting genre to single model hip-hop can be seen to move through its social and commodified rhythms becoming a panacea for disparate groups and interests who form a global-wide matrix of affective alliances.

⁷ Interview Todd Jones – May 2003 <http://www.hiphopelements.com/article/read/6/5751/1/>
Viewed 07.02.07

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, (London, Verso, 1993) p.77

In essence hip-hop's cultural strength is derived from its capacity to absorb and re-contextualize numerous other forms of music, past and present. The ability to harness evolving technology enabled it to engage with the sonic totems of the past, in order to press claims of legitimacy, and with sounds and vernacular of the present, to vindicate its immediacy and vitality. Activating these processes, of layering and juxtaposing, shapes hip-hop's defining syncretic form; one in which points of origin become blurred and progressively ambivalent to the degree that claims of authenticity become increasingly nebulous. This loss of a clear path to a sonic or lyrical author would begin to pose the question as to how we are able to assess the sounds and rhythms which, although they may be traced back to specific sources or locations, have been transformed by time, displaced through changing channels of communication, impacted by technological processing, and problematized through an endless pattern of cultural exchange. Hip-hop's chronology would show the music's diverse and idiosyncratic roots, in New York's 'five boroughs' in the mid-1970s, were shaped into an ad hoc and hybrid form that, as Gilroy claims challenges the belief that "it sprang intact from the entrails of the blues."¹⁰ Rather its eclecticism, derived from a maverick use of new technologies, was embracing Latin beats, European melodies, strident two-bar guitar rock riffs and cinematic sound effects, all juxtaposed with the defining bedrock rhythms and chants of African- America's rich cultural past. This collision is suggestive of a vibrant and entirely new form emerging from New York's neglected urban landscape in defiance of any rules of cultural absolutism. The racialization of hip-hop's official narrative, as the visible and vocal MCs rather than unobtrusive DJs and producers gained ascendancy, would also begin to marginalize certain aspects - its early but crucial Jamaican influences, significant contributions from the Puerto Rican community and inclusive make-up. Any attempts to reduce hip-hop to a single metaphor, or marketable formulae, risks its institutionalization and as such obscure its place in a wider popular cultural discourse. Tricia Rose, who positions hip-hop unequivocally as an African-American expression, nevertheless

¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 34

identifies the inherent paradox in this observing: “Not unlike racial segregation, black cultural practices and popular culture are treated as if they are mutually exclusive categories of analysis.”¹¹ In seeking to construct and protect hip-hop’s cultural heritage it risks becoming detached from its wider dissemination, one in which, as George Lipsitz attests: “Popular music is nothing if not dialogic, the product of an ongoing historical conversation in which no one has the first or last word.”¹² Hip-hop’s place, as the incipient form in which popular music engaged, through producers and DJs plundering quite literally its recorded past requires it to play a significant role in this wider cultural conversation.

Adventures on the Wheels of Steel

It was to take away from gang affiliations and turn to something positive.¹³
Afrika Bambaataa

Any understanding of hip-hop’s movement towards global proliferation, evident in vibrant communities from Israel to Brazil, Sweden to Australia, must address the complexity of the music’s construction and reception. Hip-hop’s multiple communities have been accelerated not only through contemporary mediated and commercial forms but also through a broad set of values, attendant expressions and cultural norms produced by the very specificity of hip-hop’s origins in New York in the mid-1970s. Many of hip-hop’s global hubs, that incorporate independent labels, radio shows, fanzines, producers, DJs, MCs, designers, and graffiti artists, are resonant of the nascent communities that were being forged from the rapidly changing conditions and channels of communication present at the movement’s inception. Importantly hip-hop’s paradigm was constructed and progressed through the capacity of an urban youth who

¹¹ T. Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, (Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press, 1994) p.83

¹² G. Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1990) p.99

¹³ Afrika Baambaata, *Scratch*, Director – Doug Pray, (Palm Pictures, © Firewalk Films, 2001)

were able to shape the detritus of their cultural environment into new forceful expressions. DJ'ing, rapping, break-dancing and graffiti were symptomatic of a need to grab hold of what was at hand to utilize as tools to both celebrate and repudiate the markers of identity and location. Peter Shapiro saw these Bronx teenagers, living through the death rattle of the disco era, as being:

Like carrion crows and hunter-gatherers, they picked through the debris and created their own sense of community and found vehicles for self-expression from cultural ready-mades, throwaways and aerosol cans. If club goers, DJs, musicians and producers were fiddling while New York burned, these kids from the Bronx were trying to make sculptures from the cinders.¹⁴

Social fragmentation accelerated economic forces which were being felt most acutely within poorer urban areas, particularly in locations such as the long neglected South Bronx.¹⁵ Changing cultural practices in the post-soul era were beginning to erode disco's drift towards complacent irony. The self-regarding thrust of disco's message of social mobility was being superseded by the need for more visible and vocal avenues of self-empowerment. The move towards identity politics would precipitate groups and gangs driven by the more strident rhythms of hip-hop and punk. Concomitant technological advances, yet to be wholly transformed by the digital revolution, were, nonetheless, informing a generation of affordable, more accessible and more malleable means of leisure as well as audio production. Against the backdrop of social flux hip-hop emerged from economically deprived urban communities not magically but rather as necessary mechanism of negotiation and as an important means of motivation, identity and community building, one which, as Nelson George observed, "didn't start as a career move but

¹⁴ P. Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around: The Secret History of Disco*, (London, Faber and Faber, 2005) p.233

¹⁵ During the 1960s and early 1970s, under the guise of 'urban renewal', 60,000 Bronx homes were razed as many members of the Bronx community underwent considerable physical displacement and which saw the social flight of many into the South Bronx. Source: T. Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, (Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press, 1994) pp.30-31

as a way of announcing one's existence to the world."¹⁶ For those who had become alienated and disenfranchised, hip-hop, through its rhymes and rhythms, aerosol cans and break-dancing crews, encoded a collective social agenda into these expressive communities as a necessary means of survival.

Afrika Bambaataa, a young DJ and one time gang member¹⁷, played a pivotal role in both hip-hop's sonic and social narrative. Bambaataa's seminal release, *Planet Rock*, in 1982 was constructed from the fusion of European and African traditions, but was also accompanied by an inclusive community ideology. The track's rhymes, chants and bedrock rhythms suitably processed, for those familiar with New York disco stalwarts D Train and the Peech Boys, and juxtaposed quite literally with the computerized modernity reified in Kraftwerk's stark but icily clear melodies and rhythms of *Trans Europe Express* and *Numbers*. Bambaataa's catch-all methodology, apparent in the music's construction, is reflected in an inclusive social ideology, which continues to resonate through many avenues of contemporary hip-hop. Aware of the social empowerment derived from gang affiliation, Bambaataa saw the potential in strengthening community bonds and the benefits of collective negotiation. A sense of collectivity, embodied in values of altruism and reciprocity, was an effective tool in replenishing the social capital that had been eroded by the social and economic conditions impacting on the poorer neighbourhoods like the Bronx. This call to strengthen social bonds was driven by the ideology of the civil rights movement, the Nation of Islam and James Brown's call to self-determination, *Say it Loud. I'm Black and I'm Proud*. Bambaataa's push to collectivity became framed by a tradition of Afro-Centrism and significantly a personal brand of cosmic futurism that had been an established component of African-American culture.¹⁸ An

¹⁶ N. George, *Hip-Hop America*, (New York, Penguin, 2005) p.14

¹⁷ Afrika Bambaataa was a member of a division of the Black Spades gang from 1969 until their demise in 1974

¹⁸ This ideology was constructed against the backdrop of cosmic consciousness progressed through science fiction and the mysticism embodied in Afro-centrism and the teachings of

idealized global community both effective and affective, a hip-hop diaspora, which he decreed in 1973, was to be the 'Zulu Nation'¹⁹. In producing a template for cultural connection and sonic movement, reified in the mobility of the DJ, and incorporating the ancillary expressions – break-dancing and graffiti - hip-hop was encoding a mechanism for its informal dissemination. A self-propagating and inclusive rhythm nation, it was a precursor to hip-hop's expansion through the marketing and distribution forces of corporate America, where power would shift centrality from the DJ to the iconic rapper or MC.

Hip-hop's early inclusive make-up was an inevitable consequence of its iconoclastic nature. The movement, an important pre-echo of a contemporary global network that would willingly grab shards of image and sound, to feed back into a cultural soup. Hip-hop was feeding a culture that prioritizes spontaneity and stimuli over author and authenticity, where discontinuities and continuities battled each other for cultural space. David Toop saw the portent in this creative euphoria catalyzed by the use and abuse of available technology, in which:

The notion of creating new music and previously undiscovered sounds from old records, using only a pair of record decks, was as new as any art form could be in the accelerated information blur of the technological 20th century.²⁰

Hip-hop's roots were explicitly cultivated from the bedrock of sound and rhythm, where 'the break' – that four, eight, or sixteen bar drum pattern cut adrift from the body of the track as

Marcus Garvey. Accelerated by technological advances in games and music production, hip-hop's appropriation of Kraftwerk's tropes of modernity had been inculcated by the music and imagery of George Clinton- Parliament / Funkadelic and the Mothership, Jimi Hendrix, Sly Stone, infamous Chicago radio DJ, Captain Sky, jazz legend Sun Ra and his Cosmic Orchestra, themselves popularized by the Jonzun Crew's homage – *Space is the Place*. Hip-hop would respond with the names and affectations of Grand Master Flash, Herbie Hancock – *Rockit*, and Afrika Bambaataa and the Soul Sonic Force.

¹⁹ The Zulu Nation, founded by Afrika Bambaataa, still exists as a global community offering a range of information, books, music and products through its website:

<http://www.zulunation.com/afrika.html>

²⁰ D. Toop, *Rap Attack #3: African Rap to Global Hip Hop*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 2000) p.xiii

intro, fill or solo – became for DJs the elusive holy grail. Since the technology of turntables and mixers, then subsequently digital samplers, advanced to enable the recorded past to be manipulated and shaped to create new syncretic forms both live and in the studio, the role of DJ became transformed. The capacity to beat-mix and scratch consequently turned the record decks into a powerful expressive tool and the DJ into a visceral exponent of the art. Now the role was no longer that of a mere selector but rather a cultural gatekeeper and much-heralded alchemist, an exponent of arcane techniques of DJ'ing.

In dismantling the pre-packaged record, the song or the track, the DJ/producer was able to reconfigure its raw components to suit an entirely new and different context. In this way the song's original place within what was a frequently accepted music narrative was being exposed then exploded. New inter-textual relationships were being forged that would be suggestive of music's more malleable and interactive future. Before the term was even conceived the 'mash up' had begun. These collisions of sound were substantially facilitated by DJs and producers accessing the African-American heritage that the vinyl record had catalogued and stored. It was this rich, often untapped, reservoir of beats and hooks that provided hip-hop its raw materials of change. As rock and pop happily tossed aside easily digestible and disposable products hip hop trawled through for 4 and 8 bar gems amongst the detritus. Grand Master Flash, who as much as any other DJ in the movement's early period, symbolized hip-hop's innovative stance in reaching out to claim all sounds and rhythms as being permissible in turntable construction. His pivotal release, *Grand Master Flash's Adventures on the Wheels of Steel*, reached out to the margins of the stockpiled past to juxtapose familiar beats and popular bass lines with children's stories, soundtrack grabs and forgotten dance-floor exhortations.²¹ Similarly Flash's early club sets would, in giving ascendancy to the break and insure the crowd stayed on the floor, see him

²¹ The track was a collage built around the bass line from Queen, *Another One Bites the Dust*, incorporating Sugar Hill Gang, *8th Wonder*, Blondie, *Rapture*, Chic, *Good Times*, The Sequence and Spoonie G, *Monster Jam*, The Incredible Bongo Band, *Apache*, an obscure Flash Gordon record and the group's own track *Birthday Party*.

take delight in destroying preconceptions of what was deemed authentic and incorporate breaks from The Monkees - *Mary, Mary* and The Beatles - *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. In David Toop's history of hip-hop, the DJ admitted:

I'd say, 'I thought you said you didn't like rock.' They'd say, 'Get out of here, 'Well, you just dance to The Rolling Stones.' 'You're kidding!'²²

Afrika Bambaataa, like Grandmaster Flash, was willing to embrace rock and pop's melodic and rhythmic components in his DJ sets and studio output forging strong bonds with producer Arthur Baker and musician John Robie, who had developed reputations in the popular music industry. Bambaata had a strong Latin following and was quick to exploit the DJ's mobility and play downtown in more punk and fashion clubs like Danceteria, Roxy and the Mudd Club; significant entries for nascent scene into popular culture's wider dialogue.

If hip-hop's key signature was 'the break' it enabled the music to resonate more readily with aspects of rock, itself valorized by the physicality and power of the drumbeat, and so more effectively impact upon the predominantly white American rock market. Music enthusiast and entrepreneur Russell Simmons was able to see the music's power and transgressive potential. Simmons readily identified with hip hop's immediacy recognising its capacity to appeal to the testosterone-fuelled energy of young male America in a similar way to the rawness of rock n roll. Simmons considered hip-hop to have "more in common musically with rock 'n' roll than any commercial r & b since r & b *was* rock 'n' roll."²³ In drawing upon hip-hop's growing production and consumption base to create his Def Jam empire, Simmons, and later with producer partner Rick Rubin, was constructing an effective model for the music's growth. Hip-hop's immediacy and energy was, without question, in-step with the zeitgeist of teenage

²² D. Toop, *Rap Attack #3: African Rap to Global Hip Hop*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 2000) p.66

²³ M. Foreman, *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*, (Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2002) p.123

suburbia, previously the exclusive realm of hard rock. Def Jam was able to build a more utilitarian and marketable form. A form that began to replace the more eclectic and embracing styles of hip-hop with the more bombastic orality of rap. One which in the process eroded the Bronx scene's cosmopolitan flavour, its inherent eclecticism and importantly shift away from the DJ as locus of the music's dynamic towards the microphone and the message. Hip hop moved to those with the capacity to articulate the conditions of urban America and beyond, no longer a 'New York thing' the music had need to have dialogue with a much more dispersed community. The shared experience and shared spaces gave the music a greater urgency and resonance. The rhythms of the Five Burroughs gave a vehicle to move hip hop but now rappers were given a platform through which the conversation could take place.

Moving Through Analogue Space

Rap music takes the city and its multiple spaces as the foundation of its cultural production. In the rhythm and the lyrics, the city is an audible presence, explicitly cited and sonically sampled in the reproduction of the aural textures of the urban environment.²⁴

In contrast to one of its early influences Kraftwerk, which sought meaning in movement, hip-hop looked to encoding space and socially produced place to construct its identity. Hip-hop's sovereignty, by its own decree, is derived from the 'the street', where meaning is to be found in the social rhythms and interactions of micro-communities that are replicated on a global scale. It's urban make up, both real and simulated, problematic and optimistic, has been essential in retaining the seal of authority, exuding, in its own argot, 'keepin' it real'. Subsequently the street's signification has become transformed in accordance with hip-hop's morphing into newer, and what are deemed more authentic, forms of urban expression. Such is the extent of

²⁴ M. Foreman, *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*, (Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2002) p.xviii

this process that in present music designation much of hip-hop and rap's more commercial forms have been marketed alongside contemporary, corporate R & B, under the banner of 'urban music'. The music's grounding in identity and location has rendered its 'spaces' as symbolic and its 'places' a means of mythologizing the specific and local.

The ghetto, frequently an important reference in earlier blues and soul songs, became transformed into hip-hop's neighbourhood or 'hood' as a powerful motif, a touchstone of identity, connectivity, and authority. A significant tool in the dissemination of hip-hop through the modelling of its channels of social empowerment and community mores, its spaces have also been important in constructing urban and racial myths as effective marketing strategies. As the music and its attendant social practices moved beyond the five boroughs, urban space was deemed essential to its power and vitality, a necessary component in its construction.

Subsequently hip-hop became increasingly institutionalized as an expression of the localized place in which it was lived and the cultural space in which it was created. Frequently such spaces were to become symbolized by the reality of 'the hood'. Beyond hip-hop's cultural home in the Bronx many streets reverberated to an increasingly harsh reality that found the music's inbuilt oral tradition, as well as its rhythms, offered effective agency. The eclecticism of east-coast hip-hop contained within its DNA, amongst other things, the seeds of west-coast rap. The vertically constructed music communities of the Bronx became transposed into a new sonic and cultural paradigm built upon the horizontal urban geographies of East Los Angeles, Watts and Compton.

As it evolved the 'good times'²⁵ of early hip-hop were being rapidly eroded by the reality of 'hard times' as the music became an effective tool for expressing pain as well as pleasure and

²⁵ Many of the early hip-hop releases, such as *Rapper's Delight* by The Sugarhill Gang and DJ sets were built upon the bass line of the Chic disco track *Good Times* and its near identical bass

importantly the specifics of place. The urban spaces, vibrant, but sometimes hostile, social enclaves, such as: Watts and Compton - Los Angeles; Roxbury – Boston; and Fifth Ward – Houston, were significant sites of shared experience identified through the sounds which they emitted. Murray Foreman’s study of space and place in hi-hop’s narrative identifies the extent to which: “a highly detailed and consciously defined spatial awareness is one of the key factors distinguishing rap music and hip-hop from the many other cultural and subcultural youth formations.”²⁶ Many urban spaces were being culturally reclaimed by significant elements of youth across racial divides, but unequivocally from African-American neighbourhoods. Technology was assisting the process of transformation in the city’s soundscapes - boom boxes, bass speakers and car stereos becoming accompaniments to street parties and clubs as hip-hop became the rhythm and sound of choice for increasing numbers. Hip-hop operated as a highly effective tool through DJ mobility and the proliferation of audiocassettes which began to create shared space as the more bombastic sounds of rap began to impact on the sonic landscapes through which these sounds and rhythms bled.

Acts such as Eric B and Rakim plus labels like Def Jam, with its more strident vocal artists - Run DMC, and Public Enemy - in seeing the potential of hip-hop’s transgressive stance were injecting a note of assertive action that had merely been suggested by previous tracks such as Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five’s *The Message*, and the follow up *White Lines*. What evolved was a highly effective and transposable formula that established urban identity in the collective memory that would continue to resonate through time and across local, national and global networks. The success of Def Jam acts was an important factor in de-centring hip-hop and eliciting one of hip-hop’s fundamental mechanisms – antiphony. The call and response of hip-hop communities, not only an important characteristic in rap’s oral tradition and competitive

signature, Queen’s *Another One Bites the Dust*. The upbeat inflection of such motifs setting the tone for early hip-hop.

²⁶ M. Foreman, *The ‘Hood Comes First: Race, Space and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*, (Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2002) p.3

spirit, embodied in MC battles and verbal stoushes, but also a trans-community call to arms. The subsequent response to Run DMC, LL Cool J and Public Enemy's more ebullient raps saw the domination of a specific style, embodied in west coast artists N.W.A., Compton's Most Wanted and Ice-T to be answered in time by east coast counterparts. Referred to as gangsta, reality or hardcore rap it pointed to hip-hop's push to confirm its links to its urban spaces and justify its mandate from the specific community. Building on the storylines of early tracks like *The Message*, which detailed urban dysfunction under the pressures of economic hardship, rap offered up a role as community voice. Through this format rhymes and stories of contemporary life could resonate through references to popular cultural icons, shared experiences adapted to localized practices and spaces. Foreman observes: "the rap narrative is, in effect, a highly mobile form that ranges widely across our cultural spaces, touching on many walks of life in multiple ways."²⁷ Rap's established template provides a mythologized version of the authentic urban experience, which nevertheless, provides encoded social texts that and give meaning to aspects deemed essential to the urban identity and that could be moved through local communities and mediated space.

When Public Enemy's Chuck D referred to rap as being, "the black CNN we never had,"²⁸ it was an early vindication of hip-hop culture's capacity to operate as community informant. Its ability to translate and move localized tropes and practices through a growing global network was a significant tool in hip-hop's dissemination. Like CNN's repositioning of the local in current affairs within a global framework, hip-hop's growth was an indication of how, through the medium of television, the dominance of metropolitan centres was being superseded by a growth of urban regionalism. Cities such as Atlanta, Boston, and the Bay Area developed vibrant hip-hop communities just as transnational scenes would begin to emerge. Television,

²⁷ M. Foreman, *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*, (Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2002) p.16

²⁸ J. Eure and J. Spader (eds), *National Conscious Rap*, (New York, PC International Press, 1991) p.336

particularly cable and satellite, through music specific channels – MTV and BET – were dissolving established cultural centres and empowering second tier cities like Seattle, San Francisco and Houston as place itself became ubiquitous.

Importantly rap was able to incorporate its inherent storytelling into the cultural texts circulating through these de-centred networks of communication as well as through human mobilities that moved within and beyond the communities themselves. This idea of collective ownership – stories of the community and signification provided a vital link in the chain of the African-American oral tradition. Orality was underpinned by the rhythmic traditions, which filtered through to hip-hop. The roots of rap's effective narrative lay in the complexity of its own verbal sound-clash, a polyglot collision incorporating aspects from traditional West African griots²⁹ to contemporary prison slang. David Toop catalogues the many instances and influences of this orality, building in radio DJs, army and prison slang, gospel call-and-response, be-bop, scat, doo-wop groups, ring games, skip rope rhymes, Jamaican toasters, soul testifiers, and comic book slang, plus the rhymes and verbal scats of Muhammad Ali, Cab Calloway, and Bo Diddley.³⁰ More specific precedents for rap were the politicized vocal groups The Last Poets and the Watts Prophets, who along with Gil Scott-Heron injected a tone of dissent and, in the case of the former acts, a distinct flavour of urban poetry that foreshadowed the thrust of contemporary rap. All are essentially sonic and intrinsically stem from the rhythms, which operate as a mechanism for encoding and deciphering rhymes and hooks locked within the collective memory. Rhythms that provide the systematic repetition on which rap's storytelling can be superimposed to maintain circulation and continuity.

²⁹ Griots of West Africa, operating in Nigeria and Gambia were a caste of musicians whose responsibility was to function as provide the community with local history, gossip and critique of local power structures etc. Ref: J. Lott, "Keepers of History", *Penn State Research*, 23 (2), 2002 Available online: <http://www.rps.psu.edu/0205/keepers.html> Accessed 24.06.11

³⁰ D. Toop, *Rap Attack #3: African Rap to Global Hip Hop*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 2000) p.19

Technology's role in catalyzing and shaping hip-hop culture has been most effectively contained within its capacity to extend and suspend the beat. DJs using two or more turntables in conjunction with multiple copies of records were capable of stretching the break. By expanding and cutting the signature percussion and drum parts left isolated on the track, time was looped, its metronomic pulse sustained. The prolonged and accented rhythms providing emphatic punctuation to the thrust of a specific rhyme, repetition and rupture at the appropriate points, a causal link between technology, rhythm and meaning. It importantly challenges arguments of repetition in popular music as being identified and subsumed by the forces of reproduction and mass consumption. Adorno sought to critique the individual's subservience to the repetition in popular music; its mass production and consumption brought about by industrialization and the advent of the "cult of the machine."³¹ However this does not anticipate the development of late capitalism's fragmented music communities in which rhythm and technology defy reduction to a single meaning. As Tricia Rose emphasizes, "repetition cannot be reduced to a repressive, industrial force. Nor is it sufficient to understand repetition solely as a by-product of the needs of industrialization."³² Rap and hip-hop wrestle back the dynamics of repetition inherent in rhythm to use as cultural collateral by deconstructing the reproduced commodities themselves, stripping down the mass produced packages to their component parts and to be appropriated as effective tools.

In employing the effective mechanism of rhythm and repetition, either as exhortations to dance or as a backdrop in detailing life in the neighbourhood, hip-hop communities developed as they began to resonate beyond their embryonic spaces and places. The micro-worlds in which individuals and groups lived, expressed as a means of social negotiation, pushed through geographical and virtual space via human mobilities and the circulation of cultural texts. Taking

³¹ T.W. Adorno, "On Popular Music," in *On Record*, Frith, S. and Goodwin, A. (eds) (London, Routledge, 1990) p.313

³² T. Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, (Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press, 1994) p.71

root in disparate communities where a social bonding was felt through hi-hop's capacity produced such affective alliances through inherent values but also through its colonizing of corporate and media spaces.

It's the Money ... Money ... Money ...

Any lingering countervalues are seen today as a pseudo-transgressive adjunct to the official business of selling all sorts of things: shoes, clothes, perfume, and sugared drinks.³³

Paul Gilroy

San Diego producer, DJ Shadow's plaintive cry regarding hip-hop's shortcomings in the late 1990s came in the form of a melancholic sample, "It's the Money... Money ... Money..." Buried amongst collision of reconstructed sonic gems in the form of long-lost break-beats, forgotten voices and orchestral afterthoughts that made up Shadow's debut album, *Entroducing*, itself a landmark as the first ever release constructed entirely from found sources; the track was titled, *Why Hip-Hop Sucks in '96*. The producer himself has continued to qualify this statement, saying it was always to be regarded as a relative assessment admitting: "it was intended as a tongue-in-cheek way to address pressures within the hip-hop community which I don't feel even exist anymore."³⁴ Nevertheless the statement of intent was designed to respond to the encroachment of corporate values on hip-hop's inferred ideology and importantly the track's sentiment continues to dig at hip-hop's most exposed nerve. As David Toop notes, at the time the track's production worthy of comparison to hip-hop's benchmark, Dr. Dre, its looped vocal refrain seemed a calculated reply to Dr. Dre artists, Snoop Dogg or Korrump's rapping of: "bitches, gangbangin niggas, killas, and 'my mind on my money and my money on my

³³ P. Gilroy, *Against Race*, (Cambridge, Mass. Belknap Press, 2000) p.272

³⁴ DJ Shadow, real name Josh Davis, interviewing himself on his website <http://www.djshadow.com/digest/>. Accessed 09.02.02

mind”³⁵. The brutalized reality of the contemporary urban experience, conflated with money, where conspicuous consumption was not merely means but also a right in order to counteract such conditions, still continue to dominate many hip-hop’s texts. Regardless of DJ Shadow’s critique and his belief that there existed, “a very strong dissatisfaction with rap music from the hip-hop underground,” its incorporation into the mainstream economy and corporate music industry structures reflect the genre’s inevitable progression and form a significant part of a broader cultural discourse. Hip-hop’s specificity - its spaces of origin, and racial construction operating in corporate America - displays its adaptation to capitalism inherent themes. Bill Yousman’s paper on hip-hop culture’s inevitable paradox, of operating within a dominant white market, in which:

The common themes of gangsta rap represent not deviance from but conformity to a particular manifestation of the American Dream.³⁶

By moving into the shared spaces of the marketplace, the anchoring of cultural forms becomes problematic. The exchange of commodities and practices beyond their places of origin with subsequent patterns of consumption outside racial designation has been a direct consequence of the expansion of the media and communications technologies and importantly the logic of market forces. John Hutnyk observes that such commodification: “proceeds by way of a racialisation that has long been a part of marketing black musics such as jazz, disco and rap to white, Euro-American audiences,”³⁷ and in the case of hip-hop its translation to a powerful domestic, white, and mixed race market.

³⁵ D. Toop, *Rap Attack 3: African Rap to Global Hip Hop*, (London, Serpent’s Tail, 2000) p.xxx

³⁶ B. Yousman, “Blackophilia and Blackophobia: White Youth, The Consumption of Rap, and White Supremacy,” *Communication Theory*, Vol.13, No.4, November 2003, p.383

³⁷ J. Hutnyk, *Critique of Exotica*, (London, Pluto Press, 2000) p.20

The movement of commodities through an expanding market has been fundamental to the articulation and dissemination of hip-hop's meanings and values. Albeit a market that has attempted to minimize its effect so as to not undermine legitimate cultural authority by claims of 'sell out', enforcing a problematic relationship, which as Rose points out:

To participate in and try to manipulate the terms of mass-mediated culture is a double-edged sword that cuts both ways – it provides communication channels within and among largely disparate groups and requires compromise that often affirms the very structures much of rap's philosophy seems determined to undermine.³⁸

It is, as Rose also emphasizes, a relationship that is rooted firmly in: "a common misperception among hip hop artists and cultural critics that during the early days, hip hop was motivated by pleasure rather than profit, as if the two were incompatible."³⁹ A sentiment that translates into many facets of popular cultural production across the racial divide, where the market romanticizes the view that expression risks being compromised by commercial considerations. In hip-hop's case its legitimacy is in a large part derived from the capacity to work effectively within the marketplace as a direct response to past claims of appropriation, plagiarism, and exploitation of blues, jazz and soul music by America's corporate structures. The need to be visibly in control of commodities within the wider market has become increasingly significant with many of hip-hop's leading exponents maintaining control over the terms and conditions of the sale of their products and promotional associations; many successful artists expanding into films, television, clothes, music production and publishing.⁴⁰ Subsequently empowerment is seen in direct correlation to the authority over representation and cultural ownership.

³⁸ T. Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, (Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press, 1994) p.17

³⁹ *ibid.* p.40

⁴⁰ The model for many leading hip-hop artists comes from successful entrepreneurs inside and outside the music business - filmmaker and auteur Spike Lee, basketball player Shaquille O'Neil, rapper Sean Combs. See N. George, *Hip-Hop America*, (New York, Penguin, 2005)

As the twenty-first century unfolds, and simulated media icons have superseded music's local heroes, many aspects of hip-hop have become increasingly identified with a global economy to which it once seemed purposely resistant. Cable television shows 'Hi-Hop Hold 'Em' and MTV's 'Flavor of Love'⁴¹ suggests hip-hop's marketisation has been achieved by effectively negotiating a post-race leisure economy. A phenomenon that, as Hutnyk perceives, is part of the logic of the mass market's fragmentation in which factors of difference and the multicultural become effective cachet in the value of commodities.

A twisted version of unity in diversity where the unity is alienated and abstracted away from relations between people and becomes relations between things. It has been thus for a very long time under capitalism. Indeed, this is its framing presence.⁴²

Music's conflicting relationship between the corporation and the community, the embodiment of Stuart Hall's concern regarding popular culture's inherent paradox: "the double movement of containment and resistance,"⁴³ frames hip-hop's progress through the global media. The need to stake a legitimate claim to cultural authority derived from both its connection to an identified urban community whilst maintaining an effective place within the corporate market through which it operates. Specifically this highlights the problems of an expanding media culture that, in Yousman's study of hip-hop consumption, "is merely about individual self-gratification and the attempt to solve all perceived problems through the purchasing of goods in the marketplace."⁴⁴ Problematic in that it exposes two competing narratives where the music, positioned within the context of a broader self-regarding consumer culture, is clearly at odds

⁴¹ "Hip-Hop Hold 'Em" is a poker show that invites celebrities from the music industry to demonstrate their card playing and gambling skills; "Flav's House" features Flavor Flav, rapper from the group Public Enemy in a pseudo reality television setting.

⁴² J. Hutnyk, *Critique of Exotica*, (London, Pluto Press, 2000) p.135

⁴³ S.Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular," in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, R. Samuel (ed), (Boston, Routledge, 1981) p.228 Quoted in L. Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself*, (Duke University Press, London, 1997) p.3

⁴⁴ B. Yousman, "Blackophilia and Blackophobia: White Youth, The Consumption of Rap, and White Supremacy," *Communication Theory*, Vol.13, No.4, November 2003, p.370

with the essential component of hip-hop ideology that seeks to deal with issues through collective negotiation. In the process key aspects that define race and community become mythologized through cultural texts and commodities. The spontaneous groupings, practices and products that emerged out of the distinct conditions specific to hip-hop becoming institutionalized through the mechanisms of mass production and mass media. This framing of hip-hop, in Foreman's words, has been "intentionally and strategically connected to commercial procedures, linking forms, images and statements of hip-hop with commercial interests, with production, distribution, and promotional apparatuses, and with national and international commodity markets."⁴⁵ Community and race become incorporated into hip-hop's stylistic code, its rhythms commodified through jingles, its raps used to brand soft drinks, snack foods, clothing, footwear, children's toys, and such products as Campbell's soups, McDonald's Chicken McNuggets, and Pillsbury baked goods.⁴⁶

Significantly for hip-hop, as it moved into a wider domestic and global market, it would suggest a concomitant disengagement from its point of origin, the black urban community from which it drew its authority. However despite its growing identification with a fragmented and diversified audience hip-hop must continue to be sanctioned by its community. If, as anecdotal information suggests, that white or, more accurately racially diverse consumption accounts for the majority of its music sales –hip-hop magazine *The Source* suggests around seventy-percent⁴⁷ - this is not at the expense of severing its ties with the black urban audience. The under-the-radar circulation of music and other texts through the community where magazines, internet sites, CDs, and before them cassettes would indicate collective ownership to counteract individual music sales and would, as Rose suggests, indicate its cultural collateral remains embedded within its core

⁴⁵ M. Foreman, *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*, (Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2002) p.18

⁴⁶ *ibid.* p.214

⁴⁷ B. Yousman, "Blackophilia and Blackophobia: White Youth, The Consumption of Rap, and White Supremacy," *Communication Theory*, Vol.13, No.4, November 2003, p.267

audience.⁴⁸ The mechanics of the market, which sought to identify its products and practices within a racial and resistant context, which to a wider audience were seen as a symbol of rebellion. The market's capacity to sustain and promote hip-hop as a clearly identifiable form through a diverse and scattered audience is contingent upon its continued resonance through its core community, one which requires it retain its non-compliant or outlaw credentials.

The dissemination of its form through the wider audience necessitates hip-hop becoming, like all other aspects within popular culture, a simulated representation reduced to near caricature. The distillation of hip-hop's practices and commodities to serve economic ends indicates the inherent logic and, for those who profit, an acceptable consequence of market forces. The mechanisms of corporate multiculturalism, driven by instantaneous communication, are framing ideas of race, Paul Gilroy observes that contemporary, "de-politicized consumer culture has taken hold, the world of racialized appearances has become invested with another magic."⁴⁹ A world in which a particular exotic style or transgressive stance is laden with a marketable kudos challenges the degree to which it can still be described as marginal or revolutionary. Reduced by the market to rhetoric or posturing to be accessed as merely 'off-the-peg' symbols in which, as Gilroy sees, "hip hop's marginality is now as official and routinized as its overblown defiance, even if the music and its matching life-style are still being presented – marketed – as outlaw forms."⁵⁰ In this regard hip-hop's value has become a significant component in the global fascination with racialized glamour and commodified angst irrespective of whether its media construction accurately reflects the reality from which its authority is derived.

The underlying demands of market utility require hip-hop to be reduced to a clearly identifiable form, one where race and mythologized urban spaces provide a suitable modality through which

⁴⁸ T. Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, (Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press, 1994) pp.7-8

⁴⁹ P. Gilroy, *Against Race*, (Cambridge, Mass. Belknap Press, 2000) p.21

⁵⁰ *ibid.* p.180

it can be moved. This however becomes problematic when based on a relationship of commodity exchange. Conflicting positions see the industry identify a significant post-race demographic that identifies with the tropes of hip-hop, and cultural protectionists who seek to contain it within the African-American narrative. Bill Yousman's study identifies a double helix, of consumer fascination and racial fear that rightly should be understood in relation to each other rather than as discrete and isolated phenomena. Importantly this addresses factors in the music's wider cultural dialogue. Specifically this highlights the contentious debate of race as social construct, where lives and communities are lived in relative segregation and music as a means of social negotiation in which racial lines become blurred and popular culture appropriates, as Yousman argues, "whatever is available to it with no regard for imagined or real cultural barriers."⁵¹ Race's construction with very specific political and economic agendas is as Yousman claims a result of social inequalities inherent in capitalism rather than ahistorical component, consistent with human nature that continues to manifest as an exertion of power and negation of guilt through the purchasing of commodities.⁵² Although this argument identifies the market's racialization of hip-hop commodities it does not clearly address music's capacity to provide mechanisms of empowerment and mobility across complex racial divides, as Gilroy emphasized music's potential enables, "the possibility that freedom should be pursued outside the rules, codes, and expectations of this conspicuously color-coded civilization. The transgression of those codes was in itself a sign that freedom was being claimed."⁵³ A significant factor in the post-soul, post-segregation environment, which the millennial generations occupied, is that hip-hop inevitably becomes a post-race, post-American tool of identity.

⁵¹ B. Yousman, "Blackophilia and Blackophobia: White Youth, The Consumption of Rap, and White Supremacy," *Communication Theory*, Vol.13, No.4, November 2003, p.372

⁵² *ibid.* p.376

⁵³ P. Gilroy, *Against Race*, (Cambridge, Mass. Belknap Press, 2000) p.200

Like most American academics Yousman identifies hip-hop primarily as a domestic cultural phenomenon that operates as a means of reinforcing racial barriers within a national context. This view has been reinforced by a national music industry that was traditionally reluctant to see black music as being particularly mobile across racial boundaries until the 1970s given the designation ‘race music’⁵⁴ and most certainly across geographical or economic borders. As Foreman observed, “it was thought of primarily as a commodity for African-American consumers and hence did not travel well in the global commercial media systems.”⁵⁵ However auditory cultures, not nationally confined, must be addressed in terms of their increasing mobility across social and racial borders. Such insularity reflects in Gilroy’s words that, “after twenty years of hip-hop, the black American heartland has shown scant interest in that Euro rap.”⁵⁶ Although Gilroy addresses the lack of attention to Europe’s more successful rap artists - M.C.Solaar, Nique Ta Mère, and IAM – the argument can be sustained through to, not merely rappers but also, DJs, producers, publishers, and independent labels that inhabit hip-hop’s micro-worlds and form a vibrant strand of the global creative industries network.

Shouting Out – Hip-Hop’s Social Rhythms

Hip-hop and rap cannot be viewed simply as an expression of African-American culture; it has become a vehicle for global youth affiliations and a tool for reworking local identity.⁵⁷
Tony Mitchell

It's positive. It's positive because he [Barack Obama] is mixed race as well, so he is an immediate, immediate symbol of unity. And I think, know what, hip-hop played a big part in this as well. I don't think he could have done it without hip-hop. Hip-

⁵⁴ G.P. Ramsey Jr. *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004)

⁵⁵ M. Foreman, *The ‘Hood Comes First: Race, Space and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*, (Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2002) p.288

⁵⁶ P. Gilroy, *Against Race*, (Cambridge, Mass. Belknap Press, 2000) p.182

⁵⁷ T. Mitchell, “Introduction” in *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA*, T. Mitchell (ed), (Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan University Press, 2001) pp.1-2

hop is what encouraged the youth to, um, get involved in voting and making the place better and he is the first president to embrace it.⁵⁸
Dizzee Rascal, UK artist

Hip-hop's claims to wider socio-political significance have marked it as a broader cultural force, more clearly than other contemporary styles. UK artist, Dizzee Rascal's attribution, in part, of Barack Obama's historic USA election victory in 2008 to hip-hop's capacity for social progression offers an insight into this notion of a rhythmic panacea. The fact that the artist was not American suggests how trans-national hip-hop is in reality. Although its embryonic spaces, of Atlanta, New York, the Bay Area and beyond, remained largely unaware of any meaningful responses, global clusters were answering hip-hop's early calls. The antiphony built into the music's DNA ensured wherever the sounds and rhythms of hip-hop filtered through the calls were being answered. Significantly as hip-hop provided, as Tony Mitchell implies, rather than a series of unrelated practices, a coded way of life to operate as a globally appropriate modality through which social and economic conditions could be negotiated, locally configured, and culturally expressed. Hip-hop was being progressed through the continual interplay between corporate structures that represent a much wider and globally mediated cultural system, and the informal networks and cartels of DJs, rappers, independent labels producers and promoters. Together, these mutually dependent narratives inform those who comprise hip-hop's micro-worlds and associations of more loosely bound consumers. If the commodified forms of the culture merely provide a framework for the mimicking of hip-hop's tropes and affectations, its encoded ideology of collective negotiation offered a model for transformation and empowerment. In his introduction to the comprehensive study of hip-hop's complex and fractal dissemination Mitchell emphasizes its heterogeneous make-up; from Japanese B-Boys, Basque and Italian Marxist rappers, gangster affectations in war torn Bosnia and Islamic and African

⁵⁸ Interview with Jeremy Paxman on Newsnight, USA election special, 05.11.08 Transcript viewed online <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/nov/08/us-elections-2008-usa> 07.11.08

manifestations in France and the United Kingdom;⁵⁹ evidence of hip-hop's source effect if not source recognition.

We have a word *m-pahiya* for when we bring styles. It is a big word for which we have many explanations ... when you make some music and you add some thing to it, it means you have increased the whole music: you have added something that was not in the original music ... so it is m-pahiya when you bring styles.⁶⁰
Ibrahim Abdulai –drummer, Tamale, Ghana

The significance in the rhythms lay in their malleability, their capacity to morph and transform within these disparate communities. Hip-hop represents global translation of Ibrahim Abdulai's description of West African *m-pahiya*. The continual progression of beats at each encounter encourages the shaping of rhythms within a local context suggesting a process of identity building possible through music production. This mechanism, embraced within African communities, specifically the Tamale region of Ghana where, as John Miller Chernoff suggests:

Music helps to provide an appropriate framework through which people may relate to each other ... Africans use music to mediate their involvement with the community.⁶¹

If hip-hop's dominant narrative is driven by a hegemonic music industry and subsequent patterns of mass consumption, then other, less celebrated, nodes of creative production and participation have emerged to suggest the music offers an alternative social construction. Hip-hop provides the opportunity for participants to make their music socially effective, as Chernoff implies within an African context those involved "transforming the dynamic power of the rhythms into a focus for character and community."⁶² Hip-hop's commodified forms may infer freedom in music is merely defined by a freedom to consume, however the declaration of

⁵⁹ T. Mitchell, "Introduction", in T. Mitchell (ed), *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA*, (Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan University Press, 2001) p.1

⁶⁰ J. Miller Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1979) p.64

⁶¹ *ibid.* p. 154

⁶² *ibid.* p.155

intent branded into early hip-hop have seen it continue to resonate through localized communities who seek freedom of expression and markers of identity.

Two films released in the early years of the twenty-first century clearly identified the types of mechanisms through which hip-hop's calls could be definitively answered, its individual and group participants mobilized. *Scratch*⁶³, a film that depicts the alchemic skills of DJs and *Freestyle*⁶⁴, which details the rapper or MCs microphone dexterity. The latter, through its capacity to brand local spaces, group, and individual identity more readily, has perhaps been regarded as the key disseminator of hip-hop. The more fluid and heterogeneous collectives of DJs, scratchers, turntablists and low budget sonic producers signify hip-hop's less visible movement. Nevertheless both document a very visceral music culture that has positioned unequivocal competitive practices, DJ'ing and MC'ing, within its seeming opposite - a consensus, grass-roots community context. Operating in localized club environments outside the mediated spaces of the corporate economy such events provide accessible channels for social mobility and peer group recognition. In both modalities are tethered to the rhythms of hi-hop, the centrality of the beat fundamental to both the competition and the sense of identity which characterize the turntablist and MC communities.

Applying community formations, as hip-hop demonstrates, is contentious. The very idea of the community as a homogenous, stable, self-regulating social group is inherently problematic. Frequently mythologized it operates as a convenient and externally prescribed social label that fails to address the mobilities and constant flux that signify the contemporary urban environment. Foreman observes, "today's sprawling global cities, which are characteristically

⁶³ *Scratch*, Director – Doug Pray, Palm Pictures, © Firewalk Films, 2001

⁶⁴ *Freestyle*, Director - Kevin Fitzgerald, Palm Pictures, © Firewalk Films, 2003

diverse and prone to rapid transformation.”⁶⁵ Subsequently the community can be a volatile and evasive social construction, frequently defined less by the specificity of place and increasingly by the ambivalence of space. Hip-hop’s space is specifically urban, its nascent forms and subsequent dissemination has been framed against a backdrop of cityscapes; a celebration of urbanity, it has provided the discursive context for hip-hop as the definitive street culture. Subsequently hi-hop communities did not magically emerge; the function of community has evolved as a necessary social utility, something that exists in the collective mind in order provided space in which to withdraw, a support mechanism, an important means of motivation, a tool of negotiation and identity.

It was within hip-hop’s capacity to translate the early ideology of collective negotiation and group identity that its wider appropriation and relevance was retained. Factors of cultural absolutism, which may have protected American hip-hop from threats of dilution and emasculation, also served to insulate and institutionalize; subsequently making certain sentiments seem inappropriate elsewhere or simply parochial. For others, who operated below the radar, it was this largely unrecognized global flow of collectivity that guaranteed the culture’s continued significance. It is the global adaptation of the music’s ideology that has enabled this; in France, which as André Prévos details was, in the poorer Parisienne suburbs, home to the first branch of Afrika Baambaata’s Zulu Nation in the early 1980s.⁶⁶ And which, as Mitchell observes, became for non-European migrants, “a vital form of anti-racist expression for ethnic minorities.”⁶⁷ Hip-hop’s fraternal characteristics, embodied not merely by the Zulu Nation’s inferred global diaspora but also by its very framing of collective identity and

⁶⁵ M. Foreman, *The ‘Hood Comes First: Race, Space and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*, (Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2002) p.29

⁶⁶ A.J.M. Prévos, “Rap Music and Hip-Hop Cultures in the 1980s and 1990s”, in *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA*, T. Mitchell (ed), (Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan University Press, 2001) p.42

⁶⁷ T. Mitchell, *Introduction* in “Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA,” T. Mitchell (ed), (Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan University Press, 2001) p.14

mutuality. If hip-hop encouraged spatial identity through area codes, such as Boston's telephone code, eulogized in Ed O.G and da Bulldogs', *Roxbury 02119* (1993), place names – Compton's Most Wanted - and the codified system of 'shout-outs' and the culture of 'representin', it also became signified through collective identity. The inferred association that came with 'crew' or 'posse' identification was extended to groups of artists and musicians; from the embryonic Rock Steady Crew and Sugarhill Gang, through to the South Central Posse, Wu-Tang Clan and more ideological collectives such as the Native Tongues, including The Jungle Brothers, De La Soul, and A Tribe Called Quest. Such collective representations, initially the emphatic expression of America's urban black poor were able to resonate through global youth cultures who saw rap's stake of communal ownership directly linked to oral signification and stories of community. It was as David Toop observed: "a liberation of local languages, a universal voice with which to air dissatisfactions with domestic politics,"⁶⁸ making hip-hop very much synchronous with many aspects of a post-colonial world.

Hip-hop's capacity for activism would make it a perfect vehicle for expressions of racial and cultural identity. In France it was capable of encapsulating disenfranchised strands of society. Acts such as IAM (Imperial Asiatic Man) were able to adapt hip-hop's broad messages of resistance to address issues of social inequality, racism and phobias of Muslim communities. Similarly in the United Kingdom it became an effective modality to tackle issues of Asian exclusion. Labels like Nation, through acts such as Trans Global Underground, Natasha Atlas and Fun-da-mental, and more recently Asian Dub Foundation have used hip-hop's rhythmic template as a mechanism to address community issues in the public domain. Nevertheless, as David Hesmondhalgh and Caspar Melville emphasize, as with renditions of community, it remains contentious to apply overly deterministic strategies as, "hip-hop is only a node in a

⁶⁸ D. Toop, *Rap Attack 3: African Rap to Global Hip Hop*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 2000) p.xxii

complex web of post-colonial cultural elements.”⁶⁹ However it signifies hip-hop’s non-commodified effects, its dissemination through its social configurations rather than merely aspects of shared consumption of its more commercial forms.

Rap and hip-hop’s British narrative serves to emphasize the complex and multi-layered nature of the United Kingdom’s social make-up. Its colonial past and post-colonial urban present indicate an ethnic and racial construction that defy a reduction to singular identities or music metaphors. Manifestations of hip-hop reinforce this heterogeneous and fluid characteristic. Embedded West Indian and Asian representations compete with post-colonial generations who identify, like Cornershop, Asian Dub Foundation and Roots Manuva, with aspects of localism, cockney, northern and Birmingham affectations, as much as with the specificity of race and ethnicity. Similarly hip-hop and rap have experienced other significant stages of transformation fusing with reggae, ragga, techno and post-rave expressions to produced jungle, drum and bass, breakbeat, garage, dubstep and grime, as racially diverse but unequivocal urban youth formations. In contrast to the more purist and America-centric representations of British hip-hop, furthered by London DJ and radio presenter Tim Westwood, artists like Tricky and Massive Attack, in Bristol and Nightmares on Wax in Leeds respectively, were quick to shape and morph hip-hop’s sonic ambiguity and modes of construction without being anchored to every motif of its American source. Accelerated by rapid lines in communication, coupled with a more complex and heterogeneous class and racial structure, the British popular music culture displays a capacity to engage in effective dialogue. Subsequently hip-hop’s DNA has filtered through to diverse styles, artists and producers: from Coldcut to Stereolab, the Gorrillaz to Zero Seven; from style magazines like *Dazed and Confused* to transgressive housing estate ‘hoody’ cultures who have taken up the tropes of hip-hop as symbolic resistance.

⁶⁹ D. Hesmondhalgh and C. Melville, “Urban Breakbeat Culture: Repercussions of Hip-Hop in the United Kingdom”, in *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA*, T. Mitchell (ed), (Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan University Press, 2001) p.87

Within America, loose associations like the Quannum collective, incorporating some of the San Franciscan Bay Area DJs, producers and rappers – Blackalicious, DJ Shadow, Latyrx and Lyrics Born - reinforced hip-hop's more co-operative aspects, echoing the loosely pan-African collective of the early days, the Native Tongues. Unlike the more parochial representations they were progressed through the culture's more cosmopolitan characteristics and were keen to facilitate a more global associations and collaborations. These subsequent tiers of hip-hop connectivity that prioritize the culture's embryonic, progressive agenda, which rejected rule based ideologies and continually sought external stimuli to inform its inherent hybridity. Hip-hop's post-race sonic cultures have witnessed a growth in turntable practitioners and evident in the success of global forums such as D.M.C (Dance Music Competition) its lauded winners have come from France, Japan, Denmark, Canada and the United Kingdom.⁷⁰ The significance of the DJ, in collaboration with rappers or as solo and team artists, has reified the rhythm as fundamental to hip-hop's construction and transnational movement. DJs like Mix Master Mike, with the Beastie Boys, and Jurassic-5's Nu-Mark and Cut Chemist have broken down the dominant iconic status of the rapper that has underscored the commodified culture of commercial hip-hop. Through the deconstruction of the rhythmic and sonic components of the sound, they have also retained the essential hybridity of hip-hop. Others, like DJ Spooky, DJ Olive and Q-Bert, with the past turntable collective, Invisibl Skratch Picklz, have sought to continue the music's progressive agenda; in a display of cultural literacy, they push hip-hop to the point of abstraction. In doing so, they have helped hip-hop maintain its collective identity in the face of iconic representations that have hermetically sealed the culture through racialized, spatialized, and commodified forms.

⁷⁰ Winners have included: 2003- Dopey (Canada), 1996 - DJ Noize (Denmark), 2002 - Kentaro (Japan), World Team Champions 1999 -Scratch Perverts (UK), and current world champion, 2006 - Netik (France), <http://www.dmcworld.us/> Accessed: 23.02.07

Hip-hop's capacity to articulate such a wide range of sentiments of rebellion, survival, pleasure, and competition has become an important tool of social integration for youth across the racial spectrum. It has become an essential part of cultural vocabulary and conversation, often expressed through non-verbal motifs and codes and conducted through global media and networks of communication. Nevertheless hip-hop cannot be reduced to a fixed dialogue, as Gilroy warns, "the calls and responses no longer converge in the tidy patterns of secret, ethnically encoded dialogue."⁷¹ The coded familiarity of sounds and rhythms, which Rose proclaims, "carries with it the power of black collective memory,"⁷² are in the post-soul era part of popular culture's wider dialogue. Global sampling has become an inevitable consequence of the proliferation of global communications. Hip-hop expresses the disparities and shortcomings evident in these globally bridged communities, progressed through its commodified and social forms it displays its capacity to both mimic and transform society.

⁷¹ P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, (London, Verso, 1993) p.110

⁷² T. Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, (Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press, 1994) p.172

Chapter Six - House Music all Night Long. Say What? House Music All Night Long:¹ De-Constructing the Discotheque

Mozart: We ended in F major, so now A minor

Salieri: Yes, yes ...but ...

Mozart: Start with the voices, basses first, second beat of the first bar

Salieri: Time? Time?

Mozart: *Common Time!*

Amadeus, Writer: Peter Shaffer; Director: Milos Foreman²

From Warehouse to Our House

From seemingly ignominious beginnings in the mid 1980s, a time when club music had reduced status, ‘house music’, branded with a quite specific, though somewhat functional argot, became synonymous with the global proliferation of dance music cultures. Spread, paradoxically, by a largely white suburban base, ‘house’ inverted the corrosive effects of the late 70s Disco Sucks mindset to achieve popular success during the cusp of the last decade of the twentieth and nascent twenty-first centuries. ‘House’, an abridged and localized description of the sounds that characterized the ‘Warehouse’ and ‘Music Box’ nightclubs in Chicago during the early to mid-1980s, began the process of moving beyond its local environment to become a generic form.³ The 4/4 linear structure, with melodic and percussive progression meant it began to function as any easy fit for producer, DJ and consumer at all levels of mediation. The transition, from a Chicago warehouse to global ‘in house’ sound, was circumscribed by socio-economic and

¹ The Title taken from Jungle Brothers, *I’ll House You*, (Gee Street Records. 1989)

² Although this scene, concerned with Salieri giving assistance to an ailing Mozart in the composition of the latter’s *Requiem*, does not appear in Peter Shaffer’s original stage play of *Amadeus* it is included in the screen version: Director- Milos Forman. Screenplay-Peter Shaffer. Copyright- Sam Zaent Company/Time Warner AOL, 1981

³ It must be acknowledged that the term did have resonance in the UK, particularly in London where warehouse parties, frequently squat parties, during the early 1980s, were part of the clubbing scene. Dirtbox and Battlebridge Road (St. Pancras) are perhaps the most remembered. The former now hosts its own Facebook group:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=26442466301>

cultural shifts in late capitalism. It specifically signified transformations in work and leisure practices in a class fragmented, AIDS cognizant, world. Importantly it reflected changing social spaces and rituals, reinforced through patterns of consumption that had evolved from enduring disco and dance floor cultures. The emergence and transformation of house music through to rave, its shift from niche clubs in the American Midwest to Europe and back, as club music created new networks, can be mapped and read through these embedded cultures. House music was both the 'record' and the 'event', each can be traced and read through past lines of communication and patterns of social interaction.

Mapping house music's movement, from its identified spaces in the American Midwest to its later generic and commodified form is, like rhythm itself, not singular but compound. It requires an understanding of how intangible sounds are given meaning and significantly how this meaning is socially constructed, maintained and moved. Through the mechanism of rhythm, these socially read sounds create an experiential product, a transient, intangible dance floor moment, that in turn reified into a recorded product. Unlike 'the song', which can be read more easily through lyrical and melodic structures, dance music requires greater social context. It is shared through both the passing experience and the tangible product which traces are links to past music cultures of soul and disco. These links, built upon factors of physicality in which both race and sexuality can be tracked through evolving leisure practices. It is these leisure practices and patterns of consumption that facilitate house and techno music's subsequent migration to Europe. These socially constructed practices and rituals would cause early American producers and DJs, such as Juan Atkins, to question their perceptions of how evolved other club cultures had become in contrast to the music's point of origin, observing:

I was more surprised when I first went to Europe and found that white kids could enjoy dance music⁴

⁴ D. Sicko, *The Roots of Techno*, © Wired. (Issue 2.07.94)
<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/2.07/techno.html> Accessed – 12.10.05

Significantly the music's appropriation, by the more spectacular and mediated club practices of London, then subsequent second tier urban centres, was framed, in large part, by embedded disc cultures and existing networks of social association that had evolved through jazz and rock n roll. The capacity to record and reproduce sound, which had in Attali's words created "a new organizational network for the economy of music,"⁵ that would be instrumental in the music's movement. However it was the ability to commodify the experiential dance floor product which would enable house music's wider dissemination and specifically its re-importation into the broader American music economy. This dance floor interface of sound, rhythm and body, frequently catalyzed by drugs and alcohol, was frequently constructed outside regulated night-time spaces. The breakdown of established practices and behavioural mores which would in house's halcyon days at Manchester's Hacienda club cause DJ and social chronicler Dave Haslam to comment:

Everybody danced; on the stairs, on the stage, on the balcony, at the bar. They danced in the cloakroom queue.⁶

Such, at the time, uncommon club practices were transmitted through word of mouth, as well as growing niche and music media which operated on the margins of more popular culture before its rapid take up by the populist media. The space between mainstream and the demonized margins mobilized an alternative club infrastructure whose shared knowledge was both explicit and tacit. By accessing fringe communications media, of pirate radio, flyers and mobile telephone technology it became possible to build an entrepreneurial template capable of transforming a peripheral music culture into an effectively malleable rave economy. These cultural and economic trajectories were framed by changing mediums of communication. From specialist music press and localized niche media fanzines, established around past jazz and pop

⁵ J. Attali (trans. B.Massumi), *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1985) p.32

⁶ D. Haslam, "DJ Culture", in S. Redhead (ed.), *Clubcultures Reader* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1997) p.150

booms and developed in the post-punk period, to the evolution of spaced biased networks of global connectivity. Within this matrix the rhythms of house music fused the experiences of body with the efficiency of technology. A music, which was grounded in the jouissance of the moment, found connection through changing social and economic networks to build upon and expand through the recorded product.

Evolving communications media framed the movement of cultural forms. Captured and reproduced as a cultural artefact, the record was rendered the essential carrier of meaning. As Chris Cutler noted: “recording is now the primary medium through which musical ideas and inspiration spread.”⁷ Diffused through television, commercial, college and independent radio, print media, satellite, digital and mobile technologies and contextualized global industry infrastructures, to redefine the individual’s, as well as the community’s, sense of connection and their perceived anchoring in time and place. House music, in its all-encompassing definition, represented the transition of loosely bound localized cultural communities to dispersed networks. These labyrinths of music connectivity were forged not merely through embedded factors of race, gender and nationality but also through shared social practices, licit and illicit, and wider patterns of consumption. In the process discourses were thrown up that were not merely social and economic but also epistemological in respect of how high culture, niche subcultures and popular mass produced culture all interfaced. The complex interaction, of music reception, aspects of mass production, mediation through communications technology, and identity formation, provides a multi-dimensional framework that helps construct a snapshot of the movement of cultural products, like dance music, through late capitalism.

⁷ C. Cutler, “Plunderphonia” in C. Cox and D. Warner (Eds) *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music* (New York, Continuum, 2004) p.152

House music, before becoming enmeshed with other modes and forms of popular music, does have a distinct and traceable narrative, genesis in past club practices and networks of communities, which enabled it to be identified within a broader music ecology. Nevertheless the movement and subsequent translation of this discernable sound, specifically its filtering through the more spectacular club cultures that evolved in the United Kingdom took the dance floor experience from regulated nightclubs into loft spaces, aerobics centres, abandoned warehouses and along its arterial motorways to the nation's open fields. These transformations, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, were indications not only of changing spaces and practices of leisure cultures, but by association, of embryonic networks of entrepreneurialism. House music came at the convergence of cultural, social and economic factors, parameters of sexuality, gender, race and class to, in turn, collide with ingredients of hedonism, expressions of self and community, micro-economic strategies and spatial mobility. In a post-punk, post-disco period house music rhythms configured the cultural climate of the late 1980s.

The social and cultural conditioning of increasingly monetarist political economies reflected both post-Reagan America and post-Thatcher United Kingdom. The mantras of economic enterprise and self-determination trickled through the porous social fabric on both sides of the Atlantic divide as the necessary bulwarks to guard against an inversion of social mobility. It was as much these models of entrepreneurial guile and flexibility, as the actual sonic and rhythmic templates of house, which were re-appropriated in America. Here in the 1990s an alternative club music network emerged where the experience was as important as the sound itself and house became reinscribed as 'rave'. This translation, of what was originally very much a black and gay urban music subculture, into a largely white, heterosexual suburban music form, was an indication not merely of cultural appropriation and assimilation but also the impact of contemporary economic pragmatism. The demand for an imported mass dance culture, for an American audience, and

music infrastructure, weaned on white rock, was much easier to satisfy than the expansion of an existing but delineated marginal black club culture.

How house moved through these landscapes and how it was built from existing music communities is suggestive of the beat's transmission through wider modalities. The movement of these dance sounds, from niche cultures into their wider consumption, was via changing platforms and modes of communication. Reading these loosely formed communities comes from textual analysis, and positioning within the social, economic and cultural conditions in which such auditory cultures exist. Music's ephemeral nature is given corporeality through these conditions. Sound cannot travel in a vacuum. Music cannot be created or consumed in one. Just as sound's omni-directional movement through space causes it to rebound, resonate, to become absorbed and transformed so music itself cannot be reduced to one-dimensional effect. Music's intangibility requires its meaning to be constructed within the complexity of its environment. As Andrew Blake points out our drive to give sound appropriate context, "taking it from the 'natural' physicality of sound to the 'cultural' state of sounds endowed with human meaning,"⁸ with John Shepherd's caveat regarding our meaning making:

Since all music originates in the minds of individual people, and since all minds are assumed to possess the same psychological characteristics, it is taken that there will be a certain conformity of patterning or structure of all music and all minds.⁹

This patterning must, nevertheless, be conditioned by the fact that a collective reality is not externally imposed but socially constructed and communications media has a vital role in its construction. House music displays all the facets of a socially rendered cultural product which, rather than remain temporally or spatially static, was developed through internal and external

⁸ A. Blake, *The Land Without Music*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997) p.7
⁹ J. Shepherd, P. Virden, G. Vulliamy and T. Wishart, *Whose Music: a Sociology of Musical Languages*, (London, Latimer, 1977) p.8

pressures to move from contained and identifiable local communities to operate as a wider dance culture pandemic.

Work Your Body – Finding Meaning in House

The very categorization of music is both conditional and contentious. Compartmentalizing through such labels as ‘disco’, ‘techno,’ ‘house’ or, as David Toop points out, “those other separations which lay claim to the creation of order and sense, but actually serve business interests”,¹⁰ underline how we are drawn to the translation of music’s intangibility into a broader and frequently commercial framework. Like language music occupies the dimension of sound and requires the process of producing contextual meaning. Like the spoken word, sound requires its social and cultural frame of reference, its location in time and space. Any reading of music is affected by the interaction of the multiple dimensions of rhythm, melody, timbre, grain, harmony and lyrical content. Music’s meaning is not transparent or singular but legion and contingent in factors of production, mediation and reception. Musical abstraction finds analysis turning to either the tools of critique and literary assessment or to explanations of mechanical effect in order to translate from the medium of sound to that of language. To construct meaning through critical structures or cognitive responses demystifies the processes of production and reception to give musicology a significant perspective but may still fail to give sufficient understanding to the listener or provide the necessary wider socio-cultural context. This is particularly true of popular music, where mass production and consumption require broader textual analysis. The economic conditions of replication and repetition infer commercial considerations which override aesthetic merit and consequently require more populist forms to be placed in a wider cultural framework.

¹⁰ D. Toop, *Ocean of Sound*, (London, Serpent’s Tail, 1995) p.iii

Music's meaning, whether in circumstances of production or consumption, is invariably marked by factors of time or place. Designations such as, 'Detroit techno', 'Northern soul', 'No-Wave New York', 'London garage', Eighties pop, and Fifties rock-n-roll for example must be framed in reference to issues of social class, race, gender, physicality and sexuality. Musicology's singular approach often fails to explain the empathy of audiences spatially or temporally disconnected. It is unable to address how, in respect of house music, the sounds produced for a mid-western black community became assimilated and progressed through white, largely working class, second-tier cities in the United Kingdom. Music's increased social mediation requires multiple readings to take account of a global environment increasing conditioned by accelerating communication technologies. The physical liberation of the dance-floor is unaccounted for in Adorno's slavish connection to the beat:

The cult of the machine, which is represented by unabating jazz beats, involves a self-renunciation that cannot but take root in the form of fluctuating uneasiness somewhere in the personality of the obedient. For the machine is an end in itself only under given social conditions - where men are appendages of the machines on which they work.¹¹

In offering a sociological structure for reading classical music and displaying clear antipathy towards populist forms, that Schoenberg's clinical classification suggested: "if it is art, it is not for all, if it is for all it is not art,"¹² Adorno's framework of hegemony, during the ascendancy of 'the machine', helps give an understanding to music within a wider social reality.

Specifically a class based reality, reinforced through a 'culture industry', which functions as a feedback loop into social and economic delineation and the maintenance of cultural stasis. The implication that cultural consumption on which popular music feeds is a diversion from inequality and "is simultaneously one of distraction and inattention. Listeners are distracted

¹¹ T.W. Adorno, "On Popular Music", in *On Record*, Frith, S and Goodwin, A (eds) (London, Routledge, 1990) p.313

¹² Source: J. Shepherd, P. Virden, G. Vulliamy and T. Wishart, *Whose Music: a Sociology of Musical Languages*, (London, Latimer, 1977) p.vii

from the demands of reality of entertainment.”¹³ As McClary and Walser point out, the continuing attraction to Adorno’s position lies in “the case that the only music that seems to require such methods is that which is significant precisely because of its indisputable social impact.”¹⁴ Through the application of homology it is possible to identify figurative links between music’s production, distribution, mediation and consumption with the dynamics at play in society writ large.

The beat allows navigation. Rhythm provides an infrastructure for all dance cultures which cannot be readily dismissed through claims of essentialism, of race or sexuality, nor Adorno’s capitulation by the dancer to the machine’s ‘unabating beats.’ Instead, as McClary and Walser note in their assessment of the rock genre, “the rhythmic impulses of [rock] music are as socially constructed,”¹⁵ and like rock proliferate through increased commodification and expanding networks of communication. For Adorno, commodification specifically reified processes of standardization. Mass production offered a new economy of replication that, as Attali observed, transformed previous music economies of performance, in which:

Repetition began as the by-product of representation. Representation has become an auxiliary of repetition.¹⁶

This inversion of the live for the generic reproduction would leave popular music open to claims of its reduction to formulaic, custom built or pre-digested motifs. More significantly this position being a clear judgment on what could be construed as mere passive consumption of

¹³ T.W. “On Popular Music”, in *On Record*, Frith, S and Goodwin, A (eds) (London, Routledge, 1990) p.310

¹⁴ S. McClary and R. Walser “Start Making Sense: Musicology Wrestles with Rock”, in *On Record*, Frith, S and Goodwin, A (eds) (London, Routledge, 1990) p.284

¹⁵ *ibid.* p.289

¹⁶ J. Attali (trans. B.Massumi), *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1985) p.85

musical commodities, “which are already fashioned to fit the needs of emotional listening.”¹⁷ Nevertheless dance music’s underlying functionality, although not reducing its audience to slaves to the anodyne rhythm, gives credence to claims of formula for effect. In this context increased commodification would leave house music and other club genres open to accusations of product standardization. But what is this thing called ‘house’?

House Music: Urban DIY electronic disco music incorporating a rich African-American cultural tradition which can be traced back to jazz, funk, soul music and gospel, mixed with European styles like electronic trance and electronic pop music.
18

House music’s narrative places it, in Hillegonda Rietveld’s succinct definition, within primarily a Black American cultural heritage of expressive strands of soul, jazz and gospel and additionally in the context of its more recent European popular precedents. Nevertheless house music remains as perhaps the closest progeny of disco which, later trance music aside, could itself easily fall within Rietveld’s definition. But although house music is not disco, nor is disco house music, it is underpinned by the inclination to reduce music genres to mere sonic or rhythmic characteristics. In this case the functionality of ‘common time’, a 4/4 template and linear structure, is indication of the desire to identify an enduring populist narrative thread. The notions of ‘common’ or ‘popular’, which bridge Mozart’s rhythmic template to disco’s pleasure domes and beyond to the sounds of post-industrial leisure spaces, must be positioned within their corresponding social realities. Disco’s centrality on ‘the body’ was a specific link in this chain, shared expression and as such a shared reality. The locus of the ‘self’ a vital building block in the development of subsequent club styles – ‘garage’ and ‘house’ - which were to emanate from the respective urban centres of New York and Chicago in the mid to late 1980s. The essential physicality inherent in the music was driven by the simple fact that it was strongly

¹⁷ T.W. Adorno, “On Popular Music”, in *On Record*, Frith, S and Goodwin, A (eds) (London, Routledge, 1990) p.313

¹⁸ Hillegonda Rietveld, “The House Sound of Chicago” in Redhead, S *et al* (eds), *The Clubcultures Reader*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1997) pp.124-125

identified with, and supported in those cities during the post-soul, post-jazz period by, the black, Hispanic and gay communities. In these cases the framing of self-identity, community and oppression, through skin tone, sexuality and ethnicity, was itself symbolized through physical representation.

The centrality of the body and the experience of the dancer placed disco, like house, tangentially to existing western music cultures in moving away from dominant logocentric forms. In contrast to a focus on the 'song', the primacy of the rhythm shifted emphasis away from the expressive production and folk narrative to reify the music in the social dance. The locus of the beat, rather than the voice, has continually proved problematic in club culture's textual analysis. In marshalling Paul Gilroy's wariness in articulating an experience which itself refuses to articulate the experience, Pearson and Gilbert highlight how, "dance seems to resist discourse; and some discourses have resisted writing about dance – failing to deal with the dance at the heart of dance culture."¹⁹ Music, which resonates throughout the body, creates a corporeal experience; a bridging point for the inner and outer self – social, physical and emotional - where the body itself becomes the site of discourse and the distinction between 'outside' (where the music comes from) and 'inside' (where the music is felt) becomes problematic. In reaction to rhythm, an affect, which often seems to be as devoid of coherent meaning as a musical experience can get.²⁰ The problem of analysis of dance cultures frequently lies in translation of the experience as iconoclastic. Rhythm provides agency for the transient, transforming event. Dance music's authority lies in the experience, the essential moment that, unlike 'the song', is not necessarily tethered to the tangible product.

To construct meaning, through textual analysis, for music that gives primacy to the rhythmic substructure, above lyrical affectation, is inherently problematic. It is more effective to utilize

¹⁹ J. Gilbert and E. Pearson, *Discographies*, (London, Routledge, 1999) p.6

²⁰ *ibid.* p.60

Barthes 'grain of the voice'²¹ rather than search for literal analysis. Meaning is carried contextually rather than with lyrical primacy – the manner rather than the words. As remarked of turn-of-the-century popular singer Marie Lloyd's technical shortcomings, "when she sang a song, she was in it."²² From blues to Elvis Presley the tension and emotion carry the song much more than the words or technical vocal performance. Through nuance, texture and character, the voice is embedded within the music, rather than solely through lyrical signification or literal elucidation. Simon Frith, in identifying the binding of fan and idol in the pop song, through an underlying sexual tension that is contained in, "the grain of the voice, the articulation of sexuality, the body, through its timbre, texture and pulse"²³ holds equally for dance music. Much of dance music's lyrical content looks to augment the music's physicality or emphasize the hedonistic, immediate and ephemeral nature of the experience rather than extend it through intellectualizing or encouraging narrow textual analysis. Early Chicago house titles such as, *Move Your Body*, (Marshall Jefferson), *French Kiss*, (Lil' Louis), *Baby Just Wants to Ride*, (Jamie Pringle), *Feelin' Sleazy*, (Fingers Inc.) and *Let the Music Use You*, (Night Writers) place meaning within the music rather than outside it. Meaning is found in a specific context, where the conditions of the experience collide with the physical and cognitive. Dance music's vocal affect lies in its capacity to convey that moment.

Let There Be House

In fading hotels, and former churches, gays, blacks and Latinos were feeling the exaltation of the damned as they danced to the new style of syncretic music that was being pieced together by clubs' DJs. This glittering beast that eventually rose on saten wings from the burrows of the Big Apple's worm eaten core was disco.²⁴
Peter Shapiro

²¹ R. Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice" in *On Record*, Frith, S and Goodwin, A (eds) (London, Routledge, 1990) pp.293-300

²² C. MacInnes, *Sweet Saturday Night*, (London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1967)p.25

²³ S. Frith, *Music For Pleasure*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988) p.167

²⁴ P. Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around: The Secret History of Disco*, (London, Faber and Faber, 2005) p.xviii

If Chicago's house sound had a conspicuous precursor, in both as rhythmic structure and roads travelled, it came in the form of disco. Both styles, to some extent were initially cultivated in the social margins of neglected urban detritus but equally in the spaces of undetected social mobility. Significantly these styles emerged during periods of North America's economic dislocation and cultural flux. House music, like disco, once identified and commodified - in Adorno's term standardized - would subsequently become vilified. For many the music became a symbol of emasculated, and in disco's case, mass produced and hollow vulgarity. Both sounds embraced technology to fetishize and hierarchize the recorded artefact, above the 'live' performance as authentic signifier. Both gave centrality to the body, placing the social experience above internal, cognitive and atomized reception, and both moved from localized cultures that were initially constructed along lines of sexuality and race more than youth and class. Both forms placed themselves in binary opposition to the dominant masculine ideologies of rock, and in the process provided social spaces for women locked out from rock's overriding machismo. Similarly both loosely bounded music genres became reinscribed within their spaces of origin when appropriated and commodified by white, and specifically in house's case, European production and consumption. Importantly, as Rietveld refers to electronic and Shapiro to syncretic characteristics, disco and house were framed by the changing technologies that were inseparable from social reality of both genres' respective times.

Disco experienced a tangential evolution from soul music, very specifically from the rich orchestrated sounds of Philadelphia and the production team of Gamble and Huff. This represented an important historical fracture one which, for the post-civil rights, post-soul generation, broke the tense relationship between gospel and the secular spaces of the nightclub. A period of economic uncertainty and social fragmentation, which saw many discard the traditional values of church and family, to turn to more material and secular distractions. This grasp for the material moment was, as Peter Shapiro's history of disco's underbelly observes, a

time for many to “start to question the illusions of American society, to search beneath the veneer of the American dream and its myths and promises, to catalogue the betrayals.”²⁵

Nevertheless there exists tendency to overstate disco’s role in breaking the pulpit’s tenuous community hold for African Americans. To position the experience of social dance, and very specifically ‘the body’, at the centre of cultural signification perhaps is grounded in racist assumptions about rhythm and the body. Such essentialism attempts to configure black music’s primordial tendencies, to hold these sounds and rhythms to be more authentically sexual. For other’s disco’s synthetic soul actually robbed black culture of its vitality and virility. It was, as George Clinton saw it, and sang it, the *Placebo Syndrome*²⁶, mollifying the fundamental strength of black music expression. Shapiro questioned whether, for those like Clinton, it was:

A pale imitation of funk whose machine rhythms were a fake substitute for the pleasure principle. Its sexless rhythms were denuding black music of its funk, and by extension black people of their humanity. As we have seen though disco’s endless throb turned plenty of people on and got most of them off.²⁷

The draw of dance music, at a time of growing self-assertion through the affirmation of race, gender and sexuality, was its capacity to position the individual at the centre of the experience. Club music was not merely defined by disconnected cultural product; a disco record or subsequent CD, whose consumption was the sole significant factor but rather the immersion into the experience. The transient event that placed the dancer and the dancefloor at its centre was now in effect the experiential product. The music was both the dance and the record at an important social interface in which, as New York artist, Lydia Lunch, observes:

Music is the connective tissue between protest, rebellion, violence sexual awareness and community.²⁸

²⁵ P. Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around: The Secret History of Disco*, (London, Faber and Faber, 2005) p.115

²⁶ Parliament, *Funkentelechy Vs. The Placebo Syndrome*, (Casablanca, 1977)

²⁷ P. Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around: The Secret History of Disco*, (London, Faber and Faber, 2005) p.81

²⁸ *ibid.* p.47

Emerging from North America's urban centres through to the end of the century disco, house and hip-hop would be fed by a growing sense of confusion and frustration that provoked collective responses which swung between the extremes of anger and ecstasy. America witnessed an erosion of its sense of inclusion and democratic consensus; the Vietnam War had created social and generational divisions whilst Watergate created a loss of political faith and high-level ineptitude. The music was set against the growing polarity and siege mentality brought on by this twin loss of collectivity and idealism of Woodstock generation and the sheen of mass consumption. Middle America, Shapiro highlights is where:

The onset of the seventies brought identity politics, special interest groups, EST retreats, armed street gangs, 'corporate rock', tax revolts, and a politics of resentment and with these, feelings of alienation, resignation, defensiveness, frustration and betrayal.²⁹

Christopher Lasch saw a systemic disintegration of faith in American political society, a doom laden reading of a moral crisis in the post-civil right period that would continue to erode confidence in the efficacy of enfranchisement, and traditional agencies of consensus and cooperation. A retreat into individual resolution where, "self preservation has replaced self improvement,"³⁰ to produce a culture of narcissism displaying a collective, cross-class, disillusion, "where Americans are overcome, not by the sense of endless possibility, but by the banality of the social order they have erected against it."³¹ Identifying these embryonic changes would lead Robert Putnam, with cursory recognition of popular music's capacity for social adhesion, to bemoan the nation's loss of effective social capital some twenty-five years later.³² Both social chroniclers identify trends in changing social connectivity. Although underpinned

²⁹ *ibid.* p.xi

³⁰ C. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, (New York, Warner Books, 1979) p.107

³¹ *ibid.* p. 39

³² R. Putnam *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, (New York, Touchstone, 2000)

by sentiments of nostalgia, and a sense of loss, they highlight patterns of disenfranchisement and a withdrawal into individualism. It was music which captured looser social formations centred on leisure practices rather than the eroding traditions of work, family, church and formal community participation.

Nevertheless although music represents the coming together of communities, increasingly outside the once dominant markers of family, work, locality and class it is still framed by wider social mores. Lasch correctly argues that, “social questions present themselves also as personal ones.”³³ Subsequent house music communities, in the period of late 1980s Thatcherism, like those of disco represent a retreat into a social order that validates the ‘self’ increasingly challenged and confronted by a wider reality dominated by a culture of rampant individualism. Although, as this reality left many staring into the jaws of economic disaster or at best uncertainty, the need for such informal expressions of community became even greater as affirmation of the self. The social realities that have provided a rich source of creativity and expression, from the lamentation of the blues to the artist loft communities of New York’s SoHo and impromptu block parties that sprung up in the Bronx at the height of its social decay. It was the audiences which congregated to bear witness to these social events that suggest other connections, and other informal communities.

The social significance of music is contained in its capacity to transcend externally imposed boundaries of identity and strive for self-determination. As Rietveld describes Chicago’s house music, “the production and consumption of this music has generated a sense of community, of belonging, thereby creating its own definitions of ‘normality’.”³⁴ The retreat into these informal and loosely regulated communities ensured, “new identities could be forged that were not

³³ C. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, (New York, Warner Books, 1979) p. 63

³⁴ H. Rietveld, “The House Sound of Chicago” in Redhead, S et al (eds), *The Clubcultures Reader*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1997) p.125

necessarily there to be sustained throughout the rest of the week.”³⁵ The capacity, for diverse members of the wider community, to perceive themselves within the music sustained bonds of connection that operated initially on a local level but increasingly in a wider, trans-national framework. As Rietveld observes, “the cultural tapestry of Chicago has led to a musical scene which has produced dance music with recognizable local characteristics, while at the same time part of a wider international flow of (musical) communication.”³⁶ The significance of the Chicago sound was how it moved beyond its locale, a seemingly parochial music enclave that would shift onto a global stage as a prescriptive club culture that framed perceptions of self, community and place.

Move Your Body – From Illinois to Elysian Fields

It captures music in creative crisis, looking back to the history of ‘70s disco and forward to a new dance futurism.³⁷
Stuart Cosgrove

When Larry Levan, the iconic New York DJ and in his own right one of the seminal figures in the narrative of dance music, turned down the job of resident DJ in a new Chicago nightclub and instead recommended friend and associate Frankie Knuckles take up the offer of steady employment in the ‘Windy City’, a significant piece of dance music’s story was being unwittingly written. Knuckles had played in seminal New York clubs, The Continental Baths and Better Days in 1972-1973, before finally relocating in 1977. This spatial shift from New York to Chicago, in the late 1970s, created what Stuart Cosgrove identified at the time as the future, or should we say ‘phuture’³⁸, of dance music. This collision of chance and causality

³⁵ *ibid.* p.127

³⁶ *ibid.* p.125

³⁷ Source: Sleeve notes - The House Sound of Chicago Volume III (FFRR-FRLP1, 1987)

³⁸ Phuture was not merely the name under which Chicago producers and DJs, Marshall Jefferson, DJ Pierre, Spanky and Herbert J recorded the seminal *Acid Trax* (Trax Records,

providing a nebulous, but nonetheless vital thread that tied, the by now, moribund sounds of disco's halcyon days to the embryonic house music. Specifically it was the specifically local sound of Chicago transposed from the nightclubs of New York, and translated through the established music media in the United Kingdom, which provides dot-to-dot mechanism of sonic mobility. An understanding of this process requires context, what factors at this particular time would persuade foreign media, of which Cosgrove was but one amongst a core group, to champion a fledgling music form, entirely overlooked within its place of origin?

The media, through radio, press and an expanding club audience, operates as an accelerant and vindicator of house music's form. In the process of its diffusion the music would become remolded, to meet the needs of a vastly different audience. As Gary Clarke observes urban youth culture's continual appropriation of other music styles, from reggae to hip hop and soul to funk, is not mere hybridization but fundamental change, and that: "black and white musical fusions cannot be denied, but it should be noted that black culture is transformed when it is adopted by whites."³⁹ What was seen by those within the specialist and niche media as a fundamental piece in popular music's rich tapestry rather than a mere fad to fill magazine and record/CD rack space would become shaped by the social reality of late century Britain. The 1980s saw popular music drawing to a rather bland conclusion as the spectacular resistance of punk had waned to leave a cultural landscape characterized by generic pop products. The decade, dominated by the political and corporate mechanisms laid out by Thatcher and Reagan's terms in office, became characterised by social dislocation and volatile but sporadic resistance. Strikes and visible opposition failed to turn the tide of monetarism or encroachment of reduced government and as a result nurtured a generation many of whom, isolated from past

1987) but also became the preferred spelling of the word, to denote a break with tradition and infer a more technology driven dance culture.

³⁹ G. Clarke "Defending Ski-Jumpers: A Critique of Theories of Youth Culture" in S. Frith and A. Goodwin (eds) *On Record*, (London, Routledge, 1990) p.89

components of connection of work and family structures, knew little else but economic hardship and deprivation. It was members of this disenfranchised generation who would, with scant regard to the music's cultural narrative, grasp the capacity for release in the sound of house, to embrace, in Steve Redhead's phrase, "hedonism in hard times"⁴⁰, and in the process transform this demarcated American rhythmic form into the more prescriptive and utilitarian beats of 'rave'.

The ability of this circumscribed sound to move through space, from the minority black clubs in Chicago, into the micro music cultures of Europe and on to the more universal, though increasingly fragmented soundscapes, of a commodity based global club culture was determined by the nexus of evolving patterns of communication and embedded local cultures. The technologies, which were framing these 'phuture' sounds, that characterized new dance music forms, were similarly determining how these sounds were moving through space to become accessed, translated and consumed. Similarly, the growth of night-time economies in this now identified post-work and leisure environment, which would have previously been regarded as more marginalized, were becoming increasingly encroached upon by not merely entrepreneurial elements but also public factors and controlling considerations. As these dance cultures moved they became, in turn, embraced, demonized, appropriated, regulated and commodified. These processes demonstrate the wider community's capacity to effectively integrate more marginal rituals and practices that such club cultures displayed into the more dominant ideology. Their assimilation through the media of press, radio, television reinforce, in James Carey's words, that:

⁴⁰ S. Redhead, "The Politics of Ecstasy", in S. Redhead (ed) *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture*, (Aldershot, Hampshire, Avebury, 1993)

Communication is a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed.⁴¹

Carey's expansion of Harold Innis's, frequently complex, application of the modalities of communication gives an appropriate framework for understanding how, through the interaction of the mediums of communication technologies, communities connect, expand and express themselves. Carey and Innis's work also suggest how society, through these media, regulates and exerts economic control. It is important to observe how, contextualized by local factors and traditional communities, the patterns of communication create a single nervous system that sustains its own pulse and rhythm. The fusion of old and new carrying over in Carey's words, the "scar tissue"⁴² of established social connections into commodity capitalism. Here existing communities are not merely replaced or discarded but augmented by the process of fusing dispersed cultural enclaves into single community. Music communities affirm this construction of the shared expression, shaped by the specificities of time and place. Through the transmission of messages and signs, once religious but increasingly secular, move quickly and efficiently over space. It is the process of disseminating information that ultimately negates the inhibitors of distance and place. Communication lies at the heart of consensus, the creation of shared beliefs and practices, rituals, which create the 'common', which Carey sees as inseparable from 'community'. 'Common roots' emerged through shared participation, and expression.⁴³ The transmission not merely of goods and services but also, contained within them, of thoughts and ideologies.

Culture, like the world in which it is constructed, is entropic; it does not function in an orderly or systematic manner but is complex, organic and interdependent. Nevertheless we strive to find

⁴¹ J. W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, (London, Unwin Hyman, 1989) p.23

⁴² *ibid.* p.3

⁴³ *Ibid.* p.18

structure and locate patterns of movement and connection within its organic nature. Music communities, like those which developed around the house and techno in the late 1980s, evolved in social space. Thought is not an exclusively individual and isolated course of action but is invariably a very public and social process. It occurs in classrooms, in cafes and nightclubs. This construction of thought and ideology is fundamentally dependant, as Carey notes, on a - “publicly available stock of symbols,” as such, “thinking involves constructing a model of the environment.”⁴⁴ The construction of music’s loosely bound communities come from an understanding, an accumulated literacy, of the shared symbols and rituals transmitted through, in Innis’s model of communication, the mechanisms and processes of space and time.⁴⁵ These mechanisms impart knowledge and embed, institutionalize and maintain this accumulated knowledge. The communities themselves represent the collision of established cultural mores, fixed through time-biased communication, primarily the oral tradition and disseminated through family, work and locale, with more rapidly transmitted knowledge, through space-biased media, such as print, television, radio, film and today by internet and mobile technologies. Through the fusion of these processes patterns emerge, from the visceral affectations and rituals of New York’s post-disco, ‘garage’ scene, became appropriated and adapted by Chicago’s fledgling gay and black club community, this specific ‘house’ modality in turn transformed by the conditions of Britain’s strident social reality and ultimately to be driven by communication’s true master, commercial expansion.

At The Discotheque – Constructing Music Cultures

Noise bought, sold, or prohibited. Nothing essential happens in the absence of noise.⁴⁶

Jacques Attali

⁴⁴ *ibid.* p.28

⁴⁵ H.A. Innis, *The Bias of Communication*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1951)

⁴⁶ J. Attali (trans. B.Massumi), *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1985) p.3

Music becomes a mass culture by entering mass consciousness, by being heard simultaneously on people's radios and record players, on bar and café jukeboxes at discos and dances.⁴⁷

Simon Frith

Much cultural currency is invested in the belief that the truly authentic musical experience is that of 'live' music. In the post-industrial period, rather than bearing witness to the autonomous creative moment, the most common and perhaps the initial experience of music, for the majority of us, is that of the recorded sound. The rapid transmission of goods and services through space biased communications has meant the sounds we hear are that of the captured, creative act, a moment in time, disseminated through progressively wider and more sophisticated media platforms. As music producer and sonic raconteur, Brian Eno observed:

The effect of recording is that it takes it out of the time dimension and puts it in the space dimension. As soon as you do that you are able to listen again and again to a performance.⁴⁸

The ubiquitous presence of the recorded sound has increasingly framed our patterns of social interaction and our constructions of self and community. Jonathon Sterne's investigations into the cultural origins of sound recording and the social effects of its transmission, highlights important transformations in "our perceptual habits and blurring [the] boundaries of private, public, commercial and political life."⁴⁹ The overriding significance of the transmitted recording has augmented and, in many situations, largely superseded the customs of live music and the communities centred on these 'folk' music traditions. The technology, which was conceived as a means of capturing the performance and creative event, became transformed by the technologies of mass production and mediums of communication, into a process of global

⁴⁷ S. Frith, *Sound Effects*, (New York, Pantheon, 1981) p.60

⁴⁸ B. Eno, "The Studio as Compositional Tool", in C. Cox and D. Warner (Eds) *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music* (New York, continuum, 2004) p.127

⁴⁹ J. Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural origins of Sound Reproduction*, (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2005) p.6

dissemination. As Attali terms, “conceived as a word preserver it became a sound diffuser,”⁵⁰ that would reinscribe existing local narratives to indicate a new organizational network and music economy in which:

The mode of power implied by repetition, unlike that of representation, eludes precise localization.⁵¹

Simon Frith’s assertion that, “mass music is recorded music,”⁵² sustains the idea that, within a global framework, local music cultures are rarely hermetically sealed but are instead heavily mediated by the recorded sound. Dance music during the twentieth century has increasingly been constructed upon the captured recording, offering a viable alternative to the availability of the recording stars of the jazz age, or as necessary adjunct to the big bands of the dancehall apogee. Much later house and techno, in turn, sought to reposition the vinyl record as an integral component of the genuine experience as opposed to rock music’s investment in live authenticity.

Jazz music, throughout the past century, has been fundamental to the global movement of rhythm and instrumental in the embedding of dispersed music cultures and communities. Not only was the music responsible, as Hobsbawm details, for a new epidemic of mass social dancing in the period after the First World War, but also during the 1930s witness to its wider reception through jazz, or as they were more commonly called ‘rhythm clubs’.⁵³ The centrality of records and record-inspired performers, an indication not only of the absence of the live tours

⁵⁰ J. Attali (trans. B.Massumi), *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1985) p.101

⁵¹ *ibid.* p.88

⁵² S. Frith, *Sound Effects*, (New York, Pantheon, 1981) p.60

⁵³ In 1930s ‘Rhythm Clubs’ sprang up (98 between 1933 and 1935) not in middle class parts of the metropolitan area but in places such as Croydon, Forrest Gate, Barking or Edmondton. E. Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People*, (London, Abacus, 1999) p.361

by the American artists⁵⁴, but also because, as Hobsbawm's chronicle, of jazz's arrival in Europe, points out, "the machinery of commercial diffusion caught it, as it were, on the wing, in the formation of its formation and evolution"⁵⁵ This narrative traces the elevation of rhythm's significance in the social dance as well as the early naturalization of black music in Europe, itself a symbol of twentieth century modernity. This proliferation "based overwhelmingly on young men listening to, collecting and discussing records of Americans"⁵⁶ assisted through the penetration, by these collectors, of the new medium of radio. The embryonic media technologies and commodities of cultural profusion were in place. The only inhibitors of jazz or dance music transmission were social rather than structural. The recorded product would be intrinsic to the diffusion of jazz and subsequent growth of musical forms. It was within the grooves of the record that meaning took shape as Chris Cutler observes:

This division between the professionally productive and the socially reproductive media was to have important consequences, since it was on the gramophone record that music appeared in its public, most evocative form; and when resonant cultural fragments began to be taken into living sound art.⁵⁷

Dance music, in the form of jazz during the pre-war years or rock n roll in the 1950s, where black music's symbolism of modernity would shift to that of generational affirmation, the recorded sound was central. In Britain this was fundamental to the evolution of music communities, where the record itself became clearly fetishized through patterns of consumption and diffused through cafes, milk bars and nightclubs an essential component in the changing make up of expanding leisure activities. As part of her investigations into sub-cultural capital Sarah Thornton identifies Britain's the important valorization of music communities through commodities. The cachet of music products in such communities is part of, using her phrase,

⁵⁴ Tours in many parts of Europe, including Britain were banned for long periods. E. Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People*, (London, Abacus, 1999) p.358

⁵⁵ E. Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People*, (London, Abacus, 1999) p.355

⁵⁶ *ibid.* p.358

⁵⁷ C. Cutler, "Plunderphonia" in C. Cox and D. Warner (Eds) *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music* (New York, continuum, 2004) p.144

'disc cultures'. In contrast to USA, which has strong youth presence in films,⁵⁸ recorded music's centrality would be pivotal in the spread of youth cultures of rock, pop and soul as well as the subsequent growth of disco and club cultures in Britain. Shapiro traces the foundations of the term 'discotheque' to its early Parisian, and literal origins. A fusion of 'disc' and 'bibliotheque' meant "customers could 'order' a record at the same time as they ordered a drink"⁵⁹. Here the embryonic disco distils the significance of the 'record' as commodity and, with the artist in absentia, its function as essential adjunct to the authentic musical experience, observing:

Where their American comrades could simply take the A train over to 52nd Street and on any given night hear Erroll Garner or Charlie Parker at the Three Deuces, Art Tatum at Club Downbeat and Count Basie at Club Troubadour, European jazz fans' distance from their heroes led them to sanctify the record as almost a holy artefact, as opposed to the performance itself.⁶⁰

The discotheque, as a space for marginal discourse, although it must be noted often with elitist pretensions, has frequently operated as harbinger of new social trends. Specifically for those who saw the strident rhythms of American music as release from bourgeois music domination, popular as opposed to educated culture. As Frith writes, "American sounds across the sea to liberate not enslave us; the backbeat supplies the symbolic means of resistance to bourgeois hegemony."⁶¹ Although perhaps an oversimplification as post-war capitalism itself heralded influx of the records the valuable commodities of this new youth culture with as much enthusiasm. Nevertheless the youthful participants saw consumption of progressive popular music also as a means of dissolving and transcending class as well as challenging and resisting it. Here the nightclub catered for the switched on core group, and as space for the canaries of

⁵⁸ S. Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995) p.19

⁵⁹ Shapiro, whilst speculating the original sources, references Albert Goldman's *Disco* (Hawthorn Books, 1978) to detail La Discotheque, a tiny basement club, at rue de la Huchette in the Quartier Latin, in the Fifth Arrondissement during the German occupation in the Second World War. P. Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around: The Secret History of Disco*, (London, Faber and Faber, 2005) p.6

⁶⁰ P. Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around: The Secret History of Disco*, (London, Faber and Faber, 2005) pp. 6-7

⁶¹ S. Frith, *Music for Pleasure*, (Cambridge, Polity, 1988) p.47

popular music culture, and where, as Thornton observes, “the discotheque is an institution which caters for neither individual nor mass consumption but the collective consumption of the small group.”⁶² In such spaces the record, invariably imported, is central.

House music’s rapid translation into a British club environment was facilitated by these embedded disc cultures. Historically the record, or in contemporary terms ‘software’, was primarily seen by the manufacturers as an effective means of promoting the very same companies players, or ‘hardware’. However it had reached commercial ascendancy by the 1930s when the ‘popularity’ of music came to be measured and consequently defined by record sales figures and radio plays.⁶³ Although the mediums of transmission were pivotal and, as Thornton emphasizes in the development of later club cultures, media and business are integral to “the authentication of cultural practices,”⁶⁴ in Britain the social spaces themselves rather than the medium of radio were pivotal. Significantly, until the proliferation of illegal pirate stations, which were to briefly flourish during the rave scene’s nadir, the diffusion of disc cultures occurred largely without radio’s mediation. The monopoly of the BBC’s non-commercial national radio format and its reluctance to conform to external popular pressures to drive the ‘beat’ underground and into the arms of pirate radio but also into the nightclubs and onto the dance floor. As Ian Chambers’ chronicle of British urban music points out:

The importance of radio in the development of British pop has been rather marginal, and certainly not as comparable to its importance of the USA. In Britain, new proposals in pop have acquired a rather underground, grass roots style, usually located in different types of clubs.⁶⁵

⁶² S. Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995) p.34

⁶³ Ref. S. Frith, *Music for Pleasure*, (Cambridge, Polity, 1988) pp.15-19

⁶⁴ S. Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995) p.9

⁶⁵ I. Chambers, *Urban Rhythms: Pop Music and Popular Culture*, (Houndmills, Hampshire, Macmillan, 1985) p.34

British popular music has continually shown a strong synergy between urban subcultures and iconic club venues. As Chambers observes, “in Britain, it has always been dancing, not the radio or other media, that has permitted the principal access to black musics and cultures.”⁶⁶ From the capital’s Two I’s coffee bar in Old Compton Street in the 1950s, as the focus of the skiffle and rock-n-roll scene, to the jazz-funk proclivities centred on Wardour Street’s WAG (Whisky A Go-go) Club in the 1980s, and from the provincial urban settings of the Cavern Club in Liverpool during the 1960s, to the Hacienda in Manchester at the height of post-house club culture of the 1990s.

It is within the clubs themselves, these spaces of social discourse, that the very records themselves help build the understanding of the listener and construct the idea of shared meaning and community. In Frith’s assessment, “what is taken to bind youth together, despite class or sexual difference, is a shared taste.”⁶⁷ The cachet of essential tracks of the night helped valorize these loosely bound and often transient social connections, operating as “a symbol of a cluster of values,”⁶⁸ and, as Thornton stresses, frequently imbued with ‘sub-cultural capital’⁶⁹ where effective kudos is attributed to knowledge within the social group. The movement of the recorded product symbolized, at this point, the possibility of social change through cultural consumption. In a broader context mass production and mass culture democratized beyond the confines of bourgeois and European, ‘educated’ culture by imbuing the commodity itself with transformative power. Chris Cutler, casting aside fundamental questions of who controls the market or controls the meaning, sees records intrinsically as classless objects which:

Make no distinction between “high” and “low” culture, “art” and “pop”. A record makes all musics equally accessible – in every sense. No special clothes are needed, no travel is necessary, one need belong to no special interest or social

⁶⁶ *ibid.* p.189

⁶⁷ S. Frith, *Sound Effects*, (New York, Pantheon, 1981) p.196

⁶⁸ *ibid.* p.208

⁶⁹ S. Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995)

group nor be in a special place at a special time. Indeed, from the moment recordings existed, a new kind of “past” and “present” were born – both immediately available on demand. Time and space are homogenized in the home loudspeaker or the headphone, and the pop CD costs the same as the classical CD and probably comes from the same shop. All commodities are equal.⁷⁰

It is within the social group, which is allowed to give value to the record, that the product takes on its wider cultural capital above its mere exchange value. Recognition of certain records, group response and DJ acknowledgement indicate a collective dynamic irrespective of factors of class, gender and sexuality that operate outside the club or off the dancefloor.

In the wider social context the media becomes fundamental in this construction of shared meaning, operating as a system of checks and balances to regulate behaviour and attitudes. Thornton observes within club cultures, “the media are bound to be an important source of information about other social groups and, consequently, a means of orientating oneself in the social world.”⁷¹ Significantly a connecting thread established in past social groups where, as Chambers noted:

A shared sartorial regime, the patronage of particular clubs and musical venues, and the purchase of certain records: all these activities formed part of an indivisible continuum, a world within a world.⁷²

Nevertheless in the post- house period dispersed groups shared totems and expressions linked, in Rojek’s analysis of de-centred leisure, through “the electronic communication systems that connect – for want of a better term - nomadic consciousness,”⁷³ to produce “the momentary

⁷⁰ C. Cutler, “Plunderphonia” in C. Cox and D. Warner (Eds) *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music* (New York, continuum, 2004) p.147

⁷¹ S. Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995) p.109

⁷² I. Chambers, *Urban Rhythms: Pop Music and Popular Culture*, (Houndmills, Hampshire, Macmillan, 1985) p.77

⁷³ C. Rojek, *Decentring Leisure: Rethinking Leisure Theory*, (London, Sage 1995) p.7

coherence of people in emotional communities.”⁷⁴ As house music transformed into rave culture these ephemeral communities would explode spontaneously to atrophy almost as abruptly. What began to emerge as house transformed into rave represented cultural bushfires that spontaneously ignited and spread rapidly through suburban communities. Frequently outside the traditional night-time spaces, by colonising parking lots, disused buildings and accommodating farmers' fields, global connections emerged through viral media as much as through past gatekeepers – DJs, playlists, urban club promoters and rudimentary mobile technologies. House music, in transforming to rave culture, provides an important glimpse into the socially networked digital future. Operating as self-regulating communities, outside traditional lines of communication and using emerging digital media, rave was suggestive of the shape of things to come.

Twenty-Four Hour Party People – Towards the Dancefloor Diaspora

We are bored in the city, everybody is bored, there is no longer any temple to the sun ... We are bored in the city, we really have to strain to still discover mysteries on the sidewalk billboards, the latest state of humour and poetry ... That's all over. You'll never see the Hacienda. It doesn't exit. The Hacienda must be built.⁷⁵
Ivan Chtcheglov

The fundamental reason it has become so widespread and pervasive reaching into every town and village and spreading far beyond the borders of the country is simple and prosaic: it is the best entertainment format on the market, a deployment of technologies – musical, chemical and computer – to deliver altered states of consciousness; experiences that have changed the way we think, the way we feel, the way we act, the way we live.⁷⁶
Mathew Collin

In hard times, hard thrills – reaching for the tubes and pills
Cabaret Voltaire, *Sensoria*⁷⁷

⁷⁴ *ibid.* p. 151

⁷⁵ I. Chtcheglov, *Formulary for a New Urbanism*, Available online: <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/Chtcheglov.htm> Viewed 06.07.09

⁷⁶ M. Collin, *Altered State*, (London, Serpents Tail, 1997) p.4

⁷⁷ Cabaret Voltaire, *Sensoria* (Some Bizarre/Virgin, 1984)

The licit and illicit entrepreneurialism that grew during the late 1980s and early 1990s came as an expedient response to the changes taking place in Britain's club culture. For many these changes were a heightened perpetuation of older work and play rituals: working on Monday but dreaming of Friday past and planning for Friday ahead; for others they signified new patterns of leisure. Transforming work cultures, driven by monetarist economic policies under successive Thatcher administrations, had witnessed an erosion of primary and manufacturing industries to be replaced by a growing service sector and a diminishing welfare state. Echoing situationist Ivan Chtcheglov's earlier call to arms, Matthew Collin's definitive account of the period notes, "a striking chasm emerged between the power of the individual as consumer and the individual's lack of power in the employment market."⁷⁸ As a result work's tenuous grip on the nation's enduring 'gold watch' employment security and the regulation of surplus time had been released. The changes, specifically in the psyche of a generation entering into the employment market, synchronized with the rhythms of this new night-time economy and were supported by the consumption of its evolving rituals and commodities, both cultural and pharmacological. This nexus of social conditions and modes of expression reinforced in Steve Redhead's words an association with:

A politics of pleasure, a hedonism (in hard times) – a pleasure for its own sake in times when moral regulation of youth is pervasive and deep economic recession is rife.⁷⁹

The pulses and tropes of this new music economy, which would be labeled varyingly as 'acid house' or 'rave' before its rapid fragmentation into a series of micro genres, divisions and categorizations, would become disseminated as a trans-global phenomena. As one of the prime examples of this new generation of entrepreneurs, Tony Colston-Hayter, stated: "Maggie should

⁷⁸ M. Collin, *Altered State*, (London, Serpents Tail, 1997) p.7

⁷⁹ S. Redhead, "The Politics of Ecstasy", in *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture*, S. Redhead (ed) (Aldershot, Hampshire, Avebury, 1993) p.7

be proud of us, we're a product of enterprise culture."⁸⁰ From urban to suburban, rural to exotic, the sonic and economic template would be appropriated and transposed to the deregulated spaces of industrial wastelands, deserts and backpacker tourist sites.

Significantly it took a mere eighteen months for the Ibiza styled 'slacker' scene to become identified in a South London aerobics centre. Here a periodic event called Shoom became the model of large-scale suburban party that symbolized the acid house culture. In Britain this first shift in popular cultural hegemony, from metropolitan to urban and suburban clusters, signified a reaction to the very Thatcherite 'style decade' the capital symbolized. The enterprise culture, which had emerged during this period, was suggestive of an economic potential that for many, and particularly those outside moneyed London, nurtured improbable aspirations. Subsequently the attraction in the liminal spaces of this emerging club culture lay in their capacity for those outside the orthodox economy to operate and have affect or, at very the least, participate. For these new and largely cavalier cultural entrepreneurs, relying heavily on Thornton's 'sub-cultural capital'⁸¹, there arose the opportunity to feed the burgeoning alternative and, with regard to drugs, illicit infrastructures. The rhythms of Chicago and Detroit would resonate through a growing network of independent record labels, licensees and distributors. Non-corporate designers would service label copy, sleeve design, posters, flyers and advertising with club promoters, sound and lighting engineers operating tangentially to the mainstream nighttime economy. Plus information disseminated through a growing network of journalists and media, to help fill the space occupied by this embryonic and largely unsanctioned leisure economy.

⁸⁰ K. Field, "Politics of Dancing", interview Kirk Field, source unknown quoted in: M. Collin *Altered State* ((London, Serpents Tail, 1997) p.110

⁸¹ S. Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995)

Just as the unpatrolled spaces, from Speakeasies to abandoned industrial shells, have been appropriated to avoid intrusion so illicit drugs have operated as popular music's hidden accomplice throughout its history. From the jazz and blues' bootleg hooch to disco's cocaine binges, hedonism has invariably flown in the face of prohibition and austerity. 'House' and subsequently 'rave's designated pharmacological accessory, or more specifically accelerant, was for once very visible and worn as a badge of authenticity, was MDMA known colloquially as 'ecstasy' or 'E'. Ecstasy augmented by established nocturnal paraphernalia - alcohol, cannabis and LSD - framed the music's rituals and rapidly normalized the club experience for those within whilst excluding those who chose an orthodox perspective. The dissipation of 'the event', where sounds, rhythm, lights and drugs collided, pushed the reading of the social dance into the realm of phenomenology as Melechi notes, "underscored by a hypnotically insistent beat, which provides the bottom line for the body: the minimal information required of the dancer to be consumed in the 'communication'"⁸² - an experience which, as Richard Hammersley et al observed in their study of the rave scene and ecstasy use in Scotland during the 1990s, evoked feelings that transcended class and obvious social divisions. Detailing through the study's participants how:

Part of the received culture of taking Ecstasy is that it is a great leveller. That is the feeling of happiness; contentment and empathy combine on the dance floor with feelings of high energy to dissolve the traditional boundaries separating classes, sexes and ages.⁸³

In this environment the loss of subject comes at the impact of such external stimuli. The experience conditioned by compound factors in which, as Collin observed was:

The prevailing mentality was totally defined by MDMA - empathy, sensation, sound - and the set and setting of the participants, which itself was interwoven

⁸² A. Melechi, "The Ecstasy of Disappearance", in *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture*, S. Redhead (ed) (Aldershot, Hampshire, Avebury, 1993) p.34

⁸³ R. Hammersley, F. Khan, and J. Ditton, *Ecstasy: Rise of the Chemical Generation*, (Routledge, London, 2002) p.37

with the prevailing economic and social mood of entrepreneurial, free-market Britain.⁸⁴

MDMA, just as imported records from Chicago and Detroit, arrived as Collin noted, with “some weird synchronicity.”⁸⁵ Although the rapid transmission of goods and services, crucial to the dissemination of cultural products, also extended to the more nefarious accessories arriving through the same spaced biased channels of communication. ‘E’ in this situation also stood for ‘enterprise’. Symptomatic of this the mobile technologies of cell phones, voice banks and pirate radio stations, which facilitated the music’s construction beyond the reach of regulatory forces, also served the movement of rave’s social lubricants.

The subsequent movement of this, for many, Dionysian phenomena through to Britain’s provinces and suburban orbits is well a documented and archived as a feature of the nation’s popular cultural history. However less is said of its off-shore migration. If the entrepreneurial dynamics drove acid house along Britain’s motorways into the marginal spaces of the country’s post-industrial shells it was equally effective beyond national borders. The specialist media, which championed the scene’s vitality and the national media, which demonized this new ‘folk devil’, collectively propagated both the music and its associated behaviours. As one seminal participant in America’s Midwestern rave circuit, Tommie Sunshine, with no sense of irony regarding house music’s roots, attested:

I mean, the way I found out about house – I think the way most white kids in Chicago found out about it – was by reading about what was going on in our city in the British [music weekly] Melody Maker and NME.⁸⁶

Its British counterpart framed key characteristics of the North American rave culture. These were not only through the media’s diffusion but also because they were contained in the

⁸⁴ M. Collin, *Altered State*, (London, Serpents Tail, 1997) p.64

⁸⁵ *ibid.* p. 50

⁸⁶ M. Silcott, *Rave America: New School Dancescapes*, (ECW Press, Ontario, 1999) p.103

movement of a number of those associated with the British acid house scene. Mireille Silcott's documentation of the transposed rave culture identifies a strong synergy where cities like Toronto, which displayed distinct Anglo-centric characteristics. It was built in part on one of the largest West Indian communities in North America but also amongst young English speaking Canadians who shared a desire to construct an identity that distanced itself from the neighbouring USA. Events and parties frequently branded with Anglo-centric motifs, from iconic sportswear with *U* and *K* writ large, displaying 'Madchester' affectations, and ersatz British and Jamaican accents. Subsequently touring jungle and hip-hop DJs and MCs found Toronto an empathetic space, though largely from a white audience. As confirmation, Alex Clive a Toronto events promoter elucidates, "there never seems to be any great leap of faith involved in absorbing anything British here."⁸⁷ Similarly on the Californian coast Silcott attests to ex-patriot colonization of the San Francisco club scene, noting the common perception, "The Brits invaded. Or, the British conquered. Or, the British Mafia took over."⁸⁸

Paradoxically North American rave culture, which looked to Britain as a benchmark, failed to be directly informed by the history of the 1980s house music of which the sounds and rhythms of Chicago and Detroit were fundamental. The model of house, which could be effectively transplanted in North America, was one that functioned outside the entrenched and conformist nightclub structures. Cities like New York and Chicago represented the original gay-Black model and the 'Disco Sucks' tradition still lingered in the popular culture psyche. Evolving from a largely white, straight and suburban demographic, which had fed the British transition from house to rave, the music's roots in disco had become dismissed in order to differentiate hardcore, egalitarian 'ravers' from their seemingly effete, elitist counterparts. In generational terms, signifiers of British rave – smiley face motifs, glow sticks, infant's soothers and

⁸⁷ *ibid.* p.77

⁸⁸ *ibid.* p.51

lollipops, which were essentially juvenile, were readily assimilated and marketed to a youthful American demographic oblivious to the music's regional heritage.

Just as rave finally succeeded in breaking the sovereignty of the performer, or musicians, to give centrality to the participants so the new rave speculators broke the hegemony of their spaces of interaction. What was effectively moved through the new entrepreneurialism was the capacity to establish a circuit or new infrastructure that operated, from necessity, outside existing night-time economies. As Britain witnessed events outside the larger cities and on the network of orbiting motorways so North America displayed the ability of its rave consumers to travel. Despite the vastness of the Midwest promoters were aware, as Silcott observes, "ravers were willing to travel megamiles through long stretches of bland cow-horse-cow-horse-barn-barn-barn scenery in hot pursuit of the next party, and they had been advertising their events accordingly."⁸⁹ As evidence of the de-centring of the spaces of such changing modes of recreation, one witness details at a party in Wisconsin, the nation's conservative heartland, "we've seen license plates from California, Florida, Arizona, Colorado, New York, Washington DC."⁹⁰ Specifically rave, in discarding past narratives of club culture, displaced the domination of metropolitan centres and discos as the locus of the leisure economy.

As adjunct to the growing events circuit increased commodification had enabled the music to become, through mix CDs and the proliferation of DIY production technology, available virtually 'on tap'. Nevertheless the wider dissemination of this rave culture indicated the movement of the experiential product as much as the mere transmission of house music's cultural software. The sub-cultural practices which fed this pattern of movement were becoming increasingly global. John Connell and Chris Gibson's ethnomusicological studies construct new global cartographies from auditory cultures and communities that dissolve national boundaries

⁸⁹ M. Silcott, *Rave America: New School Dancescapes*, (ECW Press, Ontario, 1999) p.108

⁹⁰ S. Reynolds, *Energy Flash*, (London, Picador, 1998) p.278

in a post-colonial melting pot. Here dance music is built upon both real and virtual trajectories where, “motion was evident in the physical act of dancing, and metaphorically in the ability of a combination of music, drugs and collective consumption to move dancers to another sensory level.”⁹¹ In this context club music contained potential for both motion and escape. Looser tourist and backpacker cultures were evolving; increased commodification and mobility following identical pathways. New enterprise ventures were not exclusively local or regional and existing sites of deregulated leisure - Ibiza, Amsterdam, and Goa - offered new spaces of experience. Inter-city destinations and weekend packages from some of the larger post-house clubs⁹² signified an increasingly de-centralised music based leisure economy. These new sites were as Connell and Gibson observed, evidence that, “unlike many other sub-cultural styles, dance music has a decentralized geography of scenes with more continental European and Asian influence and participation in production.”⁹³ Dance music denotes a continual erosion of the hierarchies of producers and consumers, and the strict definition of performance and audience. David Toop notes elements of global reciprocity, a discernable pattern of ethnic and experimental music informing expressive dance cultures, in which “the aim of dancing your ass off, sacred or profane was inspired by disco’s flow motion.”⁹⁴ The perpetual social dance.

In mapping the movement of the rhythms of ‘house’ music through the physicality of disco, ‘acid house’ and ‘rave’ to its global rituals and commodified forms, a point of critical mass is reached. The Dionysian club practices associated with house music would eventually peak and begin to level off like the music itself. Generational factors would bring a process of disengagement for many who would desire lifestyle changes or simply became exhausted, as the

⁹¹ J. Connell and C. Gibson, *Soundtracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place*, (London, Routledge, 2003) p.205

⁹² Ministry of Sound and Liverpool’s Cream were the most obvious examples of ‘super-clubs’ to evolve from this new night-time economy.

⁹³ J. Connell and C. Gibson, *Soundtracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place*, (London, Routledge, 2003) p.260

⁹⁴ D. Toop, *Ocean of Sound*, (London, Serpent’s Tail, 1995) p.41

study of Scottish ecstasy users reported: “[those we have been following, and to whom we spoke again] have matured, moved on, bought property, started careers.”⁹⁵ The concomitant process being the assimilation of commodified club cultures into a dominant leisure economy. Ecstasy became just part of a wider pharmacological polydrug cocktail and alcohol companies enticed young consumers, through ‘alcopops’ and marketing strategies, back into regulated licensed venues with less prohibitive opening times and broader music policies. The sanitization of house music’s alternative economy, highlighted by clubs such as the Ministry of Sound who modeled their branding strategy on corporate lines, pushed perceptions of the music to a form of easily digested ‘McDance’⁹⁶.

Like disco before it house music demystified and democratized the creative process to dissolve the space between producer and consumer, to mobilize in Adam Brown’s words “a strong sense in which nobody even cares who made the music, that there is a deconstruction of stardom.”⁹⁷ The music’s utilitarian characteristics, which sought to construct iconoclastic motifs, would in time overturn its signifying places of reception. House’s previously significant spaces of consumption would recede to subsequently dilute its vital essence; the music’s domestication is its ultimate emasculation. House music’s capacity to rapidly produce tracks or songs would inevitably cause it to oversupply the market, creating as a consequence over familiarity and a culture of inbuilt obsolescence. The standardized, generic artefact, chiefly the compilation or mix CD, could reproduce the essential moment anywhere anytime. The once essential catalytic rhythms that provided synergy between experience, space and consumer would become a prophylactic for those now jaded of the dance floor experience; an inferior generic product simulation of the once real climax and social release.

⁹⁵ R. Hammersley, F. Khan, and J. Ditton, *Ecstasy: Rise of the Chemical Generation*, (Routledge, London, 2002) p.130

⁹⁶ ‘McDance’ became a widely used media term in the late 1990s. Specific source: interview by writer with Jonathon Moore (Coldcut), RTRFM April 1999

⁹⁷ Adam Brown “Football, Pop Music and Democratization”, in Redhead, S et al (eds), *The Clubcultures Reader*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1997) p.96

The house music's domestication and commodification assisted its development into what Sarah Champion describes as "one of the most global and enduring dance cultures with scenes from Israel to Estonia to Brazil."⁹⁸ Its embedding into the popular cultural narrative has paradoxically created a generational fracture, nostalgic for those, like Champion, who participated in past club cultures, resistant for those who now construct a simulacrum of rave's once demonized 'folk devil' signification. For those like Champion who "grew up on raves" now see its sounds, spaces and rituals cross over into popular memory, lamenting its loss of cultural sovereignty:

After closing time at 2am word would spread of warehouse parties in Lancashire industrial estates or in derelict mills on the outskirts of the city (later they'd all become designer apartments).⁹⁹

Nevertheless the power of rave's guerrilla tactics and discrete use of technology, using text and internet communication to stay, "one step ahead of the police" enables it to resist corporate regulations and patrolled spaces. As Champion proposes, "if acid house was a rebellion against Eighties blandness, what's happening now is a reaction to the equally banal corporate chain-pub culture with its bouncers, mainstream music and drunken violence."¹⁰⁰ Facilitated by the commodified sounds of past club cultures permits, through generational resistance, the traces of house and echoes of rave are still to be heard.

⁹⁸ S. Champion, "Britannia Rules the Raves Again," *The Observer*, Sunday August 27, 2006. Online: <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,1858947,00.html> Accessed: 27.08.06

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

Chapter Seven – You Can't Have Everything ... Where Would You Put It?

Moving Through Digital Space

We are not in a very visual age, I think it's all about sound. People plug in their ears and don't look much ... you notice that on buses. People don't look out of the window, they are plugged in and listening to something.¹

David Hockney

As mobility becomes the dominant mode of human activity, a constant movement from source to destination, broken by intermittent rest points, the role of sound both real and symbolic has become a means by which to unpick and find meaning in the practices associated with this relentless ebb and flow. From a personal perspective mundane family activities have served to underline key markers of movement, and networks of communication that many of us take for granted. Shifting from private to public modes of transportation we trace our paths through space to unconsciously frame our routines in aspects of privilege and vulnerability. In a daily ritual my two daughters, jamming microscopic headphones into their ears, head to the railway station to begin the first stage of a journey to school. Crammed in a car whose value is a mere percentage of the cost of the iPods, MP3 players and Z-Trips that are essential appendices to the passage through their tactile world. Anecdotally branded 'the generation that looks down', technologies and media perceived as youthful, but which can no longer be regarded as 'new', would nevertheless seem to have drawn many of today's ageless consumers into states of mutual exclusivity. The technologies employed have become a prophylactic to a reality, frequently perceived to be barbed and confrontational. In homes, spaces of work and significantly amongst each other, we appear to have retreated into individualized worlds.

¹ M. Berlins, "Hockney Says the iPod has Turned Young People Off Art. So Why Are Our Galleries Packed With Children," *The Guardian*, Wednesday 13.06.07

<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/print/0,,330016667-123424,00.html>

Nevertheless, those connected would view themselves as autonomous as much as atomic, with the capacity to realign their sensibilities to incorporate the both the sonic and the virtual into their construction of the authentic. Significantly, they represent new social mechanisms that augment rather than, in David Hockney's suggestion of disengagement, supersede or replace existing ones. What we must acknowledge is the prevalence of music in our lives, which causes us to have a rather nebulous engagement with it.

The constant iPod shuffle state in which many of us exist gives evidence of this tenuous attachment to the vast cornucopia of available music, as Andrew Blake infers:

It is possible that this kind of floating interaction with music is a defensive response to its pervasiveness. We might be able to concentrate for an hour or so on actively listening but since music is so pervasive, so completely and universally available, we can no longer choose do so.²

Networks of association have evolved to problematize this vision of urban spectres drifting amongst us, this easy-fit of techno-zombies plugged into iPods or other exponential nano-technologies, seemingly oblivious to their tangible environment. Gazing through the real into Blackberries, GPS linked cell phones, or Palms, both literal and figurative, this increasingly atomized wireless entropy requires the configuration of new ways to navigate through colliding dimensions. In truth such mobile technologies have transformed our rhythms and patterns of time to create new and complex frameworks of connection. These limitless portals that enable those who seek movement through digital space have produced new syncopations, of daily routines and normative behaviour. The boundaries of work and leisure, public and private continue to collapse. Paradoxically these same technologies that reify mobility and liberate their users from the tie lines of time and space, anchor us more closely and efficiently, through global positioning and mapping systems, than at any other time in human history. Free to move but free to be accessed and incorporated into global mechanisms of social and economic inclusion.

² A. Blake, *Popular Music: The Age of Multimedia*, (London, Middlesex University Press, 2007) p.x

The reinscription of space through technology has consequences for the user and the wider community, as Sally Munt elaborates:

We need to investigate how we use notions of space to appropriate novel technologies and to translate them into extensions of ourselves and our cultural life, through sequences of mental mapping which allocate often unconscious concepts such as here / there, public / private, home / work and translate them into technological practices.³

The concomitant consumption of, and through, technology, has caused the barriers between the private and public space, and the rhythms of work and leisure to dissolve to arguments of ethics and etiquette, but also to ones of inclusion and exclusion. The connections through mobile and digital technologies which are experienced by most people on a discrete, individualized and perhaps perfunctory level, are however part of a wider discourse that incorporates changes on a global and structural scale.

At the point when research indicates social mobility is at its lowest since 1970⁴ arguments of class, and social transcendence cannot be marginalized. The key factor of education underpins this work and by inference the technologies, which help progress attendant literacies. Mobility and access to information are regarded as fundamental democratic provisions, a transformation where, as Aharon Kellerman notes, “at the social level, the Internet has expanded the idea of personal virtual mobility as a democratic right by its very provision of the instant written communication, as well as its provision of access to information.”⁵ Mobility is framed by arguments of empowerment and assertion; it has become a key marker of class and social inclusion, highlighting the vulnerability of those who move through collective rather than

³ S. R. Munt, “Technospaces: Inside the New Media” in S. R. Munt (ed.) *Technospaces: Inside the New Media*, (Continuum, London, 2001) p.9

⁴ Social Mobility Report, 2009 (London School of Economics Sutton Trust, 2009), <http://www.suttontrust.com/annualreports.asp> viewed 30.03.10

⁵ A. Kellerman, *Personal Mobilities*, (Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, 2006) p.98

individual means. In the Post 9/11 environment networks of transportation and communication, analogous of digital networks, have become significant arterial mechanisms that are suggestive of the tension that exists between those who have both access and control and those who are marginalized and for whom access is denied. Indeed the mobile technologies, that have become symbols of movement, connection and identity, are themselves the very trigger mechanisms to paradoxically challenge the systems of connection they access and promote. As Andrew Blake observes:

These supposed connections between the humble MP3 player and international terrorism underline the connectivity of the globalised world and its technologies.⁶

Movement by *volition* or movement by *necessity*, invariably political or economic, has become a significant binary of mobility; those who have power and choice and those on which it is enforced, mobility a signifying practice which infers power, power produces difference. The capacity to engage effectively with networks of communication and transportation has become reinforced by the ability to participate through new technologies that transform patterns of social interaction. Seemingly ubiquitous mobile technologies are producing new inequalities and exclusions as well as realigning those of the past, differentiating those who can connect and regulate from those whom technology regulates. Past social divisions that frame our sense of belonging, based on race, gender, wealth and religion are now grafted with technologically driven factors of access and mobility.

The space between participant and voyeur has become unpicked in the age of mobile technologies. The idea that one is aware of one's place at moments of significance has become immeasurable. Those who could position themselves at 'the time President Kennedy was shot' had entered the mediated age. More recent fractures of the collective narrative - Princess

⁶ A. Blake, *Popular Music: The Age of Multimedia*, (London, Middlesex University Press, 2007) p.viii

Diana's funeral, 9/11 and 7/7 - have become part of the digital age requiring those connected not merely to be witnesses but instead become active agents in such events. Citizen correspondents have become increasingly drawn into news events through mobile videos and photographs, suggesting authenticity to significant moments. The empowerment of the individual however being part of a wider discourse as the mechanisms of dissemination, from *YouTube* to major news channels, remain within dominant structures, cherry-picking their audiences, images. Media studies academic John Tulloch, an unwitting participant in the London bombings of July 2007, wrestled back his position of "professional and citizen"⁷ from that of 'victim' as he became depicted by much of the media. In providing iconic images of the tragedy, that became appropriated by those who wished to progress an ideology of Britishness reminiscent of the London Blitz, the Australian ironically became the face of a mythologized 'gritty Londoner', "bloodied but unbowed".⁸ The images from the event, largely provided by anonymous witnesses on mobile phones and digital cameras, were evidence of technologies that transcended the boundaries of public space. Events once mediated at distance and retrospectively were now caught in situ. The sounds and images rapidly disseminated validating the idea of private and public space had dissolved to become indistinguishable. Paradoxically evidence of such mobility has been hijacked to circumscribe individual movement. Low resolution images of terror attacks on phones and digital cameras were used to give evidence of the consequences of unfettered movement and access. Following the USA the UK has increased border controls, inhibiting movement and access to produce a fortress mentality. Transgression, by necessity, becoming conditional, used to ideological effect.

If such sounds and images attempted to harness mobility they had more prosaic precedents. In the pre-digital era, the compact nature of the audiocassette offered the listener the ability to transgress, as science-fiction writer, William Gibson, extolled its virtues:

⁷ J. Tulloch, *One Day in July: Experiencing 7/7* (London, Little, Brown, 2006) p.9

⁸ *ibid.*

The Sony Walkman has done more to change human perception than any virtual reality gadget. I can't remember any technological experience since that was quite so wonderful as being able to take music and move it through landscape and architecture.⁹

The significance of such technologies, as Gibson emphasizes, is not as an inhibitor, which blocks our visual, tactile or olfactory sensibilities, but rather as an enhancer, to heighten our awareness. Mobile technologies break the sanctity of place enabling the user to impose themselves upon their surroundings to create an individual sonic environment. Earlier radio, television and turntables allowed transmitted sound to position itself within domestic space; mobile technologies enabled privatized pleasure to be taken into the public domain. This reinscription of public space has derived its authority from the perception of the inherent modernity of new technologies providing the ability to liberate the individual from the anchors of time and space to create meaning in a continually changing environment.

The important meaning making is built upon the interface of technology and culture. Stuart Hall's understanding of the impact of much earlier mobile technologies and the associated cultural practices pre-empted Hockney's fear of the loss of the visual:

We think of contemporary, late-modern culture as dominated by the image. Ours is pre-eminently a visual culture. We are assailed from every quarter by visual images ... the impact of the visual is so overwhelming that we sometimes forget that it has been accompanied by a cultural revolution almost as ubiquitous. This is the revolution in *sound*.¹⁰

Hall understood the ability of the Walkman to construct meaningful social practices that were part of the trans-sensory function of such technologies. The capacity to retain a presence in the real whilst creating an ethereal, virtual self presents us with an achievable transgression of time

⁹ William Gibson, *Time Out*, 6 October, 1993, cited in M. Bull, "Personal Stereos and the Aural reconfiguration of Representational Space", p.49, in S. R. Munt (ed.) *Technospaces: Inside the New Media*, (Continuum, London, 2001)

¹⁰ P. du Gay, S. Hall, L. Janes, H. McKay & K. Negus, *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*, (London, Sage, 1997) p.19

and space. The privacy of our internal world, previously unseen, now mediated through our use of mobile technologies; our movement through public space increasingly inscribed with private meaning. Such contemporary personal mobilities allowing us to publicly immerse into a private dimension have always been seductive.

The power of mobility that has become framed by new digital technologies, mobile phones, laptops, iPods and MP3 players was also evident in the cachet of the earlier Walkman. The technology, more affordable and consequently more democratic, produced mobility that was both real and symbolic, its meaning determined less by the object than its social use. Unlike more recent technologies it did not socially connect its users but rather began a process of mobile atomisation. The meaning was built upon its use as a particular set of social practices, in Hall's words "a way of using them, a set of knowledges, or know how, what is sometimes called *social technology*."¹¹ Significant in this cachet were the social codes – music styles, fashion, affectations – which informed this private listening. The suggested cosmopolitan lifestyle of the Walkman user, reinforced the cultural capital inferred by the Walkman itself. The capacity of the producers, through design, marketing and promotion, to identify the product with its user pre-dated the unanchored mobile telephone user. Its association of the technology to sport – the jogging, swimming or roller-blading consumer suggested atomized liberation unlike its socially connected contemporary who has the ability to share product and meaning through movement. Branding the Walkman through a clearly identified Japan-ness placed technological modernity with national structures contrasts with newer technologies, Samsung, Apple and Sony, which suggest a trans-nationality in which traditional borders are easily transgressed. Recent mobile technologies, building upon past identity and use value of earlier analogue products, have expanded the social practices and semantic networks to produce more easily transferable individualized experiences.

¹¹ *ibid.* p.23

Visual or sonic artists and analysts are frequently drawn to hierarchicize, compartmentalize and contrast each respective sensory domain, exclusivity rather than inclusivity. As consumers such rigid demarcation rarely exists, we move through a continual barrage of sensory information. It is the individual's ability to filter or reposition such subjectivity, to tune in, switch off, witness or a draw a blind across such experiences. Individualized technologies are progressed through their capacity to empower the user to personalize and encrypt his or her world - to consume, connect, or disengage at will. The power is mythologized at the point of reception, however through laptops, and mobile technologies this is increasingly the point of production and transmission. The internet and other digital technologies operate as convergent media providing multiple functions, points of interface and feedback loops to build a continuum of creation, production, transmission, reception and consumption. The continual encoding and decoding of information becomes evidence of the rapidly collapsing boundaries between producers, consumers and audiences. An extension, through technology, of the spectacular youth cultures, and mechanisms of popular cultural production, highlighted by the Birmingham school, but significantly the point of mediation no longer restricted to clubs and housing estates, but through the portals of computer screens and hand-held devices. These interfaces and loops, of reception and production, enabling the construction of communities, seemingly de-centred and transitory, but which nevertheless represent convergent nodes with the capacity to create, transmit and consume. Such ephemeral communities construct their social relationships and sense of self, to a large degree, on an unstable but collective consensus, the virtual.

Lost in Cyberia

Travel, indeed, struck him as being a complete waste of time, since he believed that the imagination could provide a more-than-adequate substitute for the vulgar reality of actual experience. In his opinion it was perfectly possible to fulfill those desires commonly supposed to be the most difficult to satisfy under normal conditions, and this by trifling subterfuge of producing a fair imitation of the object

of those desires... This clever simulation to the intellectual plane, one can enjoy, just as easily as on the material plane, imaginary pleasures similar in all respects to the pleasures of reality.¹²

Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature*, 1884

Contemporary associations with digital technologies are not unique with regard to man's relationship with the representational but merely capture society's long recognized marshalling of 'the virtual'. Immersion into the realms of imagination, a vital component of the construction of religious and the aesthetic iconography, has remained a building block of the literary form. The protagonist in Huysman's nineteenth century novel himself becomes a prophet of artifice, anticipating a time where nature's powers become eclipsed by technology's ability to provide simulated experiences for the static traveller. The novelist effectively pre-empts life in Western societies in the twenty-first century which is constructed as much upon virtualities as upon realities, in which the possibilities of choice and channels for self-production appear infinite.

The capacity to reify religious and cultural phenomena has remained a fundamental part, in all societies, of constructing a collective understanding, a means of anchoring abstraction. In Western tradition cultural practices and products are frequently constructed around the virtual. Through religious rituals such as the mass or Eucharist, phenomena of angels and demons, more tangibly seen in architectural fantasies, together with secular renditions in dioramas and illusions, virtuality has consistently been a key component of popular cultural and religious production. By incorporating the virtual, the 'not real', society has enabled transgressive elements to become part of the composition of not only utopian, or dystopian, but also everyday experiences. Rob Shields dissects the function of the virtual and points out "the digital virtuality of the global Internet, simulations and virtual reality is only the latest incarnation of

¹² J.K. Huysmans, *Against Nature* (London, Penguin, 1998) p. 35

the virtual.”¹³ The idea of the virtual as transcendental, a collective and consensual hallucination, has very long associations. Significantly the religious and secular virtual has helped construct the belief that it functions not through absence but importantly through representation to become a significant part of the authentic experience. Accompanied by images, sounds and rhythms the virtual becomes tangible. Technological society has increasingly allowed itself to be more at ease with absence and the removal of the tangible; with information and movement as an abstraction we allow the suspension of belief. Culturally embedded, we are at ease with movement into and through the virtual domain. Shields observes that, “we are far more sophisticated in our day-to-day manipulation of virtual and actual objects than we might expect.”¹⁴ The computer files we open, move, download and link to are real, just as with past secular and religious media, the technologies we embrace increasingly filter and shape our perception of that reality.

The ability to make sense of the world, both within and beyond the range of individual experience, has become dependent on the mediations that flow through the various electronic channels ... Everyday life is lived both in face-to-face and in the often contradictorily technologically mediated spheres where battles for control – over privacy and surveillance, for example are central. Much of our everyday life is involved in the management of that interface and in both its transgression and transcendence.¹⁵

Writing on a day when the virtual reality site, Second Life is holding what turned out to be its first and only cyber music festival, *Secondfest*,¹⁶ I am drawn into the discourse of the real, the virtual, and the authentic and importantly the function of sound in shaping such perceptions. I am also tethered to an earlier experience, which suggested a transitional moment where

¹³ R. Shields, *The Virtual*, (Routledge, London, 2003) p. xvi

¹⁴ *ibid.* p.20

¹⁵ R. Silverstone, “Introduction” in R. Silverstone (ed.) *Media, Technology and Everyday Life in Europe*, (Ashgate, Aldershot, Hants. 2005) p.4

¹⁶ *Secondfest*: 30.06.07 – 01.07.07 the Second Life virtual world website. The online event included, DJ Gilles Peterson, Hot Chip, Rob da Bank, New Young Pony Club, Groove Armada, film screenings and simulations of VIP zones, car parks, food and meeting points.

dimensions interfaced, and corporeality rather than digital avatars were left to construct meaning and perceptions of authentic participation. Whilst DJ'ing at the annual Australian outdoor festival - *The Big Day Out* in 2005, I stumbled upon a bizarre and incongruous sight, one however which has become globally familiar at such events. Amongst all the live bands, stalls and sonic mayhem of such an event, in front of me was a densely packed dance-floor, with all participants doing what they normally do on a dance-floor. However there was a strange and disconcerting silence, no sub-bass, no rhythm, no auditory cacophony that normally accompanies a packed floor and moving bodies, only the soft shuffling of feet across the shiny dance-floor. The dancers all wore wireless headphones, two DJs played separate digital selections, enabling the crowd to tune into their preferred style. Judging by the nature of the festival, my assumption was one DJ played guitar-based music, the other electronic. In this silent space my assumption remained unconfirmed. Both use digital tools as means of social mediation. Both, as Silverstone implies in our constant negotiation of everyday life, bridge the personal and the technological and involve: "the management of that interface and in both its transgression and transcendence."¹⁷ Unlike the *Second Life* festival the former was not mediated through the screen or involve two-dimensional simulation, but rather appropriated digital technology to disrupt the natural and built environments. Here the user takes control and manages the space of the dance-floor, as Michael Bull elaborates in the use of personal stereos, the, "environment is re-appropriated and experienced as part of the 'users' desire."¹⁸ Importantly public space, encrypted through rhythm, was inscribed as both private and performative space.

Secondfest's appropriation of technology enables participants to simulate themselves as avatars and transcend their spatial borders, to enter its virtual chill-out lounges, dance tents, and

¹⁷ R. Silverstone, "Introduction" in R. Silverstone (ed.) *Media, Technology and Everyday Life in Europe*, (Ashgate, Aldershot, Hants. 2005) p.4

¹⁸ M. Bull, "Personal Stereos and the Aural reconfiguration of Representational Space" in S. R. Munt (ed.) *Technospaces: Inside the New Media*, (Continuum, London, 2001) p.250

experience off-line feeds to live performances, all reified through their computer screens. This simulated environment constructing a community through atomized participants, linked via global nodes with the necessary tools and literacies to encode and decode such abstractions produce in Shields' description of virtuality, a "reality understood as concrete".¹⁹ Space has become psychological built around collective understandings; those who navigate the virtual, although fragmented and dispersed, operate with proficiency. As with the Sussex Group's investigations into the uses and practices of mobile technology, such understanding, although part of multiple discourses, reflect "a preoccupation among the users with the tactics and practices of space."²⁰

Sound and rhythm play a significant role in this collapsing of space, by providing familiar mechanisms of transmission and associations of consumption. Through radio and television, clubs, bars and airport lounges, music, if frequently ethereal and disembodied, is a constant, ubiquitous presence. Sound and rhythm have invariably domesticated technology, given it functionality, but also ecstatic purpose, reconfiguring the sounds to accommodate the users' desire. Despite, as many such as Shields would argue, "English [remained] the dominant language for programming conventions ... the 'glue' of any global virtual community,"²¹ sonic and rhythmic patterns have operated as ciphers for trans-national communities, allowing the encoding, transmission and decoding of ideas, commodities and associated practices.

Music has become a tool with which to negotiate technology and inversely for technology to deploy music in the proliferation of commodities and global markets that are built upon such users desires. As with virtual events such as *Secondfest* social network websites, particularly

¹⁹ R. Shields, *The Virtual*, (Routledge, London, 2003) p.69

²⁰ Sussex Technology Group, "In the Company of Strangers: Mobile Phones and the Conception of Space" in S. R. Munt (ed.) *Technospaces: Inside the New Media*, (Continuum, London, 2001) p.206

²¹ R. Shields, *The Virtual*, (Routledge, London, 2003) p.86

MySpace, and *YouTube*, music has become integral to expanding the digital domains portals and worm holes that connect individual users and accelerate the growth of this trans-global community. Driven by its market potential in the weightless economy, music production, transmission and reception have become key to the exponential growth of such sites.

*Facebook*²², the most ubiquitous social networking site, its initial expansion came in response to much of the corporatization and overarching tendencies of *MySpace* and *YouTube* with regard to music and video self-aggrandizement. *Facebook*'s ability to brand social interaction as a necessary lifestyle facet positioned it as a twenty-to-thirty-something digital practice. Such practices inferred mobility, know-how, and cultural capital as the only essential markers of one's right to be connected. The site's unspoken ethos of 'effective user identity', built upon an obsession with minutiae, being the only thing that mattered demoted *MySpace* and *YouTube* as brash and too-youthful mechanisms. The classification within social networking sites is suggestive of virtuality reinforcing reality, the bourgeoisification of digital culture. Attempting to proscribe cyber etiquette and/or moral codes, gives evidence of multiple discourses in on-line communities, even amongst those that have been progressed in part through music's seemingly democratic template.

The fluidity of sound, which transmits through these mobile technologies, brings new meanings of association. Constructed upon mobility and its inferred freedom, the new classes of spatial navigators, whose use of digital domains, to use Aharon Kellerman's phrase in his investigation into personal mobilities, denote, "a structuring dimension of social life and of social integration."²³ The sights, sounds and rhythms of social networking sites become completely integrated into their dynamic appeal and their system of association. Band sites on *MySpace*

²² *Facebook* was created by a young entrepreneur, Mark Zuckerberg, in 2004 and entered the top 20 UK sites in May 2007, <http://www.facebook.com/> it has since become the pervasive social networking site with 500 million users by 2010. Source: <http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics> 25.05.10

²³ A. Kellerman, *Personal Mobilities*, (Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, 2006) p.9

produce a mechanism to form links bridges and promote the freedom of movement to construct free-floating micro-communities, which, regardless of marketing and economic considerations have significant social implications. Technology becomes, for those with access and appropriate literacies, integrated into day-to-day practices and management strategies. Through work and leisure interactive technologies normalize detached social formations, reinforcing Shields' view that, "the concrete and local comes to be understood to be related to distant virtualities."²⁴ Past social divisions constructed upon economic and geographical delineations, remain formative, but nevertheless older markers of class and identification have given way to differences of knowledge, information and mobility. Specifically digital technologies, such as iTunes and *YouTube*, have made music's linearity not redundant but subjectively implemented. In terms of accessibility and consumption the past, like place, has not ceased to exist, but instead become a component of newer individualized narratives. George Lipsitz, writing before the proliferation of virtual and mobile technologies, observed:

Music that originally emerged from concrete historical experiences in places with clearly identifiable geographic boundaries now circulates as an interchangeable commodity marketed to consumers all over the globe ... these transactions transform – but do not erase – attachments to place.²⁵

The technologies produce newer attachments reified by the listener, new points of access, mediation and association. Simon Frith points to music's long standing capacity to both position us and remove us from the specificity of time and place: "by music as both fantasy of community and an enactment of it, by music dissolving difference even as it expresses ... at the same time rootless, cut free from any originating time and place, and rooted, in the needs, movement, and imagination of the listener."²⁶ The process, which Terry Flew once branded "the

²⁴ R. Shields, *The Virtual*, (Routledge, London, 2003) p.84

²⁵ G. Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place*, (Verso, London, 1994) p.4

²⁶ S.Frith, *Music and Copyright*, (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1996) p.278

informatisation of society,”²⁷ has accelerated to produce networks of connection at an exponential rate proportional to the expanding broadband width upon which much of the technology is dependant. Within these networks, the once mutually exclusive conditions of, to use Silverstone’s duality, “mobility and belonging”²⁸, become mutually supporting cornerstones of evolving communities.

I Don’t Want to be Your Friend on Facebook²⁹

rhi • zome

Noun Botany

A short continuously growing horizontal underground stem that puts out lateral shoots and adventitious roots at intervals. Compare with BULB

ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from Greek *rhizōma*, from *rhizousthai* ‘take root,’ based on *rhiza* ‘root.’³⁰

Principles of connection and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other, and must be. This is very different to a tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order.³¹

Gilles Deleuze

The hyper-mediated self is a network of affiliations, which are constantly shifting.³²

Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin

The most obvious allegory of the expanding digital connections is that of rhizomatic growth.

The expanding social networks generated by web technologies have made sites such as My

²⁷ T. Flew, *New Media*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005) p.9

²⁸ R. Silverstone, “Introduction” in R. Silverstone (ed.) *Media, Technology and Everyday Life in Europe*, (Ashgate, Aldershot, Hants. 2005) p.7

²⁹ Graffiti on a wall in Berlin, May 2010

³⁰ *Oxford American Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2005)

³¹ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, (London, Continuum, 2004) p.7

³² J. D. Bolter and R. Grusin, “Self” in D. Bell (ed.), *Cybercultures*, (Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, 2006) p.4

Space and *Facebook* the most pervasive feature of current communication and community. The multiple nodes of dissemination of information, the fractal expansion of lines of connection, and the de-centred makeup of digital reticulation, mirror the botanical world more appropriately than the linearity of past social networks. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin allude to the impact of more recent cyber cultures that encourage changing constructions of self in the digital realm, where one's representation can be in constant flux. Within these networks music not only becomes a tool of representation but its very nature, its resistance to containment, also enable it to reinforce this social architecture. Deleuze's understanding of rhizomatic expansion allows music to provide an appropriate modality, noting:

Music has always sent out lines of flight ... even overturning the very codes that structure or aborify it; that is why musical form, right down to its ruptures and proliferations, is comparable to a weed or rhizome.

Rhizomes, through the capacity to find unexpected strata of connections and multiple collisions, have provided a rich source of musical analogy from improvisation, jazz and specifically rhythm. Phil Turetsky's observations on the Polynesian 'haka' rhythms look to the deployment of multiple objects and motions, suggested by rhizomatic links.³³ However contemporary digital rhythms moving through digital platforms more closely represent such subterranean expansion, in which there are no points or positions but lines of connection, matrices and points of convergence. Operating in a capacity, that Deleuze had suggested, "by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoot,"³⁴ as such that the beat's journey has now become entwined in this heterogeneous world connecting "semiotic chains"³⁵ helping create communities through a matrix of interactions and linkages.

³³ Marcel Swiboda looks to the erosion of formal structures in Miles Davis's shift to electric, freeform productions – M. Swoboda, "Cosmic Strategies: The Electric Experiments of Miles Davis" in I. Buchanan and M. Swiboda (eds), *Deleuze and Music*, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2004) and P. Turetsky, "Rhythm: Assemblage and Event" in I. Buchanan and M. Swiboda (eds), *Deleuze and Music*, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2004)

³⁴ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, (London, Continuum, 2004) p.23

³⁵ *ibid.* p.7

This convergence of technological and natural metaphors is suggestive of David Toop's immersion into an ocean of sound or an ocean of information as a "diagnosis of our current conditions. Submersion into deep mysterious pools represents an intensely romantic desire for dispersion into nature."³⁶ Digital society utilizes the internet and other mobile technologies without explicit guidance and frequently without rigidly defined outcomes, merely pushing ever outwards. As Toop, infers with regards to the immersion into esoteric and ambient sounds, digital technologies require social navigation of this boundless labyrinth. Movement implies both a point of origin and destination, nevertheless the specificity of digital media problematizes past constructions of transmission and reception, of source and target. The plurality and reciprocity of digital lines of connection, the infinite points of destination and a limitless reservoir of information has necessitated new paradigms of association to be constructed to address this rhizomatic expansion. New expressions of space require new social networks, as conversely new communities synthesize new meanings. Through infinite portals and nodes of engagement, everything it would seem is simultaneously connected to everything else, the need to transcend this digital chaos to form a social order.

A technological society increasingly defines itself through converging information and communication mechanisms. Such mechanisms are in constant need of appraisal, self-regulation and validation of their shifting affiliations. Digital technologies require continual correlation and social assessment. At a point where, in Peter Dallow's words, "we experience being immersed in information, rather than merely retrieving information,"³⁷ the framing of this information, its structure, links, processes and modes of reception and transmission become as important as the bits and bytes from which it is composed. Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin

³⁶ D. Toop, *Ocean of Sound*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 1995) p.279

³⁷ P. Dallow "The Space of Information: Digital Media as Simulation of the Analogical Mind" in S. R. Munt (ed.) *Technospaces: Inside the New Media*, (Continuum, London, 2001) p.60

asserts that, as both subject and object of contemporary media, the virtual community is in the “process of remediation; it remediates the notion of community as defined in and through such earlier media as telegraph, telephone, radio, and television.”³⁸ Subsequent personalized technologies have allowed a far greater sense of control, engaging and shaping what is presented to the user. It has also required the validation of constant access and engagement with the technologies themselves, which come to denote the cachet of connection; laptops and handheld devices signifying mobility and belonging. The Sussex group’s observation that “the mobile phone is a significant object; it is a guarantee of connection in (and to) the dislocated social world of modernity,”³⁹ reinforces this convergence of technology and community. As a consequence these technologies become socially prescriptive. Mobile telephones have become modes of personal production in themselves, the consumption of individualized rhythms and ring-tones inferring identity and a connection, socializing through function but also empowering through specific sonic literacies. The appropriate ring-tone, like the appropriate piercing or oblique tattoo a significant non-verbal communication and expression of inclusivity as clothes and hair - each form systems of connection even at times of apparent disengagement. This almost swarm-logic and social system of organisation, of knowing and being known, outside verbal communication, comes as the result of the mass adoption of technologies. Sonic literacies are expanded through the rapid standardization of systems and procedures. The ability of the listener to know songs and genres from past generations through the technology of iTunes and file-sharing provides a constant feedback loop. This moebius strip of information linking users, moving between subject and object, creating digital practices that have not merely neutralized space but also helped produce generic information and shared social behaviours.

³⁸ J. D. Bolter and R. Grusin, “Self” in D. Bell (ed.), *Cybercultures*, (Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, 2006) p.4

³⁹ Sussex Technology Group, “In the Company of Strangers: Mobile Phones and the Conception of Space” in S. R. Munt (ed.) *Technospaces: Inside the New Media*, (Continuum, London, 2001) p.205

In order to negotiate these virtual and mobile worlds, interpretive communities have been constructed that aspire to transcend the more tangible boundaries of race, ethnicity, gender and economic delineation. The specific nature of more clearly defined music communities can be progressed through the internet. In the UK a number of acts have achieved chart success through the targeting of on-line fan-bases built upon live shows and digital community kudos. The usability and immediacy of *MySpace* has seen it supersede many of the individualised websites to which music became attached to in the pre-Web 2.0 era. The functional nature of the site in uploading songs and the instant connection to a wider music audience provided an opportunity for many artists. The Arctic Monkeys and Lily Allen, both with record deals in place, were able to exploit the potential of *MySpace*'s under-the-radar linked music community in nurturing an apparent 'alternative' promotional chic. The success, built upon this anti-corporate, populist strategy, was able to exploit this branded non-conformity. Nevertheless with promotional clips, television and other sales mechanisms afforded comparable chart acts at the time provided an unspoken caveat to such independently acquired success. The capacity to marshal the internet's social networking capabilities to challenge corporate dominance was finally underlined in December 2009 in the United Kingdom. In an effort to gazump the success in recent years of the television X Factor winner as the country's lucrative Christmas number one release a *Facebook* campaign lobbied for Rage Against Machine's 1992, *Killing in the Name* track. The *Facebook* group, boasting almost one million members successfully achieved the position with the track as a charity release.⁴⁰

Outside popular music others attempted to use web culture to develop more discrete audience bases. Andre Pinard and Sean Jacobs, have mapped the expansion of the fan-base of bands such as The Roots who harnessed a global market beyond their relatively meagre national status through information technology. The group, although definitively a hip-hop act, built their

⁴⁰ The Facebook group was launched by John and Tracy Morter:
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?v=wall&gid=2228594104&>

reputation on a 'live gig' more akin to rock band than the more formulaic 'rapper(s) and DJ show' on which hip-hop has been built. A wider and more heterogeneous audience was developed through touring and the concomitant development of web-based technology to capitalize on a trans-national, shared interest in hip-hop. As they observe, "within these (alternative) publics, social agents redefine themselves, voice calls for self-determination, and they form relationships (horizontal associations) that would not normally occur in a solely offline environment."⁴¹ Hip-hop's incorporation of technology of, for example okayplayer.com, as Pinard and Jacobs note, "enables members into a community that is first, virtual, but also real in that members form social networks".⁴² This capacity to disseminate information to an online community has enabled acts such as Talib Kweli, Dilated Peoples and Common for example to create a broader fan-base, more open to leftfield styles. In contrast to hip-hop's celebration of 'place', where progressing notions of the 'local' and urban space has been fundamental to growth of the fan-base, these acts have become voluntarily displaced in order to find a niche sonic space. Through the use of websites and broader, more generic social network sites, such as *MySpace*, bands and acts of multiple music flavours have been making use of the internet's cultural and liminal intersections to progress these fluid but often transient communities.

The Return of the Eight-Track Cartridge Family: Consuming New Rhythms

There is a texture to music. Throughout its history, popular music studies has often deflected attention from the platform on which that music has been played, focusing instead on singers, songwriters, innovative musicians or significant record companies.⁴³

Tara Brabazon, Felicity Cull, Mike Kent & Leanne McRae

⁴¹ A. Pinard and S. Jacobs, "Building a Virtual Diaspora: Hip-Hop in Cyberspace" in M(ichael) D. Ayers (ed.) *Cybersounds: Essays on Virtual Music Culture*, (New York, Peter Lang Pub. 2006) p.85

⁴² Ibid. p.88

⁴³ T.Brabazon, F. Cull, M. Kent, & L. McRae, *Jingling the Single: The I-podification of the Music Industry*, (AQ, May-June 2005) p.26

On April 2, 2006 *Crazy*, by Gnarls Barkley, an improbable cartoonesque duo comprising of producer Dangermouse and velvet-voiced singer Cee-Lo Green, became the first single to top the UK charts based on download sales alone. Unlike the system in the United States of America, in which songs achieve their national *Billboard* chart through a combination of radio airplay as well as over the counter purchase, and since 2005 official download sales, the UK calculates actual consumption. The process of achieving a chart position without a tangible product had not been immediate nor did it suggest that the artefact with regard to popular music had been forever made obsolete; it did however mark a significant moment in popular cultural history. In fact a little over twelve months earlier a truer picture of the music landscape had been depicted. The Gorillaz, this time a more authentic animated group, released a minimum pressing of their single *Feel Good Inc.* to allow the single to officially chart. Concern over a new digital platform superseding existing forms, specifically the compact disc, and the fear of traditional modes of consumption collapsing overnight the group released a minimum 300 vinyl copies of the track to comply with existing chart regulations. This loss of physicality of music, the fetishization of technology, had been accompanied by a new fetishization of traditional cultural products; in this case the 7 inch single. The process of music's digitization had been incomplete until this point of physical loss. Music's linearity, which had become fully eroded by the onset of digital bits and bytes that could be easily appropriated for the post-analogue world, had become inverted by new technologies that allowed listeners to plunder snatches of past sonic cultures and apply the party shuffle.

The popular music narrative is drawn to the easy compartmentalization of platforms with appropriate decades, the 1950s saw the rise of the 7 inch single, the 1960s the long play album, the 1970s the introduction of the cassette, the 1980s saw the proliferation of the compact disc, the 1990s CD roms and the internet and finally the 2000s saw this achieve its inherent potential with file compression, downloads and file-sharing. Each shift to another dominant platform

produced its own patterns of consumption to be accompanied by its attendant sub-cultural know-how and practices. Every fracture would in turn generate a sense of loss and in turn trigger nostalgic reinventions, from teddy boys and soulboys to eighties hair-dos. These technological leaps were not neatly bundled, not did they result in the jettisoning of old technologies, but rather a realignment of forms. Each contained the seeds of the superseding platform to allow the domestication of the new technologies and incorporation of new cultural products. The reinvention of past formats to suit market needs has continued through to contemporary digital times. The traditional favourite artist's 'album of songs', a collection akin to the family photograph album, which reached its nadir in the 1940s and 1950s was deemed a perfect format for rock's expressive indulgences in the 1960s and 1970s. This strategy has been echoed by recent technological fetishization being matched by a nostalgic counterbalance and a revival of vinyl. The British Phonograph Industry announced that vinyl single sales had increased 13% in the first half of 2007 and specifically for popular acts, Leona Lewis and McFly.⁴⁴ *The Guardian* commented on the White Stripes' *Icky Thump* achieving the highest vinyl single sales for more than twenty years observing: "rising vinyl sales down to bands rediscovering the format and to music fans' enduring desire to collect."⁴⁵ As music's physicality has evaporated through these decades record companies and bands have increasingly turned to past tangible forms to nurture fan-bases and operate as a compliment to the semantic networks which digital technologies provide.

If the Walkman offered a precursor of the existing mobile technologies the medium of the cassette also provided the listener with the capacity to turn sounds into a more malleable form, suggestive of the contemporary digital 'sound-byte' culture. The relationship between music

⁴⁴ British Recorded Music Industry: <http://www.bpi.co.uk/> Accessed 07.07.10

⁴⁵ K. Allen, "Back in the groove: young music fans ditch downloads and spark vinyl revival", *Guardian Business*, July 16, 2007
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2007/jul/16/musicnews.music>

and the medium in which it existed and through which it was played had, until the cassette's introduction, remained largely set. The transfer, not merely of whole albums, but also individual tracks onto another medium empowered the listener. The process allowed mobility but also the capacity to select, collate and share sounds. The cassette, initially a potential threat to the record company through this individual ability to manipulate sound, elicited a corporate rebuke. Most major record companies addressed this supposed threat to the industry during the 1970s and 1980s by stamping record sleeves: HOME TAPING IS KILLING MUSIC. This threat to corporate hegemony was matched by others, the independent Go Discs for example, who countered with their own stamp: CRAP MUSIC IS KILLING HOME TAPING.

Technologies inherently enable music to travel, further, more quickly, more effectively. Resistance, on the whole from entrenched business structures that are unable to contain this movement, have become an integral part of the popular music narrative. Each shift in sonic platform has been accompanied by more luddite arguments from those who have a vested interest challenged. Sound resists containment, recent digitization has problematized this attempted inhibition. The threat to corporate hegemony inherent in file-sharing has caused the music industry, and major artists to reposition themselves. Napster's expansion of digital music consumption pushed it beyond the boundaries of the sub-cultural 'geek' community to a much wider audience and provoked a belated industry reaction. As iPod became the first non-subscription download services endorsed by the music industry, it also enabled the Apple company to further the market for its own storage and playback devices. As Gabrielle Cosentino's observations of the growth of the technology noted:

Apple has been able to conquer the stagnant digital music market by skillfully walking a fine line between a carefully crafted business plan to sell its hardware and the widely common practice of sharing copyright protected digital content.⁴⁶

The topography of the digital world had evolved for both consumers and producers alike. If modes of connection and music access had changed so too had the modes of production and the community of producers. Music production has always been technologically defined; even unplugged acoustic artists required rudimentary recording facilities and the infrastructure of production, distribution and promotion of their products and performances that required technology to varying degrees to access an audience. Nevertheless the transformation of music production by digitization created a whole series of new possibilities for artists to produce sounds and for them to be heard. David Toop's argument of new technology, in the hands of more progressive sound artists, had opened the doors for an affordable and available method of music production that was quickly democratizing the industry:

Electronic music acted as one of the agents that destabilized the hierarchical, class-based model of musical culture that prevailed until the 1960s⁴⁷

Technology, once exclusive to the recording industry, was now available to those who wished to create in bedrooms and on laptops in hotel rooms or trains. Software such as Logic Audio, Cubase and Pro-Tools⁴⁸ had atomized production for those who wished to make chops and beats for drum and bass or hip-hop and also reduced production costs for all artists, successful or marginal. The ability to produce music on limited or non-existent budgets paralleled the erosion of music's out of pocket value that had come as a result of file-sharing and on-line stores.

⁴⁶ G. Cosentino, "Hacking the iPod: A Look Inside Apple's Portable Music Player" In M. D. Ayers (ed.) *Cybersounds: Essays on Virtual Music Culture*, (New York, Peter Lang Pub. 2006) p.187

⁴⁷ D. Toop, *Ocean of Sound*, (London, Serpent's Tail, 1995) p.221

⁴⁸ Such sequencing software, used for programming music and rhythms, represents the professional end of the market. Other software is available to download free, for example <http://www.jamstudio.com/Studio/index.htm> Many computers are purchased with music and rhythm programming software built in, for example Garage Band is an application supported by Apple Mac as part of iLife suite.

Perceptions of what constitutes an artist's long-term career path within the traditional industry have completely transformed. This has come in large part as a result of the vinyl and CD album becoming increasingly encroached upon by a culture of bite size downloads, ring-tones and quickie tracks. Such patterns of consumption have increasingly fed the mix and match nature of digital music culture and consequently caused many artists to reassess their strategies.

Madonna's abandoning of her record company of nearly twenty-five years signalled the realignment of artists, labels and their products. In the era of downloads the exchange value of the 'product' had been surpassed by the symbolic value of web promotion and the hard cash of concerts - the 'event as cultural product'.⁴⁹ The response of industry and producers alike has been to adapt to the ever-changing mores and whims of an often invisible, decentred audience whose sonic literacies have become increasingly complex to map. Where one million fans of indeterminate age apply for tickets through digital networks to a Led Zeppelin concert, a band whose vinyl releases carry more symbolic, and monetary value as a result of the whispers of a hidden virtual community.

The nature of these virtual communities has been increasingly shaped by internet technologies that have shifted from individualised software packages towards a utilities model where online services and software updates are farmed out to centralised super-computers. Driven in large part by the phenomena of Google whose capacity to harness the potential of rapid processing speed and broadband connection has transformed our use of the net. In the post-Web 2.0 ecology the net has centred upon search and connection allowing the synergy of provider and user to build a new web architecture. In Nicholas Carr's term, the World Wide Computer,⁵⁰ has become an actuality, information outsourced to the search engines that are accessed by

⁴⁹ Madonna's Live Nation Tour grossed \$260 million with 90% profit share to the artist, <http://arts.independent.co.uk/music/news/article3052347.ece>

⁵⁰ N. Carr, *The Big Switch: Rewiring the World from Edison to Google*, (New York, W.W. Norton & Co. 2008)

ubiquitous terminals which function as portals to a global hub. For many the virtual is seen as equivalent to their real-world environment and has become the default setting for globally dispersed communities:

[for many] of our commercial and personal relationships, the medium of choice for storing and exchanging information in all its forms, the preferred means of entertaining informing, and expressing ourselves.⁵¹

In market terms the shift to online economies has had repercussions for this 'entertainment', 'information' and 'expression'. The drive for such detail has resulted in the illumination of shadowy cultural corners and forgotten spaces of cultural production that have significant resonance for the sonic domain. The relentless haemorrhaging of traditional music sales through the CD format⁵² has not been entirely replaced by any similar online market model. The inability of music industry corporations to fully grasp the implications of file-sharing has left a window wide open for the relatively free movement of music through digital platforms. At a college party in the seminal television series *The Sopranos*, Anthony Soprano Jnr.'s observation, that "it's not music ... it's beer ... you've gotta pay for it,"⁵³ was a clear indicator of how music had become valued by many in the post-analogue world. Despite the growth of the download market through iTunes, as it moved from being a digital media player to becoming the dominant online store⁵⁴, sounds and rhythms move largely uninhibited through

⁵¹ *ibid.* p.124

⁵² International Federation of the Phonographic Industry declared music sales for 2007 fell to their lowest level since the body began publishing figures in 1997. Physical sales of CDs and DVDs fell 13 percent to \$15.9 billion. Sales of downloaded songs and mobile-phone ringtones rose 34 percent to \$2.9 billion. John Kennedy, chairman and chief executive of the industry group digital sales "are growing healthily but, crucially, not fast enough to arrest the overall decline of the market". The decline in CD and DVD sales was not matched by a comparable rise in digital downloads as a result of illegal acquisition - physical and digital piracy cost the U.S. music industry alone \$5.3 billion. Source: <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/06/18/technology/music.php> published 16.06.08 Viewed 25.09.08

⁵³ *The Sopranos*, Series 4, HBO, 2002

⁵⁴ In February 2008 iTunes sales figures made it the number two single music retail outlet according to the market research group NPD, (<http://www.npd.com>), with over 50 million store

digital space. The reduction of traditional analogue costs, packaging, distribution, storage etc. has, as Chris Anderson observed, resulted in a shift market attention where, “popularity no longer has a monopoly on profitability”.⁵⁵ The underpinning philosophy being that everything is now available and the subsequent reinvigoration of the niches of the ‘long tail’ through online fan-bases and the sharing of specialist or arcane knowledge comes at the inevitable cost of smaller slices, or rather lower aggregated sales for many online products. The proliferation of popular culture through on-line networks has reinvigorated what were once seen as sub-cultural or liminal spaces but this liberal movement of sounds and images has come with some collateral damage, a loss of past exchange values.

‘Free’ is a word with an extraordinary ability to reset consumer psychology, create new markets, break old ones, and make almost any product more attractive.⁵⁶

Chris Anderson has developed this growing perception of a ‘free’ digital ecology, one that has become increasingly dominant for the, anecdotal, Google Generation, who as Anderson notes, “[have] grown up online simply assuming that everything digital is free. They have internalized the subtle market dynamics of near zero marginal cost economics in the same way that we internalize Newtonian mechanics when we learn to catch a ball.”⁵⁷ The expansion of bandwidth, processor speed and digital storage has resulted in the technology dictating the economics of the web. Sheer force has caused a restructuring of the laws – copyright and economic – that industry had previously felt adequate and impervious to. The rapid take up of online culture has meant that free access and use is the default setting of the web. Music is given away regularly

customers and over 4 billion download sales Source:
<http://www.apple.com/pr/library/2008/02/26itunes.html>, viewed 05.11.08

⁵⁵ C. Anderson, “The Long Tail: Forget squeezing millions from a few megahits at the top of the charts. The future of entertainment is in the millions of niche markets at the shallow end of the bitstream.” *The Wired*, October 2004 <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html> - Viewed 06.01.07

⁵⁶ C. Anderson, *Free: The Future of a Radical Price*, (London, Random House, 2009) p.10

⁵⁷ *ibid.* p.5

on the web the most effectively executed being Radiohead *In Rainbows*⁵⁸ made available as an unpriced download where consumers could order the release at whatever price they wished. For acts like Radiohead ‘free’ is not profitless but rather the revenue from a product is not a simple exchange process but more complex and indirect. Many artists, specifically established and touring ones, have embraced, somewhat reluctantly, the new online economic forces. Using the free movement of music to promote themselves and capitalise on the more tangential rewards in merchandising and ticket sales. For others it has required a non-profit based ideology, music making as a return to something they do for other reasons, from fun to creative expression. An ideology that entrenched in the beliefs of ‘freedom of expression’ that runs the risk of becoming debased by market forces. However one that has worked quite effectively for those who are able to see music releases as ‘loss leaders’ and are able to exact a profit from other sources. For others a return to ‘gift economies’, perhaps unwelcome but music is inevitably centred in communities which are rooted in ideologies of support, mutual aid and reciprocity, have a much clearer grasp of gift economies. For many artists, specifically in an embryonic phase, attention precludes income. With such a volume of music on the web, the majority by those in these early stages, financial reward is something that becomes secondary to building a fanbase and clearly the key is that using digital network is low cost, low risk.

Music and creative communities, the majority developing beyond the reach of corporate business models have undoubtedly found adapting to web free-economics a little easier. As Anderson infers the development of web networks has created a new ecology that has yet to develop an effective market model. As with ‘open source’ model this often based on strategy of building a large audience before a clear business model is established. Corporate models, as Jeff Zucker, Head of NBC/Universal, clearly suggests in reference to the television industry are

⁵⁸ Radiohead, *In Rainbows*, (EMI, 2007)

“terrified of trading analogue dollars for digital pennies”.⁵⁹ Nevertheless we are lead to believe that the interests of the corporate music industry are synonymous with the interests of the music market, consumers and producers, as a whole. The current activities and practices of users on the web are redressing this philosophy. It must be added that ‘free’ needs qualification. The general perception is ‘without charge’ but this is a very specific, market definition. In a digital ecology ‘free’ also has wider meaning - ‘without restriction’ - uninhibited in movement and access.

The chapter title’s appropriation of the old adage ‘you can’t have everything where will you keep it?’, is actually being challenged with music. Technology has made this possible, it required access to free, or near free, music. Peer-to-peer file sharing has, together with the infinite shelf space of the web and the exponential capacity of hard-drives, has transformed once passive users into active producers, interactive sharers and distributors. This has as Anderson notes made past definitions of piracy inadequate:

The reason piracy is a special class of theft is that the costs to the rightful owner are intangible. If you make a music album that is then pirated, the pirates haven’t taken something you own, they have reproduced something you own.⁶⁰

The loss of tangible, the CD, vinyl record or DVD, in a digital ecology means that music has become reduced to its primal characteristics – sound unrestricted by borders and market forces. If it can be free it will be free, which would suggest it is impossible to reverse this process and return to past models of exchange.

The volume of legal and illegal songs moving through this utilities model global network would suggest a rich and varied auditory culture has blossomed that challenges past music industry

⁵⁹ C. Anderson, *Free: The Future of a Radical Price*, (London, Random House, 2009) pp.126-127

⁶⁰ *ibid.* p.71

mechanisms. Previous corporate infrastructures, that built consumer markets upon spatial and temporal branding and recognition, have been swamped by the growth in new music that is no longer tethered exclusively to place and time. Cultural niches thriving on the cachet of sub-cultural ‘difference’ offer a potential for unfettered heterogeneity. Nevertheless the internet’s mass use brings into play broader structural mechanisms that see the inherent diversity of the long tail outweighed by commonality. The collaborative characteristics of current net use, as a result of deploying technology built upon participation, inevitably becomes a cultural leveller. The margins and minutiae that have the capacity to proliferate on-line are drowned out by the web’s critical mass. Music, which proudly markets it on-line abundance, illustrates this homogeneity through sharing as effectively as anything. The sheer volume of sounds and rhythms that have converged to become a familiar throb require, as during analogue cultures, investigation at a granular level to discern difference. Popular culture, now by common consent viral in nature, inevitably infects on a mass, and global, scale. The belief, as with Anderson, that in the context of random internet junk, search engines “help pull some signal from the noise,”⁶¹ fails to address the long established premise that mass participation creates commonality.

Every track you play will tell your Last.fm profile something about what you like. It can connect you to other people who like what you like - and recommend songs from their music collections and yours too.⁶²
LastFM Homepage

The belief that the web has produced a flattening of popular culture is widely applied. Nicholas Carr’s view that:

What is sacrificed may not be blandness but quality ... the culture of abundance being produced by the World Wide Computer is just a culture of mediocrity – many miles wide but only a fraction of an inch deep.⁶³

⁶¹ C. Anderson, *The Long Tail*, (New York: Random, 2007)

⁶² LastFM Online Music <http://www.last.fm/>

⁶³ N. Carr, *The Big Switch: Rewiring the World from Edison to Google*, (New York, W.W. Norton & Co. 2008) p. 157

The tools and algorithms which access contributors personalized content and interaction with the technology are increasingly driving traffic through the web. Google as the dominant search engine has the capacity to shape the movement of information, and as a result, communities which evolve from this participation. As a consequence of this movement of information, rather than reflecting diversity, communities traversing geographical borders become more virtually homogenous. Social networking sites, Facebook and MySpace are constructed upon parameters of similarity and convergence. Similarly the emergence of user generated on-line radio stations like LastFM⁶⁴ has accelerated this process of drawing like to like. Carr built on the demographic work of Thomas Schelling⁶⁵ that examined how individuals who demonstrated no apparent bias were drawn towards groups similar to themselves and away from those who characteristics were divergent. The consequence of this phenomenon is that, despite assumptions the Internet will promote productive and diverse culture, in actuality as Carr observes:

Not only will the process of polarization tend to play out on virtual communities in the same way it does in neighbourhoods, but it seems more likely to proceed much more quickly online.

There is growing concern for our acquiescence to a world of techno-utopia by the growing acceptance of the web as an unchallenged panacea. As the internet has become the default setting for globally dispersed communities it is important to acknowledge both the democratising and homogenising potential of digital culture. Media in general, and music

⁶⁴ LastFM based in the UK (Shoreditch, London) claims to be the world's largest social music platform and offers the service in 200 countries, 12 languages, is affiliated with iTunes and was acquired by CBS Interactive in 2002. The site has created a music community that, it claims stands in excess of 21 million users, and generates recommended music lists through its audioscribbler system, enabling subscribers to produce their own customised online radio stations through the use of its library database. Source: <http://www.last.fm/>

⁶⁵ T.C. Schelling, "Dynamic Models of Segregation," *Journal of Mathematical Sociology*, (1971) pp.142-86

specifically, highlights this duality, one of choice and diversity, another of convergence and commonality. The shift from the access and consumption of traditional media, whether newspapers, radio, television or music, in packages clusters – broadsheet, real-time transmission, Long Player or CD respectively - to current online distribution in ‘unbundled’ segments – on-line news, podcasts, TV streaming, and downloads, has been built upon such choice and diversity. Nevertheless social networking rebundles these deconstructed media items. Blogs, playlists, and online radio posts enable web producers and consumers to share and in effect regroup them - the attraction of like to like. The exponential growth of music available through current on-line platforms as bite-sized downloads, MP3s, ringtones and wave files has neutralised this limitless choice by the very nature of the web which draws upon society’s inherent capacity to seek the convergence of community.

CONCLUSION

This research has been undertaken over a period of four and half years during which considerable transformations, central to the thesis, have taken place which have impacted on the author's role as researcher, writer and music producer. At the commencement of the thesis the term Web 2.0 had barely surfaced and popular music was clearly functioning in a transitional ecology, dominant market strategies and networks of communication, still clinging however reluctantly, to past analogue models. On a personal level I provided evidence to this, still operating within established structures and embedded processes, overseeing a record label that released CDs and vinyl products, promotional material, and professionally designed artwork, couriered across the world. I recorded in studios that although digital were still reliant upon auxiliary hardware and instrumentation. I produced radio programmes that were yet to offer global streams. I DJ'd from a stock of 5,000 vinyl records and made daily journeys to university libraries for teaching and research materials. Web technology at this time offered effective means of communication and information: radio station, label, and library websites a one-stop-shop for information; email enabled me to post journal articles to distant publications; DJ'ing augmented vinyl with CD burns for hard to find tracks. This would be a reasonable assessment of my, and a significant percentage of my associates, application of digital technology. The activity was very much individualised, undertaken on a home office computer with purchased or, I have to admit occasionally ripped, personal software, overhead and printed worksheets were the dominant teaching materials, and the processes, for both music and research, were centred on information retrieval for personal use. Scroll forward to the present and the web offers a very different series of perspectives. A growing utilities model has provided a view of a limitless horizon with readily accessible, largely free and, within an increasingly flexible copyright framework, shareable and reusable resources. On-line radio

stations Spotify, LastFM and the more rhythmically and genre specific We Funk¹ online station stream limitless free music, record labels have diminished in real terms as tangible products give way to downloads and file-sharing, club cultures have retracted and services such as Stick It On² offer club and bar consumers to dispense with DJs to preselect their own tracks for the evening, print journals have given way to on-line publications and PowerPoint, with embedded URLs, have made classroom overheads obsolete. It is within this new ecology that the thesis finds its use and validity. As the web offers faster and seemingly limitless information it is essential that past creative production, which populates this reservoir of digital information, is acknowledged, mapped and referenced. Rhythm provides an appropriate modality through which such transformations can be tracked to detail the inexhaustible database of information.

The author's work as a music producer has informed this research and reciprocally the opportunity to investigate wider contextual issues has impacted on my ongoing studio work. As the thesis neared completion, approaches to recording illustrated this synergy and underlined the current relevance of the research. Approaches to recording have, for myself and in common with much popular music production, required rhythm to be the first step in building a framework for a piece. Tempo, even if only a metronomic pulse, and meter offer the necessary infrastructure upon which other elements can be layered and shaped. This bedrock rhythm is in current digital practices much more culturally infused than previously, where a click track of backing rhythm would invariably be merely functional, to offer guidance to vocal and melodic textures. Breaks or rhythmic phrases from older, frequently forgotten tracks are readily available on-line display complex, polyrhythmic sample databases, rich in cultural significance. The nuances of the beat on this occasion were provided by a demonstration on YouTube by an

¹ We Funk, established in 1996, is an online radio based in Montreal specialising in, largely American, hip-hop, soul and funk, <http://www.wefunkradio.com/radio/>

² The Stick It On website offers club audiences the opportunity to choose their own music prior to the event claiming: "Stick It On aims to give you something different. There are no resident DJ's. Definitely no so called 'Super DJ's' and the music is provided by YOU" <http://www.stickiton.co.uk/>

enthusiast, happily sharing the capabilities of a long forgotten rhythm generator - the Chamberlin Rhythmate Tape Loop Drum Machine.³ The track I was co-writing became a distillation of the doctoral thesis. A conscious effort to incorporate the specific textures of drum machines from previous eras, had opened up a metanarrative of the beat. These machines, beat boxes, or generators, open a specific chronicle of rhythm within popular and electronic music. As a researcher and producer it is fascinating to consciously delve into past histories and associations, in this instance to navigate the web to retrieve lost gems of the beat generators. Equally significant is how the track, once completed, would be disseminated, accessed, heard, and potentially repurposed by others.

The machine, which would in time give one producer, Davy DMX⁴, important nomenclature was originally built in 1931 by Russian inventor, Leon Theremin. The Rhythmicon, designed to offer complex multiple rhythms for avant garde composer Henry Cowell,⁵ was the first appearance of the drum machine which would continually resurface for the rest of the century in different contexts. Its place in popular music's story gives a somewhat granular analysis of 'the beat', the sounds of the drum machine would find themselves currently available but dispersed throughout the outer reaches of the web. From the cosmopolitan funk of Sly Stone⁶ and Timmy Thomas⁷ to the strident rhythms of French punk band Metal Urbain⁸ and New York desolationists Suicide⁹, the drum machine has provided an ergonomic and easily transported smorgasbord of beats. The creation of technology, which offered functional beats, produced an

³ Chamberlin Rhythmate Tape Loop Drum Machine:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmAbtzMChHk> Accessed 14.07.09

⁴ Named after the popular Oberheim DMX machine. Davy DMX - *One for the Treble* (Tuff City 1984) See Old School HipHop.Com:

<http://www.oldschoolhiphop.com/artists/deejays/davydmx.htm>

⁵ D. Mooney, Opaque Melodies, source: <http://www.city-net.com/~moko/rbackgnd.html> Accessed 20.08.09

⁶ Sly and the Family Stone - *It's a Family Affair* (Epic 1971)

⁷ Timmy Thomas - *Why Can't We Live Together* (TK Records 1972)

⁸ Metal Urbain - 'Paris Maquis' (Rough Trade RT001 1978)

⁹ Suicide - *Suicide* (Red Star Records, 1977)

unexpected cultural dialogue as a consequence. The cultural currency of the Roland 808 and 909 drum sounds, for example, which evolved through the club movements of hip-hop, electro, house and techno that centred on New York, Chicago, and Detroit subsequently provided the opportunity for sonic referencing and acknowledgement.¹⁰ The track being constructed in the studio would enter this sonic discourse on completion. When mastered it would initially not be considered as a tangible product; the cost of manufacturing CD or vinyl, not only prohibitive but also problematic with the decline in music distributors in recent years. Instead a posting on My Space and uploading to iTunes offers a lower investment risk and the opportunity to enter into global dialogue (and audience). Such inter-textual approbation illustrates the continuing significance of the rhythmic narrative detailed by the thesis and one which, as a music maker, carries collateral that requires recognition and essential analysis. The research objective has been to map and place such beat signification into a wider social and cultural context in order to give understanding and ensure that the linkages in popular culture can be read through what are often seen as peripheral, more overlooked parameters, in this case ‘the beat’.

Why rhythm? As a musician, my role has been multiple, generally considered a vocalist and bass player, my tasks have also been centred on rhythm both as performer and producer – as percussionist, programmer and DJ. Being a vocalist, I was keenly aware of the cultural primacy afforded ‘the voice’ and by default the frequent marginalisation of ‘the beat’. The invisibility, and ephemerality, of much club music becomes difficult for popular music analysis which can find it easier to translate meaning through, not merely ‘the word’, but also through iconography afforded the singer or singers in visual media. Unlike much of dance or club culture popular

¹⁰ New York electro and hip-hop used the sounds of Roland 808 as benchmark rhythms – eg. Jellybean Benitez (Mix) Rockers Revenge (Arthur Baker) *Walking on Sunshine* (Streetwise 1982) as well as in Japan with Yellow Magic Orchestra - *BGM* (Alpha 1981), it has been extensively referenced since then from Sweet Exorcist – *Testone* (Warp 1989) to most recently Kanye West *808 & Heartbreak* (Roc-A-Fella, 2008)

music culture is fundamentally logo-centric. The locus of the beat, rather than the voice, has continually proved problematic in club music's textual analysis. The voice has been traditionally been regarded as the vehicle which carries emotion and meaning. The voice conveys the message: the singer gives authenticity; humanity and enables empathy. The singer prompts understanding and connection with the listener, the potential of developing community through shared reading and emotional experience. The thesis has addressed this by illustrating music cultures that afford centrality to rhythm, from West African drumming communities to the collision of traditional and modern in the networks of techno and hip-hop. In the author's capacity to operate as both practitioner and researcher the thesis demonstrates how current practices are unpicking such delineations. Conventional descriptors, networks and communities have become blurred by technology which has eradicated past cultural products and economic models replacing them with online communities sharing information that challenges previous parameters of place and time.

This conflation of analysis and production afforded the author the opportunity to embrace the core aspects of cultural and media studies. So often reduced to an unhelpful binary, I have in my teaching and research often confronted this supposed division between theory versus practice. Humanities approaches, which feel media readings provide true understanding of the transformations in popular culture, and creative production approaches which, through the creative industries, play an important role in current economic thinking. The thesis illustrates the danger inherent in such reductionism and that both approaches have the capacity to inform each other. Production enables individuals to become immersed in a world of cultural association that can be marshalled to good effect. Why and what one creates requires reflective and diagnostic processes to be put in place. In an increasingly complex on-line ecology it is ever more important that these wider understandings are addressed. The volume of information, its availability and potential for reuse and dissemination challenge our current capacity to place

much of this social production in broader contexts. The thesis has drawn upon thirty five years of film and music production experience but also employed methodologies from across the different disciplines, from textual analysis, primary source interviews, economic and statistical evidence, and in-situ, studio, application of these theoretical approaches. It is the intention that the research will provide an appropriate analysis of the movement of popular rhythms from past analogue cultures to the present digitally repurposed 'mash-ups' that comprises much of our social production.

The resources that have been used are intended to reinforce common practice in the humanities, to read the multiple assessments of popular culture and find understanding through these readings. As a music producer I am fully aware of the processes, making music one is fearful of overprescribing how audiences respond and interpret. Singular interpretation, often an anathema to music producers, is shunned in favour of ambiguity, and in the process challenging critics to misread or proffer multiple readings. In consideration of this the thesis aims, in large part, to address the subject through relevant cultural filters and allowing the artists a voice through the mechanism of interviews. It is how the media of popular culture have read the referenced works that provide the appropriate context. This has allowed an audience perspective; popular music is constructed by negotiation between producer and consumer. The thesis has embraced the changing cultural filters, as the beat has transformed so have the media through which it is disseminated, accessed, and assessed. Traditional gatekeepers have receded; the music press, popular journals and radio have given way to blogs, on-line forums and live streaming.

There's twenty hours of video uploaded every minute on you tube ... If you count it up there's about almost six lifetimes of material on you tube right now. So if you tried to watch it, it would take you six lifetimes, but you would never catch up because there's over 1.7 million minutes uploaded every day and that's a thousand times faster than you can watch. So there's just no way to keep up with what's going on you tube ... here's 493,000 plus videos a day, and that's just on you

tube.¹¹
Michael Wesch – Cultural Anthropologist.

Academic Michael Wesch underlines the exponential growth of information made available, our capacity to address such volumes of knowledge surpass older media readings. Lifetimes of data and knowledge are being added to reach an event horizon of information. This current online ecology is characterised by the continual fragmentation of sounds, rhythms and images, largely without attribution or recognition of the component parts. The thesis has sought to position this relentless morphing of the present within the context of a potentially forgotten past. In order to understand this digital present where nothing is new, nothing is lost, and everything becomes transformed, it is vital that past narratives, together with earlier modalities of movement and change, are addressed. The research has attempted to understand this perpetual present through the lens of popular culture's past. As the tangible products of this mass produced culture disappear – vinyl records, compact discs, cassettes and reel-to-reel recordings – the times and places which were embedded in them begin to fade in popular memory. The research has presented how the ambience of place and time became embedded through cultural production and consumption, specifically through the rhythms upon which they were built. The thesis has sought to not only understand the processes which made these transformations possible while also making every effort to archive the key changes in post-war popular culture made evident through rhythm. The thesis has acknowledged music's role in embracing and domesticating of technology, which have caused the severing of many cultural ties to time and place. Similarly it is sought to locate current social networks and formations in these past club cultures. Here social modelling, built upon shared knowledge, experiences on the dancefloor and through cultural products, provides evidence of pre-digital connections and earlier dispersed

¹¹ Michael Wesch – Cultural Anthropologist (Kansas State University). Keynote Speech: Media Education Summit, John Moores University, Liverpool, September, 2009. Podcast: http://umanitoba.ca/ist/production/streaming/podcast_wesch.html

communities. We can more readily understand current virtual worlds in the context of long established patterns of human engagement with the intangible through religion, art and literature but importantly through the intangible and ephemeral nature of music. In tracing the journey of the beat we can more easily understand how in the niche communities the sharing of cultural cachet became a marker of identity, how rave culture's use and dissemination of information, its capacity for viral marketing, benchmarked future digital networks. On a more prosaic level the thesis has attempted to find balance between the European rhythms and the hegemony of African beat. The research has captured the cultural specificity of many popular rhythms as they transform, mutate and dissipate in the limitless repository of the internet.

I have applied subject methodologies to situate the thesis within an appropriate framework. Although cautious of anchoring the research too closely to a singular chronology, the thesis applies a linear narrative in order to accentuate how, in the shift from analogue to digital cultures, this linearity becomes ineffective. The shifts from linear to cyclical and constant time, from place to space, brought about by such transformations are central to the thesis. The change from physical movement, which was the modality of the beat, to virtual mobility is significant. It is not merely to emphasise changing popular cultural communities and networks at the heart of the work but also because the thesis's relevance is equally contained in its attempts to establish a 'history of the beat' that risks being lost in the constant present of the online ecology. It has been the purpose of the research to establish a series of histories that can help to inform current producers, popular cultural theorists and online communities how the complexity of a vast web world can be mapped and read. As a history graduate, I am keenly aware of the interconnection between multiple forces and discourses, from the structural to the discrete. The dynamics of history and relationships between such forces are addressed through the cipher of rhythm.

The aim of the research has been to situate the movement of the rhythms within the context of broader structural changes that they reify. Not merely through the transformations in communications media and production technology but also through structural movements that they themselves both reinforce and remodel. Political, economic and technological parameters act as tectonic plates whose shifts inevitably impact on the social and cultural formations built upon them. The research aims to address such structural changes to illustrate how the seemingly discrete transformations that take place within popular culture are not isolated, localised and fragmented but rather are part of much more fundamental global patterns. The later part of the research looks to how incumbent political and economic models have begun to be reshaped in response to changing technologies. As the tools of communication and creative production have become democratized so new patterns of association have evolved and new economic models sought. Changing perceptions of community, brought about by digital technologies, that are suggestive of Marx and Engels belief in the fundamental importance in the shift from forced and paid labour to individual, self-activity. There prognosis that the tools of production must be made subject to each individual, and in common ownership in order for the shift to self-activity and the ability for new communities emerge. Their words, although unable to envisage the leap to digital and nano technologies, envisage the potential of such paradigm shifts: “Individuals must appropriate the existing totality of productive forces, not only to achieve self-activity, but also, merely to safeguard their very existence.”¹² The belief that such a reordering of production would bring patterns of association: “only in the community [with others has each] individual the means of cultivation his gifts in all directions; only in the community, therefore, is personal freedom possible.”¹³ The current web ecology

¹² K.Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology Part One*, (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1970) p. 83

¹³ *ibid.* p.92

potentially points towards the idea of a new universality. This emerging global community brought about as individuals become immersed in a range of activities that begin to invert past models of production and the division labour. Although the capacity of the web is still inseparable from corporate models of late capitalism it is worth noting that online activity marks the erosion of private for the more public property of the net. Open source software, network sharing, peer-to-peer communication and collective access, are beginning to reshape networks and communities and as a result demand new economic models in response.

In the current online environment the rhythms of the digital age have matched, reinforced and become an inseparable part of, not only, contemporary auditory, but also visual cultures. The slicing of beats into the minutiae of barely audible slivers of sound, reduced to bytes, quantized and fed into a matrix that continues to expand ever outwards. They have become the metronome of a mediated and interconnected globe in which a post-place, post-history, generation mark time through accelerated and cyclical pulses with ever-attendant images. Contemporary nano society follows an instantaneous meter in which the barely perceptible molecular beats periodically break the surface to expose the rhythms of past and present, from known and unknown spaces. As a case in point I have heard the tell tale beats of Prince, Chicks on Speed and Joy Division in the past week as mobile ring tones, triggered by third parties, push nostalgic rhythms through public space. In contrast atomized listeners challenge realities with sonic virtualities. Choice, seemingly infinite, emphasizes the distinction between those who are wired and those who remain outside these networks. It is important to consider that in any evangelic position regarding a global interaction and the democratization of the tolls of creativity and production massive disparities remain. North America may boast almost 80% internet access, however Asia and Africa at 18% and 6% respectively illustrate the gulf between the haves and

have-nots.¹⁴ Technology, like mobility, has become an important human differential. The thesis through the modality of rhythm has demonstrated how the movement of people and ideas have accelerated in the shift from analogue to digital technologies as the critical mass of the web draws inhabitants ever closer to each other through social networks and the levelling tendencies of centralised search engines. Everyday life becomes a site for contest, for connection and access, for control of time and space. The use of sound in the context of individual movement highlights the continuing conflict of mobility and stasis, and the shifting identities built upon these two forces.

¹⁴ The 2009 figures for internet penetration show North America- 73.9%, Europe – 50.1%, Asia – 18.3%, Africa – 6.4%. However the growth in internet access is highest in Africa – 1,321.1% between 2000-2009. Source: Internet World Stats: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

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